

By Herb Benham May 11, 2011 [Link](#)

Getting a call from Congress was surprise enough, but when Monsignor Craig Harrison was asked if he would like to give the invocation at the opening of today's session at the U.S. Capitol Building, surprise became delight.

The answer was, gulp, yes and then an extra-wide smile from someone with a pretty big grin to begin with.

Although unexpected, the invitation wasn't a complete wild card.

"I went to Washington to see my doctor, Luis Cousin, receive his degree in business," Harrison said. "I've never been to Washington and I'd planned to tour the Capitol and visit the White House."

Thanks be to Kevin McCarthy, Bakersfield congressman and majority whip, for the invitation.

"One friend emailed me and suggested I also do a private exorcism for the members of Congress," Harrison quipped.

The St. Francis of Assisi pastor was instructed to prepare a prayer that was inclusive, taking into consideration the many political as well as religious persuasions. The invocation is not to exceed 150 words.

"I was actually really impressed they still prayed," Harrison said. "They've taken prayer away from everywhere else."

Harrison Googled congressional invocations and found that past participants included cardinals as well as famous rabbis and the like.

"They've got this little guy from Bakersfield coming in," he said. "I'm really excited."

It's a day of firsts. First time in Washington, first time at the Capitol and first congressional invocation.

For Harrison, a good trip to Washington that has turned memorable.