

Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina elected 266th pope

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USPA News - Thousands of faithful erupted in cheers Wednesday as white smoke began to rise from the chimney on the roof of the Sistine Chapel in Vatican City, signaling that Roman Catholic cardinals had elected a new pope. He was later introduced as Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina.

The white smoke emerged at approximately 7:06 p.m. local time on Wednesday, followed moments later by the ringing of the giant bells of St Peter's Basilica. The identity of the 266th pontiff was revealed just over an hour later when cardinal proto-deacon Jean-Louis Tauran appeared on the balcony of the Hall of Blessings of the Vatican Basilica. "I announce to you with great joy: Habemus Papam! (We have a Pope)," he told a rain-soaked crowd which chanted "Long live the Pope". He identified the pontiff as 76-year-old cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina, who decided to take the name of Francis, and making him the first native of the Americas to be elected Pope. Francis soon emerged on the balcony to address the crowd and the more than 1.2 billion Catholics around the world. "You know that it was the duty of the Conclave to give Rome a Bishop. It seems that my brother Cardinals have gone to the ends of the earth to get one, but here we are. I thank you for your welcome," he said. "First of all, I would like to offer a prayer for our Bishop Emeritus, Benedict XVI. Let us pray together for him, that the Lord may bless him and that Our Lady may keep him." He continued by calling for a "journey" of fraternity, love, and trust among peoples. "Let us always pray for one another. Let us pray for the whole world, that there may be a great spirit of fraternity," he said. "It is my hope for you that this journey of the Church, which we start today, and in which my Cardinal Vicar, here present, will assist me, will be fruitful for the evangelization of this most beautiful city." He then asked faithful to "pray to the Lord" to bless him before giving his blessing to the whole world, to all men and women of good will. "Thank you for your welcome. Pray for me and until we meet again," he said as he included his brief speech. "We will see each other soon. ... Good night and sleep well." A communique from the Holy See press office said Francis will make a private visit to a Marian site in Rome on Thursday morning before presiding over a Mass with Cardinal electors in the Sistine Chapel at 5 p.m. local time. On Friday morning he will meet with the full College of Cardinals, including those who did not participate in the conclave. During the weekend, the pope is scheduled to speak with journalists in the Paul VI Hall at 11 a.m. local time on Saturday. The first public event is due to take place at noon local time on Sunday when he recites the first Angelus of his papacy from the papal apartments. It will be followed by a Mass to inaugurate the new papacy at St. Peter's Square at 9:30 a.m. local time on Tuesday. Prior to Wednesday's election there had been no clear favorite to take over as the head of the Catholic Church, which has faced a number of scandals in recent years. Pope Benedict XVI surprised the world last month when he said he would resign on February 28, making him the first pontiff to resign the papal office in nearly 600 years. The 85-year-old pope made the shocking announcement during a meeting of cardinals at the Vatican, surprising even his closest aides. "After having repeatedly examined my conscience before God, I have come to the certainty that my strengths, due to an advanced age, are no longer suited to an adequate exercise of the Petrine ministry," he said on February 11. Cardinals elected Benedict XVI as pope in April 2005 following the death of Pope John Paul II, who became one of the most beloved popes in Catholic history. John Paul II remained pope until his death at the age of 84 after a long battle with Parkinson's disease and other ailments. Benedict XVI traveled to his summer residence in the Italian town of Castel Gandolfo on February 28 and will eventually move to a cloistered residence in the Vatican. He is now known as pope emeritus but did not take part in the conclave to elect Francis, though it is unclear if he will participate in Tuesday's inaugural Mass.

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UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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