

HOW'S THE POPE DOING?

Bill Donohue was asked by Catholic Digest how Pope Francis was doing. Here are his thoughts:

Not in my lifetime have I seen such an outburst of enthusiasm for a newly minted pontiff. And not just from Catholics: Pope Francis has won the plaudits of everyone, from people of all faiths to die-hard secularists.

His secret is his ability to resonate with the common man. We can identify with him. More than that, we can imagine wrapping our arms around him. These personal characteristics count mightily. Just ask Mitt Romney.

Of course, a pope will ultimately be judged by the decisions he makes. On this score, it is too soon to know. But the early returns are encouraging. Every bureaucracy needs to be shaken up, and the Curia is no exception. Organizations become stale at best, and corrupt at worst, when the comfort level reaches a tipping point.

Unlike his predecessors, Pope Francis is not an intellectual. But he is a bright man who knows how to shape public opinion, and how to inspire confidence. Interestingly, though, his populism has made elite opinion wary of him.

At the Catholic League, we tracked how 15 of the most influential newspapers reacted to the first six months of the tenures of Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. *There were 14 editorials on Benedict and 11 on Francis; most of the those on the former were negative, and most on the latter were positive.* So far, the *New York Times* has said nothing about our new pope. That will change.

Liberal Catholics tend to be happier with Pope Francis than conservative Catholics. That will also change. The Holy Father is just as traditional on moral issues as his predecessors,

even if he emphasizes them less. Which explains why liberals such as those at the New York Times are reluctant to speak; they are wisely bracing for disappointment.