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U.S. priests ask for prayers as cardinals meet

Thomas C. Fox | Mar. 4, 2013 NCR Today

Members of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests are asking for prayers during the process of selecting a new pope. In a statement released March 4, the AUSCP called for prayers and committed its membership ?to work and pray with all members of the faithful for the renewal of our Church which is at the same time, both beautiful and flawed.?

The statement on behalf of the 900-plus members was issued by Father David Cooper, a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee who serves as chairman of the AUSCP board.

?Our beloved Church constantly seeks both continuity and renewal,? Cooper said. ?As the cardinals gather in Rome to elect a new pontiff, we pray with them for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we ask all members of the faithful to join together, ?united in the same mind and the same purpose.??

Cooper noted that Pope Benedict had encouraged a ?new evangelization,? calling for new strategies that are needed to preach Jesus Christ who is the same ?yesterday and today and forever.?

In looking at the needs of the Church today, Cooper found a parallel with the prayer expressed by Pope John XXIII at the beginning of the Second Vatican Council: ?[M]ay you who are present respond to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that the work of all will correspond most exactly to the expectations and needs of the many people of the modern world.?

He called on the members of the AUSCP to ?renew our own commitment to work and pray with all members of the faithful for the renewal of our Church which is at the same time, both beautiful and flawed.

?Come, Holy Spirit!? he concluded.

The text of the statement follows.
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Our beloved Church constantly seeks both continuity and renewal. As the cardinals gather in Rome to elect a new pontiff, we pray with them for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and we ask all members of the faithful to join together, ?united in the same mind and the same purpose.? (I Corinthians 1:10)

It is of no small significance that the election of a new pope is taking place during the Year of Faith announced by Pope Benedict XVI. In his papal letter (Ubicumque et Semper, September 21, 2010), Pope Benedict promoted this time of ?new evangelization.?

The Church has never tired of preaching ?Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the same ?yesterday and today and for ever? (Heb 13:8),? Pope Benedict said. But, ?In the course of history, this mission has taken on new forms and employed new strategies according to different places, situations, and historical periods.?

In the dimming light of scandals and weakening faith, we pray now for new leadership in our Church, who with the guidance of the Holy Spirit will employ new strategies to preach the same Jesus Christ.

We pray for the collected cardinals as Pope John XXIII prayed for the bishops who gathered for the beginning of the Second Vatican Council. ?[M]ay you who are present respond to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that the work of all will correspond most exactly to the expectations and needs of the many people of the modern world.?

Along with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, we pray that God, the ?true shepherd of all the faithful,? will look with kindness on Pope Benedict, ?Grant him strength in frailty, comfort in sorrow, and serenity amid the trials of this world.?

As members of the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests, we renew our own commitment to work and pray with all members of the faithful for the renewal of our Church which is at the same time, both beautiful and flawed.

Come, Holy Spirit!

The AUSCP, with more than 900 members throughout the United States, is identified as ?an association of U.S. Catholic priests, offering mutual support and a collegial voice. We are engaged in contemplation, dialogue, and prophetic action on issues affecting Church and society.?

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