

Reflections

by the
Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy



Election of John Paul II

“Habemus Papam.” Once again the words were spoken from the balcony of the papal apartments in St. Peter’s Square. A new Holy Father has been elected by the College of Cardinals. His name would be Pope John Paul II. A world rejoices and once again the Church would continue its mission to the modern world under the leadership of a man who brings a rich perspective to the Papacy.

We have all read the story of the new Pope. But among the most striking features of our Holy Father is the heritage of faith he represents. Poland is a nation which has had to struggle to maintain its faith identity. Polish immigrants to the United States have offered a tremendous witness to the value of faith in their daily life. We are indeed blessed to have such a man from such a strong faith community to be our new spiritual leader. May God grant him many years of life and health. Please remember the Holy Father in your prayers each day.

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Many thoughts and reflections are somewhat scattered this week because of the many activities in which I have been engaged and the happenings that have occurred in the Church. Over the past weekend, I had the opportunity to visit various parts of our diocese of Eastern Montana which proved to be a tremendous experience for myself.

Friday, October 13th began the homecoming celebration for the students of Billings Central Catholic High School. I had the privilege of celebrating Mass with the student body and I remained afterwards for the rally in preparation for the game against Butte Central the following day. Being among Catholic young people is exhilarating because you know you are in the midst of the future leadership of the Church. The high school years are so important for our youth. Catholic education, whether in parochial schools or in CCD programs, involves not only the sharing of knowledge, but the formation and development of values and attitudes. This is a responsibility not only of a school or CCD program, but it depends so much on the witness of family and community to our faith as Roman Catholics.

On Saturday evening, I joined with the people of St. Joseph’s Church in Hardin to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the priesthood ordination of Fr. Fabian. Such celebrations are always enjoyable because they bring a community together. However, as we celebrated the gift of Fr. Fabian’s service to the Christian community, I prayed that young people today might consider a vocation to the priesthood and the religious life.

On Sunday morning, I joined the community of St. Labre at Ashland for the Eucharistic Liturgy. I became very much aware of the tremendous contribution of the Capuchin community to our diocese. We are blessed to have this group of religious men ministering to our people. On Sunday afternoon, I joined Fr. Walter Balduck and the people of St. Margret Mary’s Parish in Colstrip for the dedication of their new Church. Once again, this proved to be a faith-filled experience through the presence and involvement of many people.

The trip back to Great Falls on Sunday evening was long and tiring, but I felt enriched and refreshed as a result of the people I had met. I became very much aware that the Church is very much alive in Eastern Montana. It is a privilege to be the bishop of such a faith community.