

Wis. priests expect Pope Francis to focus on poor

By Nathan Vine
For Daily Herald Media

Members of the Franciscan and Jesuit orders in Wisconsin say Pope Francis will approach his new role with humility and a focus on social justice.

While becoming the first pope to take his name from St. Francis of Assisi, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio also became the first pope from Latin America and the first Jesuit pope when he was elected Wednesday.

Pope Francis' Jesuit background, as well as his time as archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, will serve him well, said the Rev. Doug Leonhardt, associate vice president of the office of mission and ministry at Marquette University, a Jesuit school. Leonhardt, 75, is a Jesuit and was ordained in 1969, the same year as Pope Francis.

"You have diocesan priests, who enter seminaries and spend most of their lives working in parishes celebrating Mass, presiding over weddings and other things," Leonhardt said. "Separate from that are priests in religious orders such as the Franciscans and the Jesuits who live together in a community and are not as focused on parish life. The pope has had the benefit in



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serving in both areas, which gives him a broader base of experience."

Leonhardt said Jesuits go through about 10 years of school before becoming ordained as priests, and it takes about 15 years to become a Jesuit. Going forward, Leonhardt said he expects to see the Jesuits focus on education in areas such as papal encyclicals, documents written by the pope to bishops.

Leonhardt said people already have seen a glimpse of the humble manner in which Pope Francis will carry himself, which is in keeping with the Jesuits' vow of poverty.

The day after his election, Pope Francis stopped by the hotel he had been staying in to pick up his luggage and pay the bill himself.

"You can see from that he is a very simple man, and you will see that going forward," Leonhardt said. "He doesn't want to be raised above other people; he wants to be on the

same level."

Like St. Francis, Pope Francis has placed great emphasis on living simply, said the Rev. Dan Crosby, director of St. Anthony's Spiritual Center in Marathon. Crosby has served at the center of the Capuchin Franciscan Friars, one of the main branches of the order, since 1999 and has been part of the Franciscan order for 56 years.

As a bishop in Buenos Aires, the future Pope Francis chose to live in a small apartment, take public transportation and cook his own meals. He also was well known for his work with the poor in the slums of that city.

"He will continue to be concerned about the people on the margins, the people Jesus always loved," said Crosby, 75.

Crosby said one of the main teachings of St. Francis was to serve people as Jesus did, not ruling above but being a brother to them, and he believes the pope's leadership style will, as a result, be focused on solidarity. He also thinks the pope's name choice is significant because St. Francis saw his calling as trying to rebuild the church in a time of turmoil.

"You can see that happening again today with the church, and his mission will be to make it a worthy dwelling place of God," Crosby said.