

Four generations hail election of Pope Francis at Aurora service



By Brock Weir

After white smoke billowed from the chimney of the Sistine Chapel on Wednesday afternoon and Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio was named Pope Francis, few people in Aurora were more excited than Pedro Zucca.

Mr. Zucca is the long-time caretaker of Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church on Yonge Street. Like the now-former Cardinal Bergoglio, Mr. Zucca is also of largely Italian descent but hailing from Buenos Aires. He came to Canada just over 40 years ago, eventually settling with his family — including his wife Grace, their three children, and his Greek-born mother Olympia — in Aurora in 1992.

He was on the job at the church with Father Tim Hanley when the pyrotechnic signal was beamed around the world.

"When I got a hold of Father Tim to look at the television, we heard his name and the first thing out of my mouth was, 'Argentina!'" says Mr. Zucca. "We were very happy."

Father Tim shared in the excitement.



Four generations of the Zucca family, who came to Canada from Buenos Aires nearly 40 years ago, before settling in Aurora in 1992, celebrated the appointment of Argentinian Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio as Pope Francis at Our Lady of Grace on Sunday.

"We watched when the white smoke went up," he recalls. "We closed the office and then Pedro came up stairs. When we heard, 'Bergoglio', I looked him and I said, 'an Argentinian Pope?'"

"We thought there as a move to a Pope from the Americas for the first time, but the frontrunner was from Brazil. The last time, this man did well, they say, but now there are three firsts for him: he's the first American pope, he's the first Jesuit and the first to be

named Francis.

‘[It is important to note he is a Jesuit] because they have a history of intellectual fervor. Their formation is very long and very structured, not only to be intellectually sound, but also to be reaching out to the poor and the marginalized. He lives that out, and you will see that in his pontificate.’

All the signs are already there, added Father Tim. He cited recent examples in the hours and days since his name was read off the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica on that damp Vatican evening.

‘He has not been wearing all of the regalia, which is typical [of the office],’ says Father Tim. ‘He has kept his old hat, his mitre, in a simplistic way, and you can see it in pictures of him from 10 years go. He has kept unadorned. The other day, rather than take the limousine, he went back to the hotel with the cardinals in the bus wearing the white. They had never heard of this before, so this is kind of unity with his brothers and sisters in Christ.’

A similar type of union took place at Our Lady of Grace on Sunday morning as four generations of the Zucca family were invited to take pride of place in the front pew of the congregation in honour of their shared roots with their new faith leader. Joining Pedro were his mother, wife Grace, their daughter Aurora, son Luco, and granddaughters Sonia and Brooklyn.

‘I moved to Canada when I was only 23 years old and started a life and a family here,’ says Mr. Zucca. ‘I consider Canada my home just as I consider Buenos Aires as my home. Pope Francis is of Argentinian and Italian descent just like I am and it brings me and my family a great sense of pride and confidence that he was chosen.’

‘The parish and parish members have been like a family to me as well. We believe that Pope Francis' humble attitude and upbringing will reflect Argentina in a positive way and will make all Canadian-Argentineans and Canadian Catholics proud like the Zucca family feels today.’

In his Sunday Sermon, Father Tim spoke of the lessons learned from Jesus and Lazarus and the role of God in one's daily life. The power is within everyone, he said, and while God may not intervene to protect people from all suffering and tragedy, God ‘stands in deep solidarity with us in every motion, in every moment of our lives.’

‘How beautifully we have seen this message lived out by our new Holy Father,’ Father Tim told a packed congregation. ‘His simplicity, his story, his history of identifying with the suffering of the poor and afflicted in his home diocese of Buenos Aires, Argentina. His visit yesterday, a surprise visit to a hospital in Rome where he visited an elderly cardinal who had a heart attack during Conclave time, and his invitations to the cardinals at his first mass with them, inviting him to walk, to build, and to witness with Christ.’