

Argentina was challenger to Benedict: Unclear why Bergoglio's candidacy faltered

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Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina received enough votes during the conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI to have blocked the pontiff's election, according to a detailed report published in Italy.

The report, published September 23 in the quarterly review *Limes*, draws from the diary of an anonymous cardinal who voted in the April conclave. In leaking his diary, the author appears to have compromised the oath of secrecy that all cardinals took upon entering the conclave.

According to the account, support for the Argentine peaked at the third ballot with 40 votes—the exact number of votes required to block then-cardinal Joseph Ratzinger's candidacy. On the same ballot, Ratzinger received 72 votes—five votes shy of the quorum. A total of 115 cardinals voted in the conclave.

Bergoglio, who emerged as a dark horse candidate weeks before the conclave, built momentum throughout the balloting, receiving ten votes to Ratzinger's 47 on the opening ballot, which was held on the evening of April 18. The following day he received 35 votes on the second ballot while Ratzinger garnered 65, the report said.

The diary is unclear as to why Bergoglio's candidacy faltered in the fourth and final vote that elected Ratzinger. The report suggests that Bergoglio appeared reticent to ultimately challenge Ratzinger for the papacy.

Describing Bergoglio casting his vote beneath Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* fresco, the anonymous cardinal wrote: "He had his face fixed on the image of Christ judging the souls at the end of time. A suffering face that implored: God, don't do this to me."

In the run-up to the conclave, hopes were high that the first pope from Latin America would be elected— a recognition of the high proportion of Catholics living in that region. After the voting, Belgian cardinal Godfried Danneels told reporters that “this conclave tells us that the church is not ready for a Latin American pope.”

Some published reports following Benedict’s election said that Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, the former archbishop of Milan, was Ratzinger’s main rival. But according to the anonymous diary, Martini received nine votes in the opening ballot and then dropped out of contention. *-Religion News Service*