February 27, 2013

To the Priests, Deacons, Religious and Lay Faithful of the Diocese of Juneau:

For the first time in over 500 years, a papacy has ended not through the death of the Pope but with his resignation. During these days of transition we have the opportunity to lift our hearts and minds in prayer, as individuals and as a local Church at each stage of this transition: as the Holy Father lays down the heavy burden of his office; as the Cardinals gather in Rome in preparation for the Papal Conclave; during the days of the conclave and upon the election of a new Pope.

Therefore, I am asking the following:

1. If possible, a Mass for Pope Benedict: for his health and well-being and in thanksgiving for his service to the Church using Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions: 2. For the Pope, which can be found in the Roman Missal. (Homily notes and intercessions for the Universal Prayer (Prayer of the Faithful) can be found in the “Liturgical Notes and Resource Materials for Use on the Resignation of the Pope” on the USCCB website.
2. That on Thursday, February 28th, photographs of Pope Benedict should be taken down in acknowledgement of his retirement and the beginning of the period of ‘sede vacante’.
3. That in the days preceding the beginning of the Papal Conclave, the Novena to the Holy Spirit be prayed either immediately prior to or immediately after every Mass beginning on March 1st [or beginning nine days prior to the scheduled beginning of the conclave.
4. That in the days before the conclave until its conclusion, it is suggested that the concluding prayer for the public or private celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours be taken from the Mass for the Election of a Pope (on those days when there is no obligatory memorial, feast or solemnity.)
5. That during each day of conclave itself, it is recommended that parishes celebrate a Holy Hour with Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and Benediction for the Cardinal Electors and the selection of the new Pope.

6. That in the days preceding the conclave and during the conclave itself, please offer your private prayers, good works and almsgiving, pray the rosary for the election of our new Supreme Pontiff.

7. That on the news of the election of a new Pope, every parish will offer a special Mass for the newly elected Pope, preferably at the time nearest the announcement when the Mass is usually scheduled. If applicable, the bells of the parish should be rung for a significant duration five minutes before the start of Mass.

8. A special Mass for the newly elected Pope will also be celebrated by the Bishop and as many priests, deacons and faithful who are available at the Cathedral.

9. That at the election of a new Pope, the flag of the Holy See should be prominently displayed in the narthex of parishes throughout the diocese, with flowers.

It is my hope that gathering together as a diocese to pray for Pope Benedict and for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the selection of our new Holy Father will unite us even more closely with the Successor of Peter and with the Universal Church.

Yours in Christ,
Bishop Edward J. Burns