

New pope chosen as locals plan for World Youth Day in Rio

Written by Darci Tomky

After a puff of white smoke came from the Sistine Chapel chimney in the Vatican City, it was official. The world had a new pope.

Wednesday, March 13, a gathering of Catholic cardinals chose Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the cardinal from Argentina, to be the new pope. As the 266th pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, he will be called Francis.

The 76-year-old, who was archbishop of Buenos Aires, has made history as the first South American pope, the first non-European pope in more than 1,200 years and the first member of the Jesuit order to lead the church.

Six people from Holyoke are excited to see Pope Francis when they travel to World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil this summer.

This is the 27th World Youth Day, an event begun in 1985 by Pope John Paul II to be hosted in different cities throughout the world. It includes prayer, catechesis and cultural activities, along with an overnight vigil and messages from the pope.

Even after the abrupt resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, the group said, as far as they know, the new pope will still be attending the World Youth Day.

Paul, Laura and Teresa Krogmeier, Diana and Daniela Baeza and Briar Bergner from St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Holyoke will be participating in this year's World Youth Day, which is set for July 23-28.

They will meet up with nearly 100 other people in Denver who are all part of the Neocatechumenal Way.

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As part of their two-week pilgrimage, the group will make stops in Paraguay and Argentina in addition to Brazil. They will visit holy sites, participate in street missions, attend Mass and pray the morning prayer.

A highlight of the World Youth Day experience will be the all-night prayer vigil with the pope in Rio July 27 and Mass again with the pope the following morning.

Local organizer Paul Krogmeier thinks there will be a lot of South Americans at World Youth Day, noting how interesting it will be to meet the pope almost in his home country.

The theme of the event is “Go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19).

Krogmeier said besides the set events in Rio, they don't really know exactly what they will be doing and might not even know until they are on their way to a certain activity. This isn't a vacation, so the group has to be flexible about where they will stay and what they will be doing during the trip.

A small group from Holyoke attended the last World Youth Day with Pope Benedict XVI in August 2011 in Madrid, Spain, again traveling with the Neocatechumenal Way.

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