

At our last ministerial alliance meeting, some of the other pastors in town wanted to know how they should address me if I am elected pope this week. In theory, I'm eligible. The cardinals can elect any Catholic male. They could choose Henry McKenzie or Daniel Praiswater if they wanted. I told the ministers I don't *think* I'm going to be elected this week, and besides I like the job I have. If they cannot address me with the title, "Your holiness," they might have to call me "Your not-so-holiness."

Seriously, I've received notes and phone calls from several ministers expressing their sorrow at the death of Pope John Paul and assuring all of us of their prayers and support as we await the election of his successor.

The conclave opens tomorrow. All cardinals under the age of 80 can vote. Two of the electors are too sick to attend, so the number of those voting will be 115, still the largest conclave in history. It meets in the Sistine Chapel, where Michelangelo painted the book of Genesis on the ceiling and the Last Judgment on the back wall. Each cardinal writes a name on a piece of paper, folds it, and carries it to the altar. He says this oath out loud: "I call as my witness Christ the Lord who will be my judge, that my vote is given to the one who before God I think should be elected." He places his ballot on a plate and tips it into a large chalice. After everyone has voted, the ballots are counted, announced and counted again. If no one receives a 2/3 majority plus one, the cardinals vote again. There will be up to four ballots a day. If no one wins after 2 or 3 days, the cardinals can take a break. If there is no pope after a week or so, they can allow one to be declared by a simple majority. When the new pope is elected, white smoke will billow up from the chapel's chimney and bells will ring. He will appear on the balcony of St. Peter's and be introduced by his new name. Throughout all this time, the cardinals will pray to the Holy Spirit. We believe the Holy Spirit will give us another good pope.

I expect we will hear a lot about the Holy Spirit this week. We believe the Holy Spirit can make the will of God known to us. Our task is to be open to that Spirit and to do God's will.

Last night we celebrated confirmation with a number of our youth, and at the Easter Vigil this year we celebrated confirmation with others who were baptized that night. In the sacrament of confirmation, we believe that Christians receive the gift of the Holy Spirit to help them bear witness to Christ throughout their lives.

In today's reading from Acts of the Apostles, Peter promises those to be baptized that they will receive "the gift of the Holy Spirit." This gift grants them forgiveness and the desire to be rescued from corruption.

We trust that the Holy Spirit will help our cardinals this week, and we trust that the Spirit will help each of us in whatever challenges we face this week and every week. St. Luke calls this Spirit God's gift. The Holy Spirit

**dwells with all those who have been confirmed in a special way to help us choose what we know is right.**