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Bergoglio criticized church leadership before conclave

by Thomas C. Fox

NCR Today

More evidence today the church's cardinals knew what they were going to get when they elected Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio as pope, as a serious reformer. There is a report this morning, through Cuba's Cardinal Jaime Ortega, that Bergoglio offered strong criticism of church leadership and direction before the cardinals elected him the new pontiff.

Bergoglio was reported to have called for the Vatican to emerge from self-absorption and what he called "theological narcissism." He urged the church hierarchy to refocus its energy outside of the institution, on the "peripheries," not only geographical but also existential: sin, suffering, injustice and ignorance. In other words, focus on life in the world among the people, matters causing trouble and pain, while keeping the human family from the healing and liberating work of the church.

Bergoglio's comments were said to have been made to the cardinals as they met in a conclave to choose a new pope.

The account of his remarks was published Tuesday in a Cuban Catholic magazine, "Palabra Nueva."

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