

# PASSING THE PAPAL BATON

Bill Donohue

The death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday caught many as a surprise, though not as a shock. He definitely rebounded from the time he was hospitalized, but he never regained his normal stature.

His funeral on April 26 will draw media coverage from all over the world. After the funeral, the voting cardinals will meet to discuss his successor; the voting will begin in two weeks.

Pope Francis appointed approximately 80 percent of the cardinals who will make that choice. This suggests that someone closer to his vision of the Church will be chosen. On the other hand, he has chosen men from the hinterland, from far away places where a penchant for orthodoxy, not change, is commonplace. This suggests that the new pope may be more of a traditionalist.

It does seem likely that whoever is chosen will have to bring about more clarity than we have been accustomed to under Pope Francis. Quite frankly, the Holy Father often made pronouncements that fostered confusion. The time has come to promote a more coherent vision; this will require a gentle push of the pendulum back to the middle.

If the cardinals decide to choose someone who is a traditionalist, they can do no better than to look to Africa. It is home to the most brilliant orthodox clergy in the world. If the cardinals want to choose someone more like Francis, they will look to Europe.

It appeared that Pope Francis would have liked to have made more changes, especially with regard to the Church's teachings on sexuality. He made that apparent by the appointments he made of cardinals to senior positions. But he also knew his

authority was limited by Scripture and tradition.

Those cardinals who share Pope Francis' vision of the Church will find it easier to organize, and that is because most of them know each other. On the other hand, those who prefer the traditionalist vision of the Church favored by Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II are at a decided disadvantage, and that is because so many of them are from the peripheries; they really don't know each other.

There will be time, however, for everyone to meet and discuss their concerns and preferences. The voting cardinals will travel to Rome today and tomorrow, and they have the rest of the week—especially next week—to familiarize themselves with each other.

In many ways, the passing of the papal baton will bring about a showdown between those who identify with Pope Francis, as many in Europe do, and those who want a return to a more coherent vision for the Church, as exemplified by the African clergy. In short, will it be the cardinals in the developed world who will prevail, or will it be those in the developing countries who will prove triumphant?

Of course, there are traditionalists in Europe, and there are progressives in Africa, but the generalization holds true. One thing is certain: wherever progressivism reigns, the churches are increasingly empty; where traditionalism is the norm, the churches are mostly thriving. That alone should count a great deal. Orthodoxy is a winner; heterodoxy is a loser.

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# MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE SHOULD BE CENSURED

*This letter explains why we want her censured. Contact Tom Rust, Staff Director House Ethics Committee: [tom.rust@mail.house.gov](mailto:tom.rust@mail.house.gov)*

April 21, 2025

Rep. Michael Guest  
Chairman House Ethics Committee  
1015 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Rep. Mark DeSaulnier  
Ranking Member  
House Ethics Committee  
1015 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Guest and Rep. DeSaulnier:

I am neither a Republican nor a Democrat; I am independent. I am writing to you in my capacity as president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. I have one request: Do what you can to have Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene censured.

Today, on the day that Pope Francis died, Greene wrote on X, "Today there were major shifts in global leadership. Evil is being defeated by the hand of God." This was posted just hours after the pope died.

As Newsweek journalist Gabe Whisnant noted, the two major world leadership changes that were announced today were the death of Pope Francis and the resignation of Klaus Schwab as the head of the World Economic Forum. It is obvious that

Greene's remark about God defeating "evil" was aimed at the Holy Father.

How can we be sure? In 2022, I asked the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Ethics Committee to sanction Greene for saying that "Satan's controlling the church." In short, she has a history of slandering Catholics.

If Greene, who is an ex-Catholic, wants to make reasoned criticisms of Pope Francis, she has every right to do so. But no sitting member of Congress has the right to denigrate the leader of a world religion.

To allow her to continue to smear Catholicism reflects badly on the Congress. Therefore, I am asking that Republicans and Democrats come together to censure Marjorie Taylor Greene for her bigoted remarks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.  
President

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**How Pope Francis' history of  
criticizing Trump and  
embracing LGBTQ rights  
rankled conservative**

# Catholics

*Bill in the News (New York Post): Bill Donohue, president of the Manhattan-based Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, told The Post that Francis's papacy will be eyed as a "net minus" because of his uneven approach to US leaders.*

*"I mean, Trump hadn't been in office a couple of weeks, and the Pope is lecturing him about immigration, and he never lectured Biden about transgenderism, or about abortion, or about school choice, about a whole range of things, bioethics and the like," Donohue said. [READ MORE HERE](#)*

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## **Faith leaders reflect on Pope Francis' death, papacy and lasting legacy: 'Made his mark'**

*Bill in the News (Fox News): Bill Donohue, president of the Catholic League, shared with Fox News Digital, "Catholics around the globe are mourning the death of Pope Francis. He touched millions of the faithful, including non-Catholics and non-believers. When Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio assumed the role of Pope Francis, his down-to-earth style captured the plaudits of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. It was his unscripted, and often spontaneous, manner of speaking that made him so authentic and appealing." [READ MORE HERE](#)*

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# POPE FRANCIS, R.I.P.

