

COVERAGE OF THE POPE VARIES WIDELY

During Pope Benedict XVI's recent trip to Germany, we took a look at how two different newspapers covered the story.

Perhaps the two most premier newspapers in the U.S. and Germany are the *New York Times* and *Der Spiegel*, respectively. During the first day of the pope's trip, the *Times*' story focused on the pope's protesters, mentioning such issues as celibacy, sexual abuse, gay rights, divorce, and the role of women. In the 1144-word story, there was one sentence on the message the pope hoped to deliver. By contrast, *Der Spiegel*'s headline read, "Financial Crisis, Religion and a Bit of Protest." Most of the story was on the pope's message.

On the second day of his trip, the *Times*' first three paragraphs were mostly devoted to the protesters, and five of the first six paragraphs reflected negatively on the Church. Of the 20 paragraphs in the news story, four mentioned the pope's message. *Der Spiegel* had two news stories that day, and the way they began is striking. One said of the pope, "His bluntness has surprised many—and could transform the visit into a rousing success." The other said, "The pope's highly anticipated speech in Germany's parliament Thursday was met with a standing ovation by politicians...." The standing ovation was not mentioned by the *Times*, but twice it said "dozens" of members of Parliament boycotted the speech.

None of this is by chance. The *Times* entertains the most radical views on abortion, feminism and gay rights of any major newspaper in the nation. Moreover, its secularist orientation is pronounced.

Der Spiegel did not give the pope a pass (nor should it), but it nonetheless treated him fairly. The *New York Times*, by

contrast, focused more on the pope's critics, as well as those Church teachings its critics loathe. Are they blind to their bias?