

Area Reacts to Pope Francis I

(KAIR) -- People cheered and bells rang around the world as a new pope was selected Wednesday.

The former Jorge Mario Bergoglio, a 76-year-old Argentinian, chose the name Pope Francis I.

The new pope is first pontiff to adopt the name of Francis, the rich young man from Assisi who renounced wealth and founded the Franciscan order of friars in 1290.

He is the first Jesuit pope, and first from the Americas, reportedly got the second-most votes after Joseph Ratzinger, the last pope, in the 2005 papal election.

According to his official biographer, Sergio Rubin, in a lifetime of teaching and leading priests in Latin America, which has the largest share of the world's Catholics, Pope Francis has shown a keen political sensibility as well as a self-effacing humility.

Locally, at Benedictine College, a group of students, faculty and staff held a similar moment of joy as they watched the announcement at the O'Malley-McAllester Auditorium.

According to Father Brendan Rolling, director for Mission & Ministry at Benedictine the Abbey bells rang out the news when white smoke was spotted at the Vatican.

The campus also planned a Pope Party, conducted Masses of Thanksgiving at all Mass venues on campus, raised the Vatican flag on campus buildings.

Plus, they plan to send a huge card signed by the student body to the new Pope.

Meanwhile, students at Atchison Catholic Elementary School celebrated the election of a new pope Wednesday afternoon with an impromptu parade.

Students cheered and waved streamers as they marched from the school at 2nd and Division to the Benedictine College Campus and back.

Superintendent Diane Liebsch says students understood the historic nature of what was taking place.

Liebsch adds that teachers will continue discussing the pope's election with students during classes Thursday.

The pope's installation mass at the Vatican - the first in his new role - will likely be a morning-long affair of pomp and prayer. VIPs will line the pews, with as many as some 200 foreign delegations expected.

The ceremony is traditionally held on a Sunday, when the city's streets can be closed to traffic near the Vatican.

Photo Credit: The Associated Press

Many Signals Communications