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# Egypt's Coptic Christians select new pope

Tom Gallagher | Nov. 5, 2012 NCR Today

One has to hand it to the Coptic Christians for transparency in the selection of a new pope. The final moment is actually a very public, communal event, as a blindfolded boy -- an act believed to reflect God's will -- picks one of three clear orbs containing the name of the selected pope in a divine-inspired lottery. The U.K.'s Guardian has a video of the event that is worth watching [1].

The Associated Press reports [2]:

Egypt's ancient Coptic Christian church chose a new pope in an elaborate Sunday ceremony meant to invoke the will of God, in which a blindfolded boy drew the name of the next patriarch from a crystal chalice.

Bishop Tawadros, 59, an aide to the acting pope, was selected to become Pope Tawadros II, replacing the charismatic Pope Shenouda III who died earlier this year after 40 years at the helm of the church.

All three senior clerics whose names were in the chalice were considered consensus candidates who stayed out of disputes both within the church and with other groups. Tawadros will assume the papacy as Egypt's Christians, estimated to make up 10 percent of the country's 83 million people, fear for their future amid the rise of Islamists to power in the wake of the 2011 ouster of longtime authoritarian leader Hosni Mubarak.

The death of Pope Shenouda III at age the of 88 this year heightened the sense of insecurity felt by many who had known him as patriarch for all or most of their lives.

At the televised ceremony held in the Coptic Cathedral in Cairo, acting Pope Pachomios laid the three names in clear balls inside a chalice before starting Mass. There was a moment of silence before the drawing by the blindfolded boy, an act believed to reflect God's will in the choice.

"We will pray that God will choose the good shepherd," Pachomios told the packed cathedral as he sealed the chalice with red wax before laying it on the altar during Mass.

The process of electing a new pope began weeks ago, when a committee from the church narrowed the list of potential candidates from 17 down to five monks and bishops. On Monday, about 2,400 clergymen and church notables drew up a short list of three that also included Bishop Raphael, 54, once an aide to the late Pope Shenouda, and Father Raphael Ava Mina, the oldest among them at 70, a monk in a monastery near Alexandria and a student of the pope who preceded Shenouda.

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[1] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/nov/04/egypt-coptic-pope-balancing-act
[2] http://www.npr.org/2012/11/04/164274079/a-new-pope-selected-for-egypts-coptic-christians