

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY HOLY FATHER



On March 13, you will celebrate your first anniversary as the leader of the Catholic Church. On the plus side, you have confounded the usual critics of the Church. On the negative side, some of your new fans are distorting your words, making it appear that you agree with their ideological agenda.

When you were first nominated as *Time's* "Person of the Year," it was due to your alleged "rejection of church dogma." Your interview with an Italian atheist led him to conclude that you had "abolished sin." Both attributions are absurd, but they reveal the politics that are in play.

You are constantly being quoted as saying about gays, "Who am I to judge?" What you actually said is much different: "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?"

Your comments on poverty and inequality have never been more urgent: more Americans are on food stamps than ever before and inequality is growing. To help the needy, you say, our efforts "must be person to person, in the flesh." Regrettably, current policies are actually punishing the poor.

Your call for Catholics to defend religious liberty is being put to the test by an administration that seeks to crush the Little Sisters of the Poor, forcing them to pay for abortion-inducing drugs. To say they do not qualify for a religious exemption because they serve non-Catholics is perverse: we should celebrate their inclusive approach, not condemn them for it.

We are delighted that you are winning new converts. Hopefully, they will take a serious second look at the Church's teachings, and join with us in the defense of its indispensable moral voice.

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