

# Papal



Pope John Paul II

May 18, 1920 – April 2, 2005

**Christopher Hitchens** made an accusation on Slate.com that is totally without evidence: “And it has been conclusively established that the Vatican itself—including his holiness—was part of the cover-up and obstruction of justice that allowed the child-rape scandal to continue”

**Jack Miles**, the senior advisor to the president of J. Paul Getty Trust, wrote in an op-ed piece in the *Los Angeles Times*, “it may take a Lucian Ford to capture the spectacle of grotesquerie and human ruin that has lately filled the balcony above St. Peter’s Square. The pope, suffering from advanced Parkinson’s disease, made the choice to die before our eyes.”

In a statement on the death of Pope John Paul II, **Francis DeBernardo**, executive director of **New Ways Ministry**, a gay group, blamed the pope for oppressing homosexuals. Her evidence consisted of nothing but the pope’s restatements of Church teachings on sexuality and attempts to deal with insubordination.

At a break between the two final-four basketball games, **CBS** aired a mini-news broadcast wherein **reporter Dick Roth** asked, “With whom will the College of Cardinals choose to replace this pope who ruled with an iron fist? Will they choose someone like him or someone more moderate?”

**Gay-rights activist and president of Hillarynow.com, Robert Kunst**, posted an article on his website attacking the pope and the Catholic Church. Kunst’s rant included many factual errors including blaming the AIDS crisis on John Paul II. He also

claimed that “the Catholic Church is the biggest spreader of AIDS, since it wasn’t really interested in multiple viruses and mutations, and incubation periods, but only into attacking Gays as it continues to this day.”

**Women-Church Convergence**, a dissident Catholic group, released a statement about the death of the pope that attacked Catholic teachings on sexuality, and on the alleged treatment of women as “second-class citizens.”

**We Are Church**, a pro-abortion group, attacked Catholic teaching in a statement about the death of Pope John Paul II:

*Although he was deeply committed to reform and dialogue in the world at large, he strengthened centralized, authoritarian structures within the Church itself. This fostered a climate of fear and rigidity.*

*Among the human rights still crying out for recognition in the church are: gender equality—including women’s ordination, the right of priests to marry, freedom of conscience and speech, the right to a fair trial, the right to be respected for one’s sexual orientation, and the moral adulthood of the laity in decisions regarding reproduction and the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV-AIDS.*

**Catholics Speak Out**, a dissident Catholic organization, released a statement on the death of the pope castigating him for upholding Church teachings on abortion and birth control. It accused the pope of denying “grown women and men” the right “to control their reproductive lives without interference from the church or the state.”

**Frances Kissling**, the president of **Catholics for a Free Choice**, said the following about the death of Pope John II: “On the temporal level, this papacy was a profound disappointment for those who believe that Christ’s message of liberation, human freedom, and more democracy should apply not just to the world, but to the Church itself.” She accused the

pope of lacking compassion for an almost “endless” list of groups including married priests, gay Catholics, those sexually abused by priests and women seeking ordination.

**Richard Boudreaux**, in a *Los Angeles Times* column, took issue with Pope John Paul II for upholding Church teachings on sexual morality as well as for instructing his flock on the issue of an all-male priesthood. Boudreaux claimed the pope’s “authoritarian model...drove many Catholics from the church and engendered resistance from others.” The writer hypothesized, “Perhaps his most contested pronouncement was that the church has no authority to ordain woman, ‘and all faithful are definitively bound by this judgment.’ Despite this extraordinary attempt to tie the church to his view forever, many Catholics favor opening the priesthood to women.”

**Shelley Emling and Gayle White**, writing in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, painted Pope John Paul II as a despot for upholding Church teaching: “During his first official visit to the United States in 1979, he railed against abortion, premarital sex and overall immorality, lecturing huge crowds like an authoritarian father with misbehaving children.”

In *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, **Michael Farrell**, former editor of the left-wing *National Catholic Reporter*, blamed Pope John Paul II for rifts among Catholics, saying that by maintaining Church teachings on an all-male celibate priesthood and sexual morality, he “created a division between right and left, conservatives and progressives. One half feels very disenfranchised, while another applauds because he’s giving us neat, clean answers.”

