

Statement by Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone on the Election of Pope Francis
March 13, 2013

Together with millions of other people throughout the world, I watched with great anticipation for the appearance of our new Holy Father on the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica. The Holy Spirit, the God of surprises, led the cardinals to choose as the Bishop of Rome a reserved, humble pastor, the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Like so many others, I was immediately captivated by his gentle demeanor and prayerful spirit as he looked out on the vast throng gathered in St. Peter's Square. Here, I sensed, was a true son of St. Ignatius, formed to be "a contemplative in action" in the school of the Spiritual Exercises.

The choice of a Pope from Latin America, the first pontiff to come from the New World, is both historic in itself and an expression of the vitality of the Church there. His decision to take the name "Francis" stirs the imagination. Francis of Assisi, the "Poverello", is one of the most beloved of saints, whose veneration extends well beyond the Catholic Church. As Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Pope Francis was renowned for his authentic simplicity of life and eagerness to not only serve the poor, but befriend them. Situated as we are in the City of St. Francis, we feel a special connection to our new Holy Father, and we ask the intercession of our patron, St. Francis, for him and for us, that we may follow his example of humility, simplicity, and love for all creation.

We give thanks to God for the gift of this latest Successor to St. Peter, chosen to care for Christ's flock and to teach us by word and example. As Bishop of Rome, the city sanctified by the blood of the great Apostles Peter and Paul, it will be his task to lead the College of Bishops and maintain the bonds of unity and charity within the Church, and to work beyond the communion of the Church for justice and peace in our troubled world. I ask the prayers of all, Catholics and others, for our new Pope, Francis.