

This past Monday, the whole world was shocked. Many of us woke up to see stories on Facebook or on the news and couldn't believe what we saw. I remember thinking "Wait, he can do that?" when I first saw the story about the Holy Father. Many questions fill the air, questions about what happens on February 28th, what happens on March 1st, and general confusion about the situation. Catholics around the world are excited to see what is decided in the new papal conclave, but also sad to see the 264th successor of St. Peter leave his post. It is a strange sadness. We expect to grieve the death of a pope while greeted with the excitement of a successor. Yet this grief is different, it comes with a strange feeling of admiration, very different from in the past.

The one word that comes to mind when I think of Pope Benedict XVI and his renouncement of the chair as Bishop of Rome is humility. Humility on this scale is something we rarely see in this world, especially living in Washington, DC, a town filled with politicians striving for higher political office and more power.

In the New York Daily News this past week, Cardinal Dolan wrote about the feelings Catholics of the world are expressing in the wake of this announcement. He describes "Admiration. We've come to love him, and his teaching, writing, and his gentle, shy presence. And now our admiration soars because of his humility: to know our limits, to admit our frailty, to recognize when it's time to go, not to cling to honor, office, and prominence—once again, he's a splendid professor, this time teaching us humility."

In a recent article in the National Review, our own President Garvey said that "our successes are really gifts of God, to be used for his greater glory and for the benefit of his creation. These gifts do not belong to us. They are, as the Gospel's parable of the talents teaches, entrusted to us for a time so we can do our very best to use them well." This describes perfectly what happened this past Monday, as well as what happens in all of us. We are all given talents for the purpose of using them as God wishes: to help each other. Our big task in life is in discovering these talents and discerning a way in which to use them well. But these gifts do not last forever. Life, the greatest gift, clearly has its end. Strength lessens, wit dulls, and our ability to use our gifts declines in age. While we have these gifts, it is our duty to use them well, and when they have expired, it is our responsibility to turn their use over to the next generation, as Benedict XVI has demonstrated.

This use and passing on of talents happens in an endless cycle, showing the unity of the world and of the generations. Unity, the lesson of the second degree of our order, is vital for our counsel, our country, our Church, and our world. Without unity, we bicker and argue about trivial things and we are unable to use our talents to help each other. Again in reference to the city in which we live, this is clearly a big issue in the split congress, where it seems as if the two sides can agree on so little that they are unable to pass legislation, preventing them from using their talents to benefit the people.

Cardinal Dolan also said in his article that "For the Catholic family, the most important chair is that of the Bishop of Rome, the successor of the fisherman, the leader of the 12 apostles, St. Peter. It is the earthly sign of unity, authority, wisdom for our spiritual family, the Church. We call him our 'Holy Father.'" With these words, unity could not be more perfectly related to humility. The only way to continue the unity in the cycle of the human race, our country, and our Church is to use together the

gifts God has given us and to have the humility to recognize when they are no longer effective and to pass the reigns onto the next generation. This is the profound example performed by Pope Benedict XVI and this is an example we all must strive to follow.