In the same article, liberal Catholic author **Eugene Kennedy** is quoted as saying the pope “has tried to restore what is the past of the church; a hierarchical form of government instead of the collegiality called for by the Second Vatican Council.”

**The Rev. Gerald Fogarty**, a University of Virginia historian, was quoted in the *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans) saying that Pope John Paul II “was not one who could understand that opposition did not mean hostility. I don’t think he’s a good listener. I think he has trouble understanding a country like us, even though we’re one of the more vibrant branches of the church in the west.”

*Dallas Morning News* writer **Susan Hogan** insinuated that Pope John Paul II was a hypocrite for upholding Church teaching in the face of fads and personal opinion. She stated, “While championing democracy on the world stage, he was an authoritarian church leader. Shortly after his election, he began cracking down on theologians and clergy who didn’t adhere to his strict interpretation of Catholic doctrine.”

**Fr. Richard McBrien** told *Newsday* that the pope “left the Catholic Church with probably the worst crop of bishops it’s had in centuries. He has followed a rigid pattern of picking people who are ideologically in his line of thought and utterly loyal ... That’s going to be the most serious negative legacy.”

In the same article, **Andrew Padovano**, president of **Corpus** (a group of ex-priests who have left the clergy in order to marry), lamented that the pope maintained orthodoxy in the face of dissent, saying “He had the possibility of leading the church in a way that would have been reconciling.”

**Sister Christine Schenk**, executive director of the dissident Catholic group **FutureChurch**, was recorded in *Newsday* as suggesting that exposure to Nazism and communism shaped Pope John Paul II’s leadership style. Schenk commented, “This pope has never had an experience of a pluralistic governance in his life.” When asked about those who would say the Church isn’t a democracy, she answered “The church isn’t a monarchy either, yet that’s how we’re behaving.”

The dissident homosexual Catholic group **DignityUSA** said, "We are saddened that John Paul II has left this life without having used his personal intellect and authority to learn how God is speaking through GLBT (gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender) people to spread the Gospel."

**Sheila Durkin Dierks**, author of *WomenEucharist*, bragged that groups of women are celebrating the liturgy without an ordained "presider" in their homes, and have been doing so for some time.

**The Freedom From Religion Foundation**, in a news release titled "The Pope Has No Vestments," stated that "if one adds up the good versus the evil committed by the pope, there is no question he has done far more harm than good." The group also said, "The Vatican stranglehold over Catholics greatly increased under John Paul's sway." In a particularly vicious attack, the group stated that "just a few weeks ago, he [the pope] had the temerity to label as 'murderers' those who sought to remove [Terry] Schiavo's feeding tube. The Pope lucked out, and died—before he could become a victim of his own pronunciamento." The final line of the statement read: "The best to be said about Pope John Paul II is that his successor will likely be worse."

**Stephen Pope**, professor of theology at Boston College, portrayed the pope as an autocrat when he told the *Christian Science Monitor* that Pope John Paul II "was not good at listening, especially to views that were not his own."

In an article published on the website Counterpunch, **Jim Connolly** bashed Pope John Paul II, labeling him a reactionary: "Wojtyla sanctified the baroque reproductive/sexual bugaboos that infest the Catholic Church while striving to ideologically lobotomize the Catholic clergy and laity." Connolly then went on to claim that John Paul intervened in the elections in Poland, thus admitting Connolly's preference for Stalinist oppression.

The **satirical website for the fictitious Landover Baptist Church** lampooned the impending death of the pope with the article, "King of Mary Worshipers Thumbs His Nose at God and Refuses to Die!" The article referred to the pope as Satan's surrogate on earth and said that the pope's upcoming death had "True Christian party planners around the globe in a state of panic." Accompanying the piece was a picture of the pope's head superimposed on another body, touching the exposed rear end of someone. It had the caption, "The Pope examines a young Canadian boy who was molested by priests."

On OpinionEditorials.com, **Ariel Natan Pasko** called for the Catholic Church to open up the Vatican vaults and "return all the stolen Jewish property that they have confiscated over the centuries, to honor the memory of those 'good' relations Pope John Paul II fostered." Pasko added, "The last thousand years of the Church is strewn with blood libels, riots, pogroms, expulsions, and the most evil murderous attacks against Jewish communities, many of which were carried out under the behest of local parish priests. Inquisitions, forced conversions, outright murder, these are the memories that the Jewish people carry with them of Christian 'love.' Why compound these sins, by stealing the Jews' heritage as well?"

Outside the **Calvary Evangelical Lutheran** Church in Minneapolis, MN stood a sign that read:

10:15 AM  
ALL WELCOME  
CHRIST IS ALIVE  
THE POPE IS DEAD

After the Catholic League called attention to the sign, it was removed.

On the April 5 edition of "The O'Reilly Factor," **Bill O'Reilly** took *The New York Times* to task for op-ed articles that amounted to a "counter attack against the late pontiff."

He said the *Times* “ran a couple of opinion columns saying that the pope was an autocratic guy who may have hurt his own church.” What bothered the Catholic League was O’Reilly’s hypocrisy: he has said much the same himself. On his radio show on March 5, 2003, O’Reilly said the following: “I have never liked this pope. I have always felt he was an autocrat who had no vision about how people live in the real world.” A year before that he called the pope “an authoritarian guy.”

**Rea Howarth of Catholics Speak Out**, a dissident group, talked about Pope John Paul II in a report by NBC News’ Bob Faw:

**Howarth:** “This Pope didn’t care to learn from the likes of women.”

**Faw (voice over):** “Her left-of-center Catholic group also complains that John Paul, rather than affirming life, actually affirmed death when he refused to permit the use of condoms to fight the spread of AIDS.”

**Howarth:** “That teaching is death dealing.”

The ***Village Voice*** wrote a typically bigoted statement upon the death of the pope: “Sooner or later the world’s 1 billion Catholics will have to make up their minds where they are living: this world or somewhere else.”

On the HBO show “**Real Time with Bill Maher**,” **Maher and Arianna Huffington** launched a verbal assault on Pope John Paul II on the day of his funeral. Maher started the show with several jokes including: “People waited in line for 24 hours to see the pope’s body and when they got to see him they smelled worse than he did.” Another one of Maher’s jokes concluded, “For those who could not make the funeral, the Vatican has asked that in lieu of flowers, just stop touching your d-k.”

During the panel portion of the show Maher said, “American Catholics say we love the pope, he should be a saint but he is kind of full of s— on everything we believe.” He also said

that the whole story of Jesus and the Virgin Mary and the resurrection was “grafted from paganism.” He ended by mocking the death of the pope and the upcoming conclave.

Huffington disrespected the pope by referring to him as “this guy” and blamed him for the sex abuse scandal and AIDS in Africa.

**Colman McCarthy** wrote a piece in Salon.com, “The Bully Pope,” wherein he labeled John Paul II an autocrat and claimed “those who crossed him often suffered greatly for it.” He described the pope “as the secretly elected leader of a male-run, land-rich, undemocratic, hierarchic, dogmatically unyielding organization headquartered in a second-rate European country.” McCarthy also charged that “John Paul would crook you by the neck and dispatch you to a stony field where black-sheep dissidents could do penance.”

**Christopher Hitchens** attacked the Catholic Church and Pope John Paul II for apologizing for the wrongs committed by the Church. He wrote in Slate.com that the popes have been wrong about everything and that believers in the Catholic Church are not rational. He concluded his piece, “For us, this day is only the interment of an elderly and querulous celibate who came too late and stayed too long, and whose primitive ideology did not permit him the true self-criticism that could have saved him, and others less innocent, from so many errors and crimes.”

✘ **Thoraya Obaid, head of the U.N. Population Fund**, admonished the Vatican on its teachings on condoms. Calling for the Catholic Church to endorse condom use, she said, “We are hoping the new pope will take this message further, because it makes no sense sending people to their death.”

An editorial that appeared in *The Capital Times* of Madison, Wisconsin (by **political activist Ed Garvey**) ripped the media for its coverage of the death of Pope John Paul II. “I was



appalled at the spectacle covered 24/7 by CNN, Fox, CNBC and most other news outlets. The elaborate funeral was over the top and for the most part scenes of mourners and views of his body substituted for meaningful commentary about a church in crisis." Later he attacked the church with this statement: "From birth control to abortion, to married men denied access to the priesthood, the Catholic Church demeans women."

In her article "A Cornucopia of Death" **Arianna Huffington** wrote of Pope John Paul II, "you'd think the wall-to-wall coverage would have included some serious discussion of the two tragic failures of his reign: his woeful mishandling of the church's child molestation scandal, and how his archaic position on condoms contributed to the deaths of millions of people, especially in Africa." Addressing the sex-abuse scandal, she wrote, "He even rejected a 'zero tolerance' policy calling for the immediate removal of molester-priests, concerned that it was too harsh. Too harsh?! This is a man who wouldn't allow a priest to become bishop unless he was unequivocally opposed to masturbation, premarital sex and condoms. So, in his perverse pecking order, you had to be dead-set against 'self-love' but when it came to bugging little kids, there was some wiggle room." She also blamed the pope for the rise in AIDS in Africa. "The other stain on the pope's legacy is his tireless opposition to the use of condoms."

In his syndicated "Savage Love" column, **Dan Savage** said he "was pleased to see John Paul's papacy come to an end. He recalled how upset he was when the pope made a visit to the U.S. criticizing our "culture of death." "That's rich," Savage said, "coming from the man who ordered bishops here to oppose civil rights laws that protect gays and lesbians." He added, "I'm Catholic—in a cultural sense, not an eat-the-wafer, say-the-rosary, burn-down-women's health-center sense."

In his *Village Voice* column, **Michael Musto** claimed that Pope John Paul II "fanned the flames of widespread oppression." After criticizing Catholic teaching on human sexuality and

artificial birth control, Musto mused, "Of course maybe someone's death might not seem like the right time to say, 'He furthered sexual guilt, disease spreading, and hate crimes,' but actually, when there's exhaustive, weeks-long coverage of a man's life, what better time could there be? (At least a pundit on an ABC special did note that the pope may have disliked democracy as much as he hated Communism.)"

**Endtime Ministries** runs an internationally syndicated anti-Catholic radio show. **Hosts Irvin Baxter and Eddie Sax** declared the pope to be a "false prophet." They said that when the anti-Christ comes, he will have as his partner the person who is pope at that time. Indeed, they said that the pope will have enough power to appoint the anti-Christ the leader of the world. They allowed that Pope Benedict XVI was probably too old to be the last great "false prophet," although they confessed that if he stays healthy, anything could happen.

In a prepared statement, **Judy Huckaby, a homosexual ex-Catholic and executive director of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG)**, said of Pope Benedict:

*Religious leaders like Ratzinger cannot dictate to us what our family values must be, particularly when their idea of family values excludes all GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) people and loved ones.*

Huckaby continued,

*The Church refuses to recognize the injustices it inflicts on its own families each time leaders like Cardinal Ratzinger vilify GLBT people. We hope that, as PFLAG families reach out to leaders of their faith, members of the clergy will realize the need for responsible religious rhetoric and the strength that comes from embracing all families.*

On the Fox News Channel program "Special Report with Brit Hume," Mort Kondracke said of Pope Benedict XVI:

*I mean, he said in his homily on the death of Pope John Paul that the world faces the menace of a dictatorship of relativism, and what he seems to represent is a dictatorship of certitude. One of his biographers said that he wanted to fight political totalitarianism in the world with ecclesiastical totalitarianism. Now, that's fine for Catholics. You know, he can be the enemy of dissent, and the enemy of reform, and all that stuff. But he is also very political...He sort of implied that Catholics in the United States should vote against politicians who favor abortion...so he is not only, you know, going to govern the Catholic Church with an iron hand. But he is also trying to impose his viewpoint on politics.*

**CBS Evening News' Mark Phillips** introduced his report on the election of Pope Benedict XVI with the question: "He has taken the name of a healer, but where will this archconservative lead the Catholic Church?" Later in the same broadcast, Phillips disparaged the new pope and painted him as a harsh tyrant, saying "In choosing Joseph Ratzinger, the cardinals picked the most polarizing figure in the Catholic Church. No one was more respected as a student of theology, but no one was more feared as a chief enforcer of Vatican orthodoxy...It was Joseph Ratzinger's job as head of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith—the old Office of the Inquisition—that led to him being labeled by some as 'God's rottweiler.'"

**Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force**, said of the election of Pope Benedict XVI: "The cardinals have elected the most outspoken and venomous opponent of equal rights for gay people in the Catholic Church's hierarchy."

*Newsday* columnist **Ellis Henican** wrote about the election of Pope Benedict XVI: "The only person around here yesterday who seemed truly excited about the news was Bill Donohue, head of the ultra-conservative Catholic League. Donohue's group is the

closest thing we have to our own Congregation for the Faith.”

Within days of assuming the papacy, Pope Benedict XVI was blamed for the unrest of those who dispute Church teaching by **Dean Hoge**, a sociology professor at the Catholic University of America. Of the new pope, the South Florida *Sun-Sentinel* reports that Hoge said, “He is a polarizing figure. Conservative Catholics will shout ‘Hallelujah, the Holy Spirit has shown us right.’ Dissident Catholics will wait for the next pope, but they won’t go away. They’ll push harder. This is not good news for the American church. We don’t need more polarization.”

The **editor of *Tikkun* magazine, Rabbi Michael Lerner**, was so upset by the election of Pope Benedict XVI that he said “it was a disaster for the world and for the Jews.” He further stated “This guy is going to continue the Vatican’s authoritarian, hierarchical, anti-gay policies. Many, many of my Catholic friends are in mourning today. And I want to speak out.”

The ***Los Angeles Times*** printed the following in an editorial on the Catholic Church and the election of Pope Benedict XVI: “The church is sadly putting off a change in worldview and retaining Eurocentric focus. By failing to pick a pope from Latin America or elsewhere in the developing world, the church reinforces the impression that it is a colonial enterprise, run in Europe by Europeans who see themselves as uniquely qualified to serve as God’s interlocutor.”

**Jeffery Montgomery, executive director of the Triangle Foundation** (a Michigan group for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender individuals) stated that “Based on his history and his demagoguery it is nearly impossible to imagine that this new Pope will usher in an era of reconciliation and welcome. Ratzinger has been the author and voice of oppression and attacks on GLBT people.”

**Mark Morford**, a columnist for SFGate.com (the website partner of the *San Francisco Chronicle*) described Pope Benedict XVI as: "Very old school and drab, a real lover of repressive, bitter, orthodox doctrine. No fun at parties. Catholics in chains." Morford offered 14 thoughts and ideas for the pope to try. They included endorsing condoms, ending "gay bashing" and viewing the movie "Kinsey," which depicts Alfred Kinsey, the disturbed sexual researcher who authorized his staff to molest infants as young as five months old.

**The Rev. Troy D. Perry**, gay activist and moderator of the international group Metropolitan Community Churches, expressed a "deep sadness that one of the world's most homophobic religious leaders has been elevated to the papacy, and regret that his policies will continue to devalue the rich spiritual gifts of LGBT people and women of faith."

**Rev. Allan Ramirez**, a leading Latino advocate in New York and pastor of the Brookville Reformed Church, saw racism in the of the election of Pope Benedict XVI, a European: "It is insulting to the Latin Church. It is insulting to the African Church. Isn't it about time that one of their own lead the church?"

**The Rev. John H. Thomas**, the president of the United Church of Christ, said in a statement that he greeted the election of Pope Benedict XVI with "profound disappointment." He believed that Pope Benedict's theological tone has been "rigid, conservative and confrontational."

**Richard Cohen**, a columnist for the *Washington Post*, mused:

*Being a non-Catholic nowadays is a bit like being a non-American most of the time. Important, maybe even historic, decisions are being made and you are totally locked out. America chooses a president who gets a bee in his bonnet about Iraq, and a hunk of the world goes to war. The cardinals of the church choose a pope and maybe an even bigger hunk of the*

*world is affected.*

**Stanley Crouch's** article was one of two that appeared in the New York Daily News under the banner "Agendas for the new Pope," both written by non-Catholics. Crouch wrote:

*As Pope Benedict XVI considers what the future holds, he must remember that the Catholic Church and its Popes have stood through every imaginable crisis, but in so doing have submitted to monarchies and given aid and comfort to colonizers bent on destroying any society not part of Christendom.*

