

March 19, 2013
Vol. 3, Issue 4

In this issue:

The Beginning of a Humble
Migrant's Papacy

(GSN) Pope Benedict XVI: A Good
Steward of the Good News

The Cry of the Poor



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The Beginning of a Humble Migrant's Papacy

By John Klink

I have had the privilege to come on pilgrimage to Rome this week for the Conclave.

Wednesday night, as I came out of a memorable meeting with Thai Cardinal Michai, with whom I worked many years ago during the Cambodian Refugee Crisis, I found people coming in droves to Piazza San Pietro. They were coming in keen expectation to check out the color of the smoke that was due to be emitted from the Sistine Chapel stove pipe at any minute. All of the previous puffs had been black.

It was raining lightly, and the piazza seemed a sea of umbrellas.

I shared a general feeling that the time was propitious for the conclusion of the Conclave.

After about 15 minutes of watching the distant stove pipe, there was a wave of breaking voices announcing that their individual hopes had been realized: "E' bianco!!" ("It's white!").

For the first time in 600 years we now had two popes—one emeritus, and one about whom we were to immediately learn both his name and his spiritual profile, and then to "meet him" as he assumed his unique place on the world stage.

The nationalities represented amongst the Saint Peter's pilgrims gave witness that the apostles had faithfully fulfilled the Master's mandate to leave their home and bring the Good News to all nations.

Under the umbrellas one could hear the question being posed from one friend to another: "So, who do you think it is? Scola, Ouellet, Scherer?"—referring to the front runner cardinals predicted with presumed infallibility by the secular press.

By this time, the piazza was becoming more

and more populated, and the rain was letting up enough to allow the umbrellas to begin to fold.

Despite the enormous expanse of the piazza, standing space was becoming tight as people edged further and further toward the balcony above St Peter's central entry doors to catch a closer glimpse of Benedict's and Peter's successor.

The now-compressed crowd waited patiently for about 50 minutes as an Italian military band marched forward and positioned itself in a space reserved between the crowd and the basilica.

Attention focused on huge TV screens which ranged between shots of the white-smoked chimney, individuals in the crowd, and landscape views of the basilica, or close-ups of the huge clock. Cheers emerged when the lights of the vast rooms behind and on either side of the balcony became lit.

Close-ups then began of the balcony itself and its closed glass doors from which Cardinal Jean Louis Tauran, the French ProtoDeacon in charge of the Vatican's relations with Muslims, was expected to emerge. (The press had even speculated that had he not emerged, and had another cardinal been poised to make the announcement in his place, that fact would have itself told the story that C. Tauran was the Conclave's choice as he was also deemed "papabile").

Finally, further cheers when the drapes were drawn on the balcony doors and Cardinal Tauran did emerge.

As his light voice began to utter the age old formula: "Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum; habemus Papam: Eminentissimum ac Reverendissimum Dominum, Dominum Georgium Marium Sanctae Romanae Ecclesiae Cardinalem Bergoglio qui sibi nomen imposuit Franciscum", a stunned hush fell upon the crowd as everyone looked at one another with the question, "Chi?," "Who?"



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A friend who was standing beside me, who is a long-time Vatican hand, said succinctly, "That is literally stunning."

The silence continued as the camera focused on the seemingly similarly stunned Cardinal Archbishop of Buenos Aires who came hesitatingly to the balcony like a martyr to the lions — willing, but visibly hesitant. He looked in long silence upon the sea of humanity, who in turn gazed in expectation from the dark plaza below and the Via della Conciliazione beyond.

The new pope waited patiently for the Italian military band to perform its requisite pieces.

As the crowd anticipated the reassuring signs of jubilant papal warmth and waves, the cameras focused on a man dressed in simple white without the usual scarlet cape and heavy papal stole. His arms hung almost manikin like as he gazed through large glasses without a smile. My friend and I both remarked, "I hope he smiles. This could be a PR disaster."

We also recalled the strange similarity to the Italian movie we had recently seen, "Habemus Papam" which portrayed a newly elected and terrified pope as even afraid to come to the balcony.

This was our first inkling that this is going to be a very new papal chapter.

At this point, another mutual friend next to us broke the stunned silence in the piazza by beginning a loud chant that the crowd picked up: "FRAN/CHESS/KO", "FRAN/CHESS/KO". A second "Francesco" had just been immediately adopted by his new Italian flock and was about to be adopted by his global one.

Later, at dinner that night with some traditionalist Catholic friends, we were left scrambling as to what had just happened (Francis spoke rather than chanted the blessing, he wore the simplest of robes, he evinced absolutely no triumphal demeanor). Reportedly, the more liberal members of the

new pope's Jesuit Order are similarly befuddled. (Francis evidently never allowed the Jesuits in Argentina to get involved in the politics of Liberation Theology). Francis is the first Jesuit pope, and the first Pope Francis: "And he could have been Pope Ignatius."

In Catholic terms the Cardinals' pick is a total paradox: a Jesuit "Franciscan"—or possibly a Franciscan Jesuit: a man of orthodox theology who has eschewed many of the trappings of his office in order to witness to his religious vows, especially of poverty.

Francis made a particular point on the balcony to bow and literally listen to his people as the first act of being their pastor. And he asked them to bless him and pray for him before he would bless them. In that instant he incarnated his sometime surprising, but quintessential papal title: "The Servant of the Servants of God."

The imagery of his personal introduction on the balcony for his Urbi et Orbi blessing evoked an unprecedented statement of humility of "it's not about him." He is first and foremost the new migrant bishop of the Rome Diocese (not the Pope who happens to be the Bishop of Rome), of unscripted gestures (he barely lifted his arms, let alone waved), of gratitude to his remarkable predecessor, calling his local and global flock to simple prayer ("the basics": the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory Be), and perhaps most striking for those in attendance — he instantly brought the enormous crowd to embrace silence in order to let the Holy Spirit speak to them and then to pray together in a silent bond (with hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in attendance one could only and distinctly hear the fountains when he called the people to pray).

The quiet pope (he spoke extemporaneously for a maximum of 5 minutes) chose not to wear many of the traditional and colorful trappings of his office and did not wear his stole except when actually giving his blessing. And he then immediately handed it back.

Papa Francesco is a fascinating mix and leaves no one — even the Vatican curia — feeling that they can predict where he will lead. Tellingly?,



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he has not yet reinstated the heads of the Vatican dicasteries who serve at his pleasure.

The day following his election, the Supreme Pontiff insisted on stopping by to personally pay his pre-Conclave hotel bill from his own wallet and left the Vatican unannounced in a VW to pray to Our Lady at St. Mary Major and kneel at the tomb of Pope Pius V.

His iron pectoral cross and chain are a simple but conspicuous statement, as is his directive to his fellow Argentine bishops, priests, and nuns to not come to Rome for the papal installation but to stay at home and direct whatever money they would have spent, on the poor.

As Peggy Noonan has reported, a friend recounted that several years ago he had approached the then-Archbishop to ask if he could suggest any place to live for his fellow congregation members who were moving to

Buenos Aires to devote themselves to the poor. The Archbishop had an immediate suggestion. Would they consider moving into his predecessors' palace that he had himself left to live in a small apartment? "It has many rooms."

Papa Francesco is giving quiet, personal witness from the bulliest pulpit of all. He is leading the way for his followers to leave many comfort zones in order to be led unabashedly by the Holy Spirit, and in so doing he is dutifully assuming his role of global shepherd for his people.

Papa Bergoglio, the migrant bishop from South America, will give an audience to the World Press tomorrow morning.

Those journalists, like all those I have spoken with since the white smoke came from the Sistine Chapel, will witness that the first pages of this newest chapter of Church history are filled with promise.

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