Bill Donohue

Catholics around the globe are mourning the death of Pope Francis. He touched millions of the faithful, including non-Catholics and non-believers.

When Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio assumed the role of Pope Francis, his down-to-earth style captured the plaudits of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. It was his unscripted, and often spontaneous, manner of speaking that made him so authentic and appealing.

It also got him into trouble, especially when speaking to reporters aboard the papal plane following a trip overseas. On many occasions, following a chat with journalists, the Vatican press corps had to clarify what he meant. But no one criticized him for not speaking from the heart.

Unfortunately, the end of his pontificate was troubling. His approval of a Vatican document that allows priests to bless same-sex couples was met with widespread criticism. Indeed, it was so divisive that it seriously undid much of the goodwill he previously earned.

For the most part, the media treated Francis with kindness, though they did not always accurately report what he said. For example, his much publicized remark, "Who am I to judge?", was misquoted by the media. What he actually said was, "Who am I to judge him?" That is not a small difference. He made his comment in response to a question about a particular priest who had been accused of a sexual impropriety; it was not an endorsement of homosexuality.

It spoke well for Pope Francis that he rejected the practice of publishing the names of accused priests, something that is unheard of in every other institution. Regrettably, his inability to see through the deceitful character of his friend and fellow Jesuit, Bishop Gustavo Zanchetta—he was sentenced to prison by an Argentine court for sexually abusing seminarians—revealed a serious blind spot, one that earlier emerged in his dealings with priestly sexual abuse in Chile. Zanchetta is still a bishop.

More recently, Pope Francis' passivity in dealing with accused serial predator Fr. Marko Rupnik, another friend and fellow Jesuit—he was charged with grave, and indeed sacrilegious, sexual offenses—was another serious error in judgment. Rupnik was finally dismissed from the Society of Jesus in June 2023. After he was excommunicated, he was reinstated! Inexplicably, the pope allowed him to remain a priest in good standing. In fact, he kept a picture of him in his office.

Worse, Pope Francis chose as one of his most senior advisors, Luxembourg Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, a man whose passion for gay rights led him to say that the Church's opposition to gay sex is outdated. The pope knew this yet appointed him the "relator general" of the Church's "Synod on Synodality." The Synod, itself, proved to be a source of great consternation among many bishops.

The pope's strong defense of the rights of the unborn, and his condemnation of gender ideology, sat well with conservative Catholics. But they were not happy when he refused to honor questions regarding his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*; prominent prelates sought clarification on some doctrinal issues. The Holy Father was clearly more critical of conservative bishops than he was their liberal counterparts.

Even more significant, his attack on traditionalists, especially those who favor the Latin Mass, were frequent and lacking in nuance. Yet at the same time, Francis welcomed

known Catholic dissidents, men and women who were previously condemned by officials in Rome and the United States for sabotaging the Church. His embrace of Sister Jeannine Gramick was the most conspicuous example of this phenomenon.

Pope Francis often spoke about the need to decentralize the Church, yet he did more to centralize the power of the papacy than any of his predecessors in modern times.

He took away the right of bishops to approve new religious communities in their dioceses and changed canon law so he could fire bishops. His decision to essentially take control of the Pontifical Academy of Life, and the former John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, angered many in the U.S. He also took control of the Sovereign Order of Malta, ordering a new constitution and new senior officers.

On foreign affairs, Francis took a soft and conciliatory approach to the Chinese Communist regime, which sought to crush the Catholic Church. The arrest of Cardinal Zen, and the silence with which the Vatican greeted the news, did not sit well with many Catholics.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was condemned by the Vatican, though the Holy Father's statement blaming NATO, and not Putin, was seen as an example of his alleged anti-Western, and anti-American, bias.

In November 2024, the pope stunned Catholics and Jews alike when he called for an international probe of Israel's decision to defend itself from Hamas terrorists; he inquired whether this constituted genocide.

In what proved to be a real eye opener, the pope admitted that as a young man the person who did more to shape his thinking about politics was a female communist atheist, Esther Ballestrino. She introduced him to prominent communist publications.

Pope Francis made his mark on the Church, much as John Paul II and Benedict XVI did. It remains to be seen whether his successor will hew more closely to his stance than that of his predecessors. May he rest in peace.

