

Where were you a little after 2:00 pm today?

Me? I was running over to the Cathedral Offices to get Fr. Tom so that we could ring the bells in the tower. Why? Because the Cardinals had elected our new Pope.

The reading for Wednesday Evening Prayer during Lent is the same one we heard three weeks ago. Three weeks ago, we were wondering what it meant to have Pope Benedict resign.

And now, as of this afternoon, *“habemus Papam.”* We have a Pope. St. Paul’s words in the Letter to the Philippians take on a new meaning after three short weeks ... and in light of the events of this afternoon:

*“Work with anxious concern to achieve your salvation.”*

In a sense hearing these words at the beginning of a new pontificate carry an overtone of hope.

Our new Holy Father has taken the name Francis I. The news reporters were quick to bring up Francis of Assisi, whom many have made into a sort of caricature of the real St. Francis. Perhaps you know someone who has a statue of St. Francis in their back yard - surrounded by bunnies, or even integrated into a bird bath.

Yet the real St. Francis took a radical stance against the life of leisure and luxury into which he was born. At one point, stripping naked in order to return to his own father everything that he might have owed him - even including the clothes on his back.

We may have forgotten - or perhaps we never heard - that it was while praying in the church of San Damiano, that Jesus spoke to St. Francis from the cross and told him to *“rebuild my Church.”*

Is this why he chose the name Francis? Did he hear Jesus call him to rebuild the Church? Will he call us to help him rebuild our Church? Are we up to the challenge?

Or perhaps, as a Jesuit, our new Pope has chosen to honor St. Francis Xavier - one of the original seven members of the Society of Jesus, and a companion of St. Ignatius Loyola himself.

St. Francis Xavier's right arm - with which he baptized so many on his missionary journeys - is enshrined as a relic in the main Jesuit church in Rome, *Il Gesù*.

Maybe he chose the name Francis for this reason. In order to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Can we accept the mission to be evangelists of the Good News to all the world?

And finally, the new pope's motto: "*Miserando atque eligendo*" is from an eighth century homily given by Venerable Bede. When Jesus saw Matthew the tax collector, and called out "*Follow me.*" Bede reminds us that Christ saw this tax collector with the eyes of mercy, and chose him.

Is he calling us to always remember that God sees each one of us through His eyes of mercy - and no matter our qualifications or not - we must remember that God chooses each one of us for Himself.

And so, whatever the future holds, may St. Paul's words prepare us to follow Christ through our new Holy Father - Pope Francis I. And so may we remember that:

*"It is God who, in his good will toward you, begets in you any measure of desire or achievement. In everything you do, act without grumbling or arguing; prove yourselves innocent and straightforward, children of God without reproach."*