



Te Huinga o ngā Pīhopa Katorika o Aotearoa

New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference

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Prayer carrying Cardinal Dew towards start of conclave

Cardinal John Dew said he is relying on prayer – his own, and that of others – in helping him prepare for the “immensity” of the task of being one of 133 people about to elect Pope Francis’ successor.

On Wednesday, Cardinal Dew will become the third New Zealander to enter a conclave, following Cardinal Reginald Delargey (two conclaves in 1978) and Cardinal Thomas Williams (2005).

He said on Monday that the daily Masses of mourning, which concluded on Sunday, and the daily meetings of the cardinals have narrowed their focus on the task at hand.

“I think the fact that we are all together, and we’re talking about the one thing – electing a new bishop of Rome, electing a successor of St Peter – has really helped all of us,” Cardinal Dew said.

One of the main aspects of the cardinals’ daily meetings has been sharing their perspective on the needs of the Church and the world, and the qualities a Pope would possess to meet those needs.

“Listening to what everyone is saying and the kind of person they’re looking for, and the needs of the Church, it’s been quite inspiring, really, to hear the passion that people have for spreading the work of the Gospel,” Cardinal Dew said.

The former Archbishop of Wellington has had the chance to address the cardinals on that question, and he spoke about Pope Francis’ “gift to the world” of the Jubilee Year of Hope.

“I think one of the things that a new pope will need to do is to continue to try and give hope to the world,” Cardinal Dew said.

“But as well as being the leader of the Church, he needs to be a world leader who’s prepared to speak out and, in this world of disinformation and misinformation and sometimes lies, someone who stands up for the truth.”

In a society where there is “turmoil and turbulence”, Cardinal Dew said the Church – and the Pope – has a role “to bring peace and harmony and to get the message through that we are all sisters and brothers of one another, no matter what part of the world we might live in”.

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Pope Francis was someone who helped offer hope and joy to the world. Cardinal Dew hopes his successor can do the same.

Finding that successor among a sea of faces and names is causing Cardinal Dew some “apprehension”, he conceded.

“The immensity of the task, the fact that this only happens once every few years, and it has incredible consequences for the Church and for the world, and that I’m part of that, it makes me a bit apprehensive,” he said.

The process being “steeped in prayer” is giving Cardinal Dew a sense of comfort as the preparation for the conclave continues.

“One of the parts of Scripture that I often think about in terms of prayer is responding to the invitation of Jesus in St John’s Gospel to ‘remain in my love,’” he explained.

“We can think about that as just for the time of prayer, but that’s going to be for all this time – being aware we are all surrounded by the love of the Lord.”

Like most of the cardinal-electors, Cardinal Dew will be participating in a conclave for the first time. From among those who have voted in a papal election before, their explanation of how the process is divinely inspired has offered some insight.

“A couple of the cardinals actually said you can go into the conclave and even have some ideas, but it’s only after a vote or two that things start to clarify,” he recalled.

“When Francis was elected, people hadn’t thought of him, but it became very clear that he was the one. They described that as the work of Holy Spirit.

“And the fact that you’re in a place where you have no contact with anybody else – no cell phones, no computers, no iPads – the whole thing becomes a bit like a retreat and a real time of prayer.”

Cardinal Dew expressed his gratitude to the Catholic community in New Zealand for their prayers for him and the other cardinals.

He mentioned in particular the uptake of the Litany of the Saints prayer prepared especially for the Church in New Zealand and for the intention of the conclave.