

DIOCESE OF EAST ANGLIA

STATEMENT ON THE ELECTION OF POPE FRANCIS

The Diocese of East is delighted to welcome Pope Francis on his election. As part of the Universal Church we have been waiting prayerfully for this moment since the departure of Pope Benedict on 28th February.

We now have a new Pope, Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, who has taken the name of Francis, a saint noted for his simplicity of life and love of the poor and of the world in which we live. That simplicity of life and solidarity with the poor has already been reflected in the Pope's life. It reflects the Church's commitment to social justice as a central part of her proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. In our country, it is often commented that the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church is her 'best kept secret'. It is certainly part of our witness and life of faith. Let us hope that in the papacy of Francis, that witness may be more clearly seen and recognised.

As the first Pope from South America his election is a powerful witness to the universality of the Catholic Church and above all the universality of God's love and gift of salvation. As successor of St. Peter, the Pope has a particular role: to be a focus of unity for the Catholic Church throughout the world. At the Last Supper, Jesus told Peter that he had prayed for him, that his faith would not fail and that after he had recovered he would strengthen his brethren, the Apostles. (*cf Luke 22: 31-32*) Pope Francis then will exercise a ministry of unity for the Church and together with his brother Bishops he will make present for us the loving care, compassion and guidance of Christ, the Good Shepherd.

In East Anglia, as we continue our wait for a new bishop, it is particularly good news as it moves us one step closer to having news of that appointment.

Pope Francis has asked us to walk with him and with all people of good will as brothers and sisters in the loving service of all humanity. We hope and pray that our fellow Christians, people of other faiths and of no faith will join us on this journey as we seek to serve the people of East Anglia and those in need throughout the world.

The silence in St. Peter's Square as Pope Francis asked us to pray for him was deeply moving. As we prayed for him then, we will continue to do so as we journey together in the service of God's love.

Fr. David Bagstaff,
Diocesan Administrator.

Issued at 8.50pm
Wednesday 13th March, 2013.