NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

On not covering the conclave

Heidi Schlumpf | Mar. 8, 2013 NCR Today

As a journalist, it?s in my DNA to want to hop on a plane when news happens. Even if I?m not actually covering the presidential election, the natural disaster, the teachers? strike, I feel the need to be in the middle of it. And when the big news is part of my beat?religion, specifically Catholicism?it?s almost impossible for me to sit on the sidelines.

But that is exactly what I?m doing during this historic leadership change in our church. From Benedict?s surprising decision to step down, to the pre-conclave chatter, to the white smoke and after, I am not in the middle of it?for a number of reasons.

First and foremost, I have another full-time job (teaching), and I?m the mother of two preschoolers. So hopping on a plane is not something that could be accomplished without quite a bit of accommodating.

If that were the only thing stopping me, though, I?d be begging my editor, ?Send me,? blogging daily, submitting columns to secular news outlets, etc. A writer interested in branding and expanding his/her reach would be doing just that.

And many good writers are. I can be confident that John Allen, Dennis Coday and Joshua McElwee are doing top-notch reporting from Rome. Other Catholic journalists, including John Thavis and Father James Martin, are also getting plenty of national play with their commentary, as are a number of Catholic activists.

What could I add to the nearly instantaneous and massive quantity of content coming from newspapers, television, radio, blogs, tweets? (Note to my editors: If I think of something, I?ll be sure to blog about it!)

Truth is, while I recognize the importance of a new pope, my enthusiasm for the ?story of the year? is a bit tempered. I remember my disappointment last time when Cardinal Ratzinger was elected on the fourth ballot. And this time around, the few papabile who give me hope for the future of our church have very low odds of actually being chosen.

While the head of the church can and will make decisions that may affect me on a very personal level (witness, the Mass changes, which still drive me crazy), in the end this decision is only as important as we make it. Part of my spiritual journey has involved getting to a place where I don?t let what the pope does or doesn?t do bother me that much. If the old boys? club that is the College of the Cardinals is going to exclude people like me (ie., women), then I?m not going to pay them much mind either.

So I don?t need to know where Ratzinger bought his shoes or what the cardinals eat before they enter the Sistine Chapel?anymore than I need to know the details of any celebrity?s life. I don?t need to revisit all the issues facing Catholics today, from women?s roles in the church to the sex abuse scandal, though I know these are important topics and am grateful that their supporters are getting the chance to tell their stories.

Like so many everyday Catholics, I need to fix dinner for my kids and catch up on some work. Sure, I?ll be

praying that those making the decision listen to the Holy Spirit. But this time I?m OK with following this news from the sidelines.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/02/2015 - 11:21*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/not-covering-conclave