*Of course, we all know it looked the other way when Adolf Hitler and his murderous, jack-booted buffoons strode this bitter Earth. And we know that the church has held high the Virgin Mary while keeping women in a secondary position—as minor voices in the executive branches of its order—and has maintained a basically dismissive attitude toward what many consider contemporary women's issues.*

**Ari Goldman's** article was the second of the two pieces. Goldman opined:

*The church bells of St. Peter's rang in the new Pope Benedict XVI, a man of the curia, the giant and glittering bureaucracy that runs the Catholic Church.*

*"More of the same," a Catholic student groaned as we gathered around the television to watch the announcement. "Did you know he was a member of the Hitler Youth?" a Jewish student said. "All the old values without the charm," said a gay student.*

*I am sure that Pope Benedict, even at 78, still has great reservoirs of enthusiasm to bring to the church. But to reach alienated Catholics, Jews and gays, like my students, he has to strip away the Vatican trappings and get off his papal throne.*

In a piece in which he argued for fair treatment of the new pope, **John Kass** reported in the *Chicago Tribune* some of the things that he heard said:

*Adolf Hitler was invoked, and the Nazis and the Spanish Inquisition. The images were strung together, then placed tightly about the neck of the German-born Cardinal Ratzinger, to immediately delegitimize the man now known to the world as Pope Benedict XVI.*

Kass continued:

*It was on TV and all over the Internet and printed in newspapers around the world, phrases like "Hitler Youth" and "God's Rottweiler" and "The Panzer Cardinal" and the "Pope's Hitman." These were mentioned—in the ostentatiously neutral and therefore ostentatiously objective voice—to express the dissenting views of his critics.*

**Mary Mitchell**, a *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist, expressed her feelings on the election of Pope Benedict XVI: "I'm disappointed. Well I am disappointed as a non-Roman Catholic." Mitchell was upset that a pope from Europe was chosen and not a person from Latin America or Africa. "It's pretty clear," Mitchell added, "at least to this Baptist, that the Holy Spirit didn't get the final word."

A **comment posted on National Review Online** asked of the new pope, "what else can you expect from a filthy Nazi? ... Nazi bas—wearing a dress and no doubt with a past in child-molesting."

The **headline of a reader's letter on NYTimes.com**, the website of *The New York Times*, was titled: "Nazi pope a clear and present danger to the civilized world."

**Forward**, the Jewish weekly newspaper, took a shot at Pope Benedict XVI's duties prior to becoming pope, writing:

*Ratzinger, [was] the church's chief theologian, prefect of the Congregation for Doctrine of the Faith—an ancient body that was known until 1908 as the Sacred Congregation for the Universal Inquisition (yes, that Inquisition).*

On Fox News Channel's "The Beltway Boys," **Mort Kondracke** found fault with Pope Benedict XVI for upholding the teachings of the Catholic Church, saying, "I mean, the idea that the...Catholic Church is saying, you can't use birth control, is just laughed at by, by American Catholics, and for this, for this pope to continue with that argument is not going to build the, the American Catholic Church...and it also contributes to the AIDS epidemic in Africa...What I'm worried about is the dictatorship of certitude, where you stifle dissent, you prevent growth, and that sort of thing."

An **anonymous CNN insider** was reported as saying the following after the election of Cardinal Ratzinger to pope: "I can't believe the Catholic Church would do this. This guy doesn't believe in abortion, contraception, same-sex marriage, or female priests. I was really anticipating that the Catholic Church was ready to elect a pope that was not a true Catholic. Someone far more flexible on these issues. You know. Like a Unitarian Church leader."

**Carlin Romano** published an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that paints Pope Benedict XVI as a former Nazi turned Neo-Nazi. (In truth, the young Joseph Ratzinger was forced to join the Hitler Youth, and later was drafted into the army. He quickly deserted.) He also claimed that the pope exhibited no empathy toward victims of the Nazis and describes "the image of Ratzinger that emerges from his youth" as "insular, fond of priestly authority, less moved by the moral code of Jesus' message than by liturgy, eschatology, the precise meaning of 'revelation,' lovely diocesan buildings." Romano ends his piece with the line, "The biography of Benedict XVI should trouble any who believe that the pope ought to be a morally inspiring figure, like Jesus himself."