



## RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES OFFER PRAYERS, SUPPORT FOR POPE FRANCIS

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Area religious communities, including his fellow Jesuits, expressed their prayers and support for Pope Francis upon hearing the news of his election March 13.

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The news was especially meaningful for Jesuit Father Michael J. Graham, president of Xavier University, who said, “When I heard the news that a Jesuit brother of mine would be the next pope, I was completely stunned. As were many people, it seems, from whom I began to hear very quickly!”

“But that surprise yielded quickly to a profound sense of gratitude,” Father Graham added. “That the Holy Spirit should choose a man from the tradition of Ignatius Loyola to lead the church, must be a deep consolation for anyone and everyone associated with any Jesuit ministry throughout the world.”

“That Pope Francis is a Latin American Jesuit, I have no doubt that he will bring a particular care and concern for the poor and marginalized to his pontificate, for that sensibility has been an overwhelming gift of Latin American Jesuits worldwide,” he said.

Franciscan Father Jeff Scheeler, provincial minister for the friars of the Cincinnati-based St. John the Baptist Province, offered his community’s “heartfelt congratulations,” to the new pontiff.

“It’s exciting that he comes from a part of the world where the church is growing” Father Scheeler said. “We’re thrilled with his choice of a name. It honors our founder. It evokes the mission of Francis to rebuild the church, to begin again. It evokes the spirit of simplicity. As a religious, as a Jesuit, he can bring his lived experience and appreciation to his new role. Initial reports are that he has great concern for the poor. That will no doubt inspire him to share a message of a simple life and care for the poor. We pledge to him our prayerful support as we move into the future.”

The Franciscan Sisters of the Poor expressed their joy in the following statement:

“The Franciscan Sisters of the Poor in the United States share the excitement of Catholics around the world at the historic election of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio of Argentina, and are delighted that he chose the name Francis to honor St. Francis of Assisi. The choice of this name says a lot about our new pope. Francis of Assisi was a simple man of the people, so is Pope Francis. This man, who lives in a small apartment, takes a bus to work, and cooks his own food; this archbishop and cardinal is now our pope. Known for his conservatism, for his compassion and for his commitment to reform, Pope Francis’ offers hope to us all. In his first public statement, he asked people to pray for him — and he may be assured that we join the



*Sisters of the Precious Blood at the Congregation’s administrative offices in Dayton watch news coverage of the announcement of a new pope on March 13. From left, Sisters Mary Yarger, Linda Pleiman, Nancy McMullen and Nancy Kinross. (Courtesy Photo)*

millions of others who are praying for him, and for our church!”

The Sisters of the Precious Blood in Dayton reacted to the election with words of encouragement for the new pontiff.

“We offer our prayers, support and best wishes to Pope Francis I as he assumes his position as Bishop of Rome and leader of the universal church,” said Sister Joyce Lehman, president of the congregation. “May God grant him the wisdom and courage to follow always the promptings of the Holy Spirit in shepherding the people of God.”

“We join with people throughout the world in hope and prayer for our new pope. May the blessing of the people that Pope Francis invited enrich our common journey of faith,” reads a statement from the Sisters of Mercy of the Americas South Central Community, which includes the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

Because of the Mercy vow of service to the poor sick and ignorant, Sister Mary Rose Bumpus, a member of the congregation’s leadership team, said her community feels a kinship with Pope Francis who is known for his great love for the poor. Her community has a strong emphasis on being in solidarity with the people who are most in need, said Sister Mary Rose, and the Sisters have been moved by the new pontiff’s humility, simplicity and history of advocacy on behalf of the poor.

“When he took the name Francis, there was a palpable sense of wonder and gratitude among our staff and leadership team who were glued to the television,” Sister Mary Rose said. “That he wants to follow in the footsteps of St. Francis gives us such a sense of hope and he is in our prayers.”