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## EASTER BRINGS SIGNS OF HOPE

[Bill Donohue](#)

Mention the word Easter and what comes to mind is redemption. Ultimately, it's all about salvation. After the darkness of Good Friday comes the light of Easter. It's also a time of hope, and this year the hope is that the early signs of a religious renaissance in the West come to fruition.

*New York Times* Catholic columnist Ross Douthat is right to observe that it is too early to say we are witnessing a religious revival, but, he says, no one can dispute that there is a growing interest in religion. This includes some notables who are not content with what secularism has wrought.

Until recently, the biggest religion story in the United States was the increase in the "nones," those who answer "none" when asked what religion they belong to. But survey data now indicate that this phenomenon has hit a plateau.

The religiously unaffiliated are comprised of atheists (5 percent), agnostics (6 percent) and "nothing in particular" (19 percent). Seven-in-ten of the latter category—which is roughly two-thirds of the religiously unaffiliated—say they believe in God. This suggests that their status may only be temporary.

In a recent Barna survey, 66 percent of adults say they have

made a personal commitment to Jesus. This struck me as odd given that a recent Pew survey found that 62 percent of Americans are Christian. But then I read that Barna researchers reported that three-in-ten of those who don't identify as Christian have made a personal commitment to Jesus. So religious matters are rather fluid these days. Another sign of hope.

It's not just in the United States where religious stirrings are apparent.

In France, 2025 has seen a record 10,384 adult baptisms; this is an increase of 45 percent over last year. Indeed, adult baptisms have more than doubled since 2015. Importantly, this surge is being led by young Catholics. Another sign of hope is that young Catholics constitute the largest segment of converts.

In the United Kingdom, one study found that church attendance has increased by 55 percent since 2018. It is being led by Catholics, especially young Catholics. Among churchgoers aged 18 to 34, Catholics outnumber Anglicans by more than two to one. This is the first time since Henry VIII initiated the Protestant Reformation that Catholics outnumber Anglicans.

What's going on?

Some say it has to do with social media. They say it is easy to access information about Catholicism in the comfort of their own home, and it is also easy for young people to express themselves. Even if there is some truth to this, it doesn't explain the cultural dynamics that are bringing more young people to religion.

Justin Brierly is an English podcaster who has covered this subject. He believes that our post-Christian society has delivered much "confusion," including a "mental health crisis in the young."

An English Catholic priest, Fr. Daniel of the York Oratory, agrees. “There is a sense of moral chaos and lack of meaning in today’s society. If people can find something that makes sense, provides meaning, and also gives a community, which the Catholic Church does, they are going to be attracted to this, and I think this is particularly true for young men.”

No one can argue that the “confusion” and “moral chaos” that these men describe is not real. When young people are told to follow their feelings, not science [read: the sexes are interchangeable], and they later realize that they have been had, it triggers a reaction that begs for truth and clarity. This is what Catholicism offers—a ready antidote to the meaninglessness and rootlessness of militant secularism.

In short, there is more reason for hope this Easter season than we have witnessed in some time. That’s a net gain for the newcomers and a net gain for society.

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## **COLUMBIA TARGETS CATHOLIC STUDENTS**

*Columbia has a problem with Jewish **and** Catholic students.*

April 16, 2025

Ms. Claire Shipman  
Acting President  
Columbia University  
Office of the President  
202 Low Library, 535 W. 116 St., MC 4309  
New York, New York 10027

Dear Acting President Shipman:

As president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization, I was disturbed to read of an anti-Catholic incident that took place at Columbia. The victim is Daniel Di Martino, Ph.D. candidate in Economics. The victimizer is Columbia University.

Mr. Di Martino was summoned to appear before "investigators" from the Office of Institutional Equity because of his professed belief in Catholic teachings. He was told that by posting on social media comments such as, "God does not teach us that we can change our gender," he was engaging in "conduct that could be considered discriminatory harassment." He was also told that what he did could be interpreted as "creating a hostile environment."

It would be more accurate to say that Columbia is creating a "hostile environment" for Catholic students. Indeed, most practicing Jewish, Muslim and Protestant students would agree with Di Martino's post.

It must also be said that there is a profound difference between conduct, such as taking over a campus building and stopping Jewish students from going to class—this is not protected under the First Amendment—and speech that in no way threatens public order (this is protected by the First Amendment).

Columbia boasts that it promotes "Inclusion & Belonging," saying they "are essential elements of a welcoming campus. At Columbia, all members of the community—students, faculty and staff—are expected to participate in creating a culture of inclusion."

That culture of inclusion was violated when staff members created a "hostile environment" for Daniel Di Martino, and others like him. To be specific, interrogating Catholics for publicly supporting their religion creates a "chilling effect"

on their speech. Therefore, I respectfully ask that this incident be investigated by agents from outside the Columbia community.

