Cardinals do it too: A, B and C lists

by John L. Allen Jr.

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Conclave 2013

Rome — Cardinals Sean O'Malley of Boston, Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston and Francis George of Chicago met the press for a half-hour at the North American College, home to American seminarians in Rome.

There wasn't much hard news out of the session, though it was interesting to hear each man speak briefly about how he plans to go about preparing for the papal election.

One interesting comment on that score came from George. In effect, he said the cardinals don't go about things all that differently than those of us who get paid to handicap papal candidates for a living.

The three cardinals were asked if they go into the conclave with names of possible candidates in mind.

"Each of us has some kind of list," George said, "often with primary, secondary and tertiary [candidates]."

Translating the semi-Latin terminology of the notoriously cerebral George, what he meant is that cardinals have an "A list," a "B list" and a "C list."

In other words, it's not just pundits and Vatican-watchers who engage in that kind of exercise; the cardinals do it too, at least some of them.

The difference, of course, is that pundits and church-watchers publish their lists, while cardinals cast votes based on theirs.

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