

Schools create lessons in March for conclave, election

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |



Schools got into the excitement of the conclave and papal election in March.

At St. Edward School in Little Rock, teachers had in-service training to review the wealth of papal election resources available online. Principal Jason Pohlmeier created a bulletin board with 19 “papabili” so the students could get to know the cardinals. He also explained a papal election word of the day over the intercom each day the week before and during the conclave.

The various classes did lessons and projects to understand the process better. The younger students made model chimneys with white and black smoke and pope hand puppets. Each class “adopted” a cardinal elector through www.adoptacardinal.org and prayed for God’s guidance for that cardinal.

The school also held a school conclave in which each student cast a vote for a cardinal each day for a week. The students elected Cardinal Norberto Rivera Carrera of Mexico. (Cardinal Bergoglio received two votes in each ballot.)

Students watched several of the events online live, including Pope Benedict XVI’s departure from the Vatican and the cardinals’ entrance into the Sistine Chapel. Most importantly, all of the students gathered around their Promethean Boards March 13 to watch the white smoke and the introduction of Pope Francis.

At St. John School in Hot Springs, an all-school Mass was held Feb. 28 to mark the last day of Pope Emeritus Benedict’s time as pope, followed by the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Students returned to the church at 12:30 p.m. for adoration and Benediction and remained in church until the bells rang at 1 p.m. for five minutes. Students were given prayer cards for Pope Benedict after he announced his resignation and also prayed for the election of a new

pope.

Pastor Father James West discussed this process with students several times during the days leading up to the election. On March 12 for the beginning of the conclave another all-school Mass was held and Father West led a rosary.

On March 13 once the white smoke was seen, students gathered in the parish hall, along with church staff, to watch a big screen television until the new pope was presented. To celebrate the election of Pope Francis, students enjoyed ice cream and "pope-sicles."