I noticed that in the "Inclusion & Belonging" section under "University Life" that it lists support for students who are Arab and Palestinian, Asian and Asian American, Black, Jewish, Latinx/e/a/o, LGBTQIA+, Muslim, Native American and Indigenous, and People with Disabilities. Why is there no support for Catholic students at Columbia? There is obviously a need.

In 2002, Columbia President Lee Bollinger personally apologized to me after a bigoted incident on campus. It involved an obscene anti-Catholic stunt committed by a band announcer at a football game against Fordham. This is more serious—it gets to the issue of thought control. Please take the necessary steps to rectify this problem.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.

President

cc: Laura Kirschstein, Vice Provost for the Office of Institutional Equity

Daniel Di Martino

Erin Mersino, Esq., Thomas More Law Center

Linda McMahon, U.S. Secretary of Education

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# RELIGIOUS LEFT OKAYS ANTI-CHRISTIAN BIAS

[Bill Donohue](#)

The difference between left-wing religious groups and left-wing secularist groups is miniscule. Both are more worried about bias against midgets than Christians, and that is not an exaggeration. In fact, when left-wing religious groups speak about anti-Christian bias, they can't help but write about "so-called 'anti-Christian bias.'"

That's exactly the way the Interfaith Alliance characterizes President Trump's directive to Pam Bondi, who heads the Department of Justice. She is in charge of a task force to root out anti-Christian bias in the federal government; the Catholic League is proud to assist her in that effort.

The Interfaith Alliance is a hodgepodge of left-wing activists, spread across a variety of religions. It needs to be asked: Why would a group of professed religious people be against efforts to combat anti-Christian bias? Indeed, this is the only bias they appear to be okay with. To be exact, they deny it even exists.

Earlier in the year, after Trump made his announcement about establishing a Presidential Commission on Religious Liberty, and the task force on anti-Christian bias, the Interfaith

Alliance issued a statement saying, "There is no evidence of widespread anti-Christian bias in the United States...."

If that were the case, the Catholic League would not exist. We don't create bigotry, we respond to it. But in the minds of those affiliated with the Interfaith Alliance, the very fact we fight anti-Christian speech and behavior means *we are a threat to liberty*. Read what they say.

"While this effort may appear to address certain forms of stigma against Christians, particularly against Catholics, in reality it will weaponize a narrow understanding of religious freedom to legitimize discrimination against marginalized groups like the LGBTQ community, infringe on our reproductive freedom, and hurt our society's most vulnerable."

In other words, those who fight anti-Christian bigotry are actually advancing discrimination against gay and transgender activists. How so? By objecting to "Drag Queen Story Hours" for children? By opposing genital mutilation for minors? Moreover, by opposing those who infringe on the health of unborn babies, how are we the guilty ones?

The guy who runs the Interfaith Alliance, Paul Raushenbush, is a homosexual Baptist minister who insists he is married to a man; he and his partner are raising children (who are obviously not their own). He is so extreme that he says efforts to combat anti-Christian deeds are actually expressions of "Christian nationalism." Got it? Christians who object to intolerance are agents of intolerance.

A statement of the Interfaith Alliance's vision is available on its website. It says it believes in "freedom, not extremism." It lists three examples: LGBTQ freedom, reproductive freedom and countering hate. Regarding the latter, it names "antisemitism and Islamophobia" as a problem. What about anti-Christian bigotry? Nope. But it does mention the scourge of "Christian Nationalism."

The Interfaith Alliance was founded in 1994, and in 1996, when I was in this job for only a few years, the Catholic League was named to its “Enemies List.” I issued a statement at that time, boasting of our inclusion. I also noted that the Interfaith Alliance accepted \$25,000 in start-up funds from the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. Some things never change.

In 2010, the Interfaith Alliance joined with GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) and Call to Action (a defunct group of mostly ex-Catholics) in demanding the media “ignore Bill Donohue.” Looks like they lost.

Ironically, the Interfaith Alliance’s opposition to fighting anti-Christian bigotry validates the very reason why President Trump formalized efforts to combat it. For that they are to be commended—their contribution will not go unnoticed.

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## Why Do Leftists Still Love Masks?

*Bill in the News (American Spectator): Today, four percent of Americans still wear masks when going to stores and other businesses. Who are they? A recent Pew Research survey revealed that they are mostly Democrats. This explains why the majority of Republicans (62 percent) said that during the pandemic, there should have been fewer restrictions, but only a few Democrats (15 percent) agree. The conclusion is inescapable: those on the left like masks. [READ MORE HERE](#)*