***By Jan Schultz, The Imperial Republican News Editor***

We were in an airport in San Francisco last Wednesday when a text arrived that read, “Habemus Papam!”

The message that means “We have a pope!” was being read around the world on phones and computers that Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio from Argentina had been elected the 266th pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

FOCUS, an acronym for Fellowship of Catholic University Students, promoted “The Pope Alarm.” The subscription service sent out text and email messages to thousands of users the moment white smoke emerged from the Sistine Chapel’s chimney last Wednesday.

The instant messaging of the news made the naming of Pope Francis a worldwide news event, a huge change from previous elections.

But, in just a week’s time, it’s easy to see that change and not following the norm will likely mark Pope Francis’ service.

He is the first non-European Cardinal to be named pope in 1,300 years, is the first from the Americas and also the first Jesuit priest to be chosen.

The pope is known for his frugal nature, and love of the poor. While a Cardinal in Argentina, he didn’t live in the ornate residence reserved for him, but rather gave it to missionaries in the country while he resided in a much smaller and frugal home. He often took public transportation instead of a limousine, and even after his election as pope, rode the bus to the hotel he had been staying in, picked up his luggage and paid his bill.

His choice of the name Francis in honor of St. Francis of Assissi is also very telling.

St. Francis came from a wealthy family but shunned those comforts to work with the poor. His love of animals and the environment are well-known, but the Prayer of St. Francis reflects his life the best:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen

Those words, and Pope Francis’ example, are ones we all should take to heart.