

POPE OFF TO FAST START



Bill Donohue comments on Pope Francis' first day in the U.S.:

The most significant thing about the pope's first day in the United States was his unscheduled visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor. By embracing this order of nuns, Pope Francis laid down an unmistakable marker: He rejects efforts by the Obama administration to force Catholic nonprofit organizations to pay for, or even sanction, abortion-inducing drugs in their health care plans.

Earlier in the day, Pope Francis spoke pointedly about the need to protect religious liberty. That he did so in the company of President Obama, at the White House, was critically important. The pope's commitment to our first freedom was then underscored with his visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor.

I got a chