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RELIGION

Pope brings message of power and the poor to U.S.

Francis pleads for social justice

Gazette wires

WASHINGTON — Pope Francis arrived Tuesday for his first-ever visit to the United States, bringing to Washington a message that its power and wealth should be used to serve humanity.

Bestowing on Francis an honor that few foreign dignitaries receive, both President Barack Obama and Vice President Joe Biden greeted the 78-year-old Argentine on the tarmac after the Alitalia papal plane landed at Joint Base Andrews near the capital.

The six-day visit to America gives Francis an opportunity to deliver his message of compassion and simplicity to the world's richest and most powerful country.

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Pope Francis is greeted by President Barack Obama, first lady Michelle Obama and others as he arrives Tuesday in the United States.

UI students will go to see pontiff

By Vanessa Miller, The Gazette

IOWA CITY — Buses do not make for ideal sleeping conditions. Neither do the cold, hard floors of church multipurpose rooms.

But University of Iowa senior Caitlyn Hagarty isn't necessarily worried about being well-rested when she and 49 other UI students — along with five staff members from the Newman Catholic Student Center at UI — head to Philadelphia to see Pope Francis.

"I don't know if I'll even be able to sleep because of how excited I'll be," Hagarty, 21, said. "It's a little stressful right now. But it will all be worth it."

The group is planning to leave Iowa City on a

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AGRICULTURE

Harvest expected to push record levels



Stephen Mally photos/The Gazette

Soybeans are piled in a grain truck Tuesday during harvesting on an 80-acre field near Quasqueton. Some farmers say a "perfect summer" may lead to a record-breaking harvest.

USDA pegs second-best year for corn, best for soybeans

By Orlan Love, The Gazette

QUASQUETON — Combines are rolling as Iowa farmers begin harvesting excellent corn and soybean crops expected to challenge if not exceed yield records.

Tracy Franck, who started combining corn just west of this Buchanan County town Monday, thinks he will harvest his best crop ever.

So does Washington County farmer Rob Brenneman, who went "hammer down" Monday after opening up a field of corn Thursday.

"Last year's crop was really, really good. Throw in one more 'really' for this year's crop," Brenneman said.

Both Franck and Brenneman, who farm 100 miles apart, said their crops benefitted from a perfect summer.

"It was a little wet, but not too wet, and it was cool during pollination," Brenneman said.

Franck said his crops always got rain well before they needed it but never too much at once.

Franck said he has a sandy, creek-bottom field that grew its first excellent corn crop in memory.

"Every year until this year we've gotten a dry spell that hurts the yield in that field," he said.

Though farmers in some parts of the state may harvest their best crops ever this fall, Iowa State University

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Austen Franck of Franck Farms, who farms with his father, Tracy, unloads a John Deere combine Tuesday.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Owners in NewBo, Czech Village urge new tax district

Extra money would beautify, market the area

By Rick Smith, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — Not every property owner would choose to tax himself or herself more.

But a majority of property owners in New Bohemia and across the Cedar River in Czech Village are asking the City Council to let them create their own Self-Supporting Municipal Improvement District, a move that would let them increase their own property taxes to generate money for use in the new taxing district.

Under the proposal, the SSMID could raise property taxes there by up to \$3 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation, which for now would generate about \$56,000 extra a year to help beautify and market the district, said Jennifer Pruden, executive director of the Czech Village/New Bohemia Main Street District.

The city has two other SSMIDs — the downtown district, which taxes itself an additional \$2.75 per \$1,000 of taxable value, and the MedQ district, which has an added levy of \$3.75 per \$1,000 of taxable valuation.

"We are pretty modest," Pruden said, comparing the property value of Czech Village and New Bohemia to downtown and MedQ.

"But we are growing," she said, noting that the property value there doubled in the last year as construction has come on line and new businesses have moved in.

Under the proposal, the new SSMID tax in Czech Village and New Bohemia would be put in place for seven years beginning July 1, 2016. Pruden said the hope is that the extra revenue will allow for some "visible" changes so property owners would have reason to renew it after the seven years.

State law requires at least 25 percent of the property owners who represent at least 25 percent of the property value in the district support a petition to the city to create or expand an SSMID. According to Pruden and city officials, owners of 60 of the 104 taxable property parcels (57 percent) who represent 62 percent of the assessed property valuation have signed the

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Taxing district proposed

A majority of property owners in New Bohemia and Czech Village want the Cedar Rapids City Council to let them create their own improvement district, a move that would let them increase their own property taxes to generate money for beautifying and marketing the area, shown below.



Source: City of Cedar Rapids

Gazette map