

Cardinals elect Pope Francis, Argentinean Jesuit Jorge Mario Bergoglio

Joshua J. McElwee | Mar. 13, 2013

Pope Francis

Vatican City

Jorge Mario Bergoglio, an Argentinean Jesuit who is the first in his order and the first from Latin America to hold the see of Peter, has been elected the 266th bishop of Rome and leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics.

Appearing on a balcony of St. Peter's Basilica about an hour and 10 minutes after white smoke from a chimney above the Sistine Chapel first signaled his election Wednesday, Bergoglio was introduced by his birth name with the traditional proclamation of the Latin phrase "*Habemus papam*" ("We have a pope").

Then came pronouncement of the choice of his papal name: Francis.

He is the first pontiff to choose the name. Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, said the new pope chose the name in honor of the 12th-century St. Francis of Assisi, known for his simple lifestyle and dedication to the works of mercy.

Bergoglio's election came on the fifth ballot and second day of voting among the 115 cardinals who participated in the secret election. It was a surprisingly quick conclusion to a conclave that seemed to have no clear front-runner among the cardinals.

At 76, Bergoglio is only two years younger than Joseph Ratzinger was when he was elected Pope Benedict XVI in April 2005.

Bergoglio's, now Pope Francis', first word to a cheering crowd in an overflowing St. Peter's Square was "Buonasera," Italian for "Good evening."

"You know the task of the conclave was to give Rome a bishop," the new pope continued, speaking Italian with a slight Spanish accent. "My brothers went to the end of the earth to get him."

Francis then asked the crowd to join him in praying "for our emeritus bishop, Benedict XVI." Following the "Our Father," the "Ave Maria" and the "Glory Be" prayers in Italian, the Argentinean continued: "Now let's start working together, walking together in the church of Rome, which is the first among churches. This is part of the governance of love, of trust."

"Let us pray for each other, let us pray for the entire world because there is great brotherhood in the world," Francis continued. "I hope the path that I am about to take now and my father will help me to be fruitful for the evangelization of this beautiful city."

Before giving the traditional *Urbi et Orbi* blessing to those in the crowd, overwhelmingly Italian, the Argentinean asked "for a favor."

"Before the bishop blesses his people, he asks that you pray to the Lord to bless me, the prayer of the people for the blessing of their bishop," he said, bowing his head and clasping his hands.

A 15-second silence lasted in the crowded, reported to contain 100,000 people.

"Brothers and sisters, thanks for the welcome," Francis said before heading back into the basilica. "Tomorrow I will pray that Mary safeguard Rome. Good night. Good rest."

Widely reported to be the second-place candidate after Ratzinger in the conclave held after the death of Pope John Paul II in 2005, Bergoglio is known for a simple lifestyle and for dedication to social justice.

After becoming archbishop of Buenos Aires in 1998, he moved out of the traditional archbishop's palace, preferring instead to live in an apartment. He also cooks his own meals and does not use the services of a chauffeur, instead riding the bus.

Francis is the first non-European pope in more 1,200 years. The last was the Syrian Gregory III, who died in 741.

Worldwide reaction to the election of Bergoglio, also the first of a pontiff from the southern hemisphere, was immediate.

"Perhaps for the first time in modern times, the global outlook of the church is reflected at the highest level of the church," Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, a fellow Jesuit who leads the order's Eastern African province, told *NCR* in an email.

"I want to believe that considering the humble and down-to-earth background of Pope Francis ... the church is in capable hands -- not just the pope's alone, but the hands of the entire people of God across the globe," said Orobator, who is also a moral theologian at Nairobi's Hekima College.

"Francis's first gesture of asking the people to pray to God for him may signal the beginning of a more authentic and humble recognition of the priesthood of the people of God and the responsibility we all bear for the church of God in the world."

People had gathered in St. Peter's Square in sometimes-pouring rain throughout the evening Wednesday, keeping their eyes trained on two screens showing images of the Sistine Chapel's chimney, looking for signs of smoke.

There was a collective gasp and pause in the crowd as smoke of indistinguishable color billowed from the chimney -- black would mean no consensus on the pope; white, his election. Cheers began to rise across the square and rose higher and louder as the bell of St. Peter's began to peal, confirming the election of a new pope.

Within moments, people were running through puddles and rain, trying to make it to the square for announcement of the pontiff. Traffic along the streets surrounding the square came to a standstill.

Vatican gendarmes stationed around the square's iconic colonnades directed people to specific gates to control the flow of the crowd. Inside an hour, people had filled about a half-block of the street leading into the square.

As the waiting for the new pope continued, screams of "*Viva il papa*," Italian for "Long live the pope," echoed

every few minutes. Many waved national flags -- among them South Korea, Brazil, the United States, the Philippines, the Holy See, Argentina, Chile and Spain -- under their umbrellas.

Cheers rose across the crowd again as lights went on at the window of a balcony at St. Peter's, where the pope was expected. When the doors opened and French Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran appeared to make the official proclamation, many screamed in excitement.

The Vatican said in a brief press briefing Wednesday night that shortly after his election, the new pope had phoned retired Pope Benedict.

Pope Francis is expected to have Mass with the cardinals who elected him at 5 p.m. Thursday Rome time, then Mass with all of the cardinals at 11 a.m. Friday.

On Saturday, he will host an audience for the more than 6,000 journalists who came from around the world to cover the conclave. On Sunday, he is scheduled to lead the traditional Angelus prayer.

He will inaugurate his papal ministry on Tuesday, the Feast of St. Joseph, with a special Mass at 9:30 a.m. in St. Peter's Square. Hundreds of thousands, including dignitaries and political leaders from around the world, are expected to attend.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1936, Bergoglio is the son of an Italian immigrant and railway worker from the region around Turin. He has four brothers and sisters.

The future pope had originally planned to be a chemist, but in 1958 he instead entered the Society of Jesus and began to study for the priesthood. He spent much of his early career teaching literature, psychology and philosophy.

From 1973 to 1979, he served as the Jesuit provincial in Argentina, then in 1980 became the rector of the seminary from which he had graduated.

During what is commonly known as Argentina's "Dirty War," when a military junta ruled the country from 1976 to 1983, Bergoglio mandated that Jesuits continue to staff parishes and act as chaplains rather than moving into "base communities" and political activism.

Some have claimed the future pope did not do enough then to protect church workers against the dictatorship.

Bergoglio was named auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires in 1992, then succeeded the ailing Cardinal Antonio Quarracino in 1998. Pope John Paul II made Bergoglio a cardinal in 2001, assigning him the Roman church named after the legendary Jesuit St. Robert Bellarmine.

Bergoglio is a supporter of the social justice ethos of Latin American Catholicism, including a robust defense of the poor.

"We live in the most unequal part of the world, which has grown the most yet reduced misery the least," Bergoglio said during a gathering of Latin American bishops in 2007. "The unjust distribution of goods persists, creating a situation of social sin that cries out to Heaven and limits the possibilities of a fuller life for so many of our brothers."

Yet he is also known as a staunch defender of the church's traditional sexual teachings, opposing abortion, same-sex marriage and contraception.

In 2010, he said gay adoption is a form of discrimination against children, earning a public rebuke from

Argentina's president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

Bergoglio was also highly praised for his response to the 1994 bombing in Buenos Aires of a seven-story building housing the Argentine Jewish Mutual Association and the Delegation of the Argentine Jewish Association. In 2005, Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz of the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn., praised Bergoglio's leadership.

On the first night of his pontificate, Pope Francis is expected to join the cardinal electors at a special Vatican hotel where they have been staying during the conclave.

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