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Cardinal views: Mahony says new pope should be 'dynamic'

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NCR Today

Conclave 2013

Retired Los Angeles Cardinal Roger Mahony, one of the 115 prelates of the Catholic church expected to vote to elect the next pope, has said he is hoping for the new pontiff to "help shape a new and dynamic future for the Church in today's world."

"There is concern that the Church is proceeding down two opposite directions," Mahony wrote Tuesday on his blog.

"In many countries of the northern hemisphere, the Church is not fully alive and dynamic, with far fewer Catholics living out their faith. At the same time, the Church in many countries of the southern hemisphere are experiencing great vitality and growth."

"Many are praying that our new Pope will enliven the Church world-wide, bringing us the dynamism of the Church in the Acts of the Apostles," he continues.

Mahony, who retired as Los Angeles' archbishop in 2011, has faced sustained criticism since January, when the Los Angeles archdiocese released some 12,000 church files detailing its handling of sex abuse cases as part of a court order.

Some of the documents detail Mahony and other church officials' shielding of priests accused of sex abuse in the 1980s.

The current archbishop of Los Angeles, Jose Gomez, announced Jan. 31 Mahony would "no longer have

any administrative or public duties" in the Los Angeles archdiocese.

The cardinal has taken to his blog several times in the past week to address the humiliation he has felt following the document release.

Reflecting on the matter Feb. 20, Mahony obliquely referred to his experience as a "painful and public humiliation, which is spiritually a grace-opportunity."

On Tuesday, Mahony said the mood in Rome is "quite different" than when the cardinals elected Pope Benedict XVI in 2005.

"The mood back in April of 2005 was somber and sad," Mahony wrote Tuesday on his blog. "So many people had never really known any other Pope in their lives, and it was like losing a revered Grandfather -- someone whom we had made a part of our own families."

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This time, writes Mahony, the mood includes "great anticipation and expectation everywhere."

115 cardinals are expected to participate in the vote to determine the next pontiff. While all cardinals under the age of 80 -- numbering 117 -- are allowed by church law to take part, two eligible cardinals have announced they are not coming.

One, Indonesian Cardinal Julius Darmaatmadja, has said he cannot participate because of poor health and loss of vision. Another, Scottish Cardinal Keith O'Brien, announced Monday he would not partake following allegations made against him of improper sexual relations with priests.

O'Brien, who the Vatican also announced Monday had resigned his post as archbishop of Saint Andrews and Edinburgh, has denied the allegations through a spokesperson.

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