

POPE BENEDICT AND POPE FRANCIS

The following is a summary of the 15 newspaper editorials we surveyed about their reaction to the first six months of the tenure of Pope Benedict XVI (2005) and Pope Francis (2013):

Atlanta Journal-Constitution

(4-20-05): It bemoaned the Church's "hard-line" on "the ordination of only men to the priesthood."

Boston Globe

(4-20-05): It said Catholics will continue to ponder issues such as "women priests."

(4-3-13): "No one expects Pope Francis to be ordaining women priests any time soon."

Chicago Tribune

(4-19-05): Pope Benedict XVI is "feared" by those who want to "ordain women."

(4-20-05): It said the quickness with which the selection of Pope Benedict XVI was made meant the cardinals "weren't consumed with mollifying Catholics" on the subject of women priests.

(3-14-13): It noted that Pope Francis has "forcefully opposed" such subjects as abortion and same-sex marriage.

Dallas Morning News

(4-20-05): Pope Benedict XVI "will not hesitate to wield a sword in defense of authentic Catholic teaching—even if it drives many away."

(3-14-13): Pope Francis was criticized for his opposition to the Argentine government's legalization of "same-sex marriage."

Denver Post

(4-20-05): Prior to being named Pope Benedict XVI, he was "the

driving force behind crackdowns" on "homosexuality" and "women's ordination."

Kansas City Star

(4-20-05): "Benedict likely won't bend" on women's ordination.

(3-13-13): Pope Francis will not "waver from the church leadership's strident opposition to abortion, gay marriage...."

Los Angeles Times

(4-20-05): Pope Benedict XVI "probably will tolerate no talk of loosening church views on women priests." He was also accused of "condemn[ing] gays."

(3-14-13): It regretted to note that Pope Francis is not going to change the Church's teachings on "same-sex marriage."

Miami Herald

(3-16-13): Pope Francis is "an outspoken opponent of gay marriage" and he is a traditionalist on "the role of women."

(7-30-13): Although Pope Francis was praised for saying he would not judge a gay person of goodwill, he "did not signal a doctrinal change in the church's position that homosexual acts are a sin," nor did he "retreat" on women's ordination.

New York Times

(4-20-05): Pope Benedict XVI is not going to change on "homosexuality."

Philadelphia Inquirer

(3-14-13): It is hoped that Pope Francis will "bring a new perspective on inflammatory social issues, such as abortion and homosexuality."

San Francisco Chronicle

(4-20-05): Pope Benedict XVI needs to "knock the sharp edges off Catholicism by admitting women as priests."

(3-14-13): Citing his opposition to gay marriage, it said, "The new pope is no free-thinking reformer."

(7-30-13): It was encouraged by Pope Francis' statement about not judging gays, but noted with disapproval that the "door is

closed" on women's ordination.

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

(4-20-05): "Those who hoped, against the odds, that the new pope might soften the church's teachings" on "the ordination of women," it said, "will be disappointed by the choice [of Pope Benedict XVI]."

Sun-Sentinel

(4-20-05): "There is nothing in Pope Benedict's background to suggest he will give ground" on "the ordination of women as priests."

(8-1-13): It was happy to learn that Pope Francis would not judge gays, but it noted "Francis offered no hope that they [women] may one day be ordained priests."

USA Today

(4-20-05): It noted that "millions ignore church teachings" on moral issues.

Washington Post

(4-20-05): It took Pope Benedict XVI to task for impeding "the distribution of condoms in Africa and other developing countries."

Our favorite was the editorial from the Miami Herald. By acknowledging that the pope did not "signal a doctrinal change in the church's position that homosexual acts are a sin," it suggested that he might have taken the opportunity to do so. Yet his comments were made while chatting with reporters on the plane back from Brazil. Look for more of this kind of reporting in the future. Too many journalists don't know the difference between an encyclical and an off-the-cuff remark.