



Mass for the Election of the New Pope
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Bishop of Sioux Falls
March 11, 2013
Cathedral of Saint Joseph

We gather this day to pray for the Election of the Pope and for the Cardinals who gather in conclave beginning tomorrow who will so elect under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the secular world there is much interest focusing on speculation about factions and personalities as if the conclave were a political convention. There are betting odds about who will be selected and what name he will choose.

In a way that is an acknowledgement that the Church and its earthly head the Pope continue to be of interest and have a significant role to play. It can also be a detriment resulting in the diminishment of the Office to that of a job and the view that the Pope is simply another celebrity.

We as people of faith know that the office and the person are much more than that. Canon law puts it that "by virtue of his office, (the Pope) possesses supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power in the Church." In other words he is the supreme pastor, priest and teacher of the Church and the source and guarantor of the Church's unity. He is the supreme shepherd of the Church whose real head is Christ.

The burden on the Cardinals is an awesome one. We must pray for them as enveloped in the sacred art of the Sistine Chapel with the Last Judgment hovering over them, they in silence discern what the Holy Spirit calls them to do. As they come forward to cast their votes the ritual requires them to announce publicly: "I call as my witness Christ the Lord who will be my judge that my vote is given to the one who before God I think should be elected." How solemn, how sacred, how lonely, how privileged a responsibility is theirs.

God willing in the near future we will joyfully celebrate Mass for the new Pope. But today let us take a few minutes to pray that through the earthen vessels who are the Cardinals one will be raised up who as the Collect so beautifully phrased it, "will please God by his holiness and to us show watchful care."

Let us now take a few minutes in silence for this intention.