

POPE FRANCIS AT SIX MONTHS; MEDIA COVERAGE SKEWED

After Pope Francis finished his first six months as pontiff, we compared how he is faring with the media vis-a-vis his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI, after his first six months in office. It told us more about the media than either pope.

We looked at the editorials in 15 of the nation's largest newspapers to see what they said about both popes six months after being elected. The papers we examined were: *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *Boston Globe*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Denver Post*, *Kansas City Star*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Miami Herald*, *New York Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, *Sun-Sentinel*, *USA Today*, *Washington Post*.

There were 14 editorials on Pope Benedict XVI and 11 on Pope Francis. The difference can probably be chalked up to the familiarity of the former versus the unfamiliarity of the latter. But there were more similarities than dissimilarities.

Two segments of the population dominated the media's interest in the two popes: homosexuals and women. In the 25 editorials, homosexuals were cited 13 times, and women 15. With the exception of a few editorials that gave faint praise to Pope Francis for not judging gays of goodwill, they were uniformly critical of the teachings of the Catholic Church on both subjects. Only two newspapers, *USA Today* and the *Washington Post*, did not mention either subject explicitly.

We found it interesting to note that the *New York Times* has been noticeably silent on Pope Francis. After all, the new pope is trying to reach out to atheists and homosexuals, so we thought these developments might occasion a positive statement from the newspaper. Wisely, it has decided not to

comment.

It is smart for those who are not Catholic-friendly not to get too excited by the new pope. All popes are free to decide what style best suits them, but papal observers know that substantive changes are altogether different. It is amazing how much stock some in the media give to the pope's remarks when he is merely jostling with reporters; they treat everything he says as if it were an apostolic letter or encyclical.

That said, there is no other religion that is subjected to this kind of micro-scrutiny. The elite media react to Islam and Judaism with cautious restraint, and with voyeuristic intrusiveness to Catholicism. Yet when it comes to teachings on homosexuality and women, there is very little difference between the three monotheistic religions. Judaism is respected, Islam is feared and Christianity—especially Catholicism—is loathed.

To see a brief summary of the editorials click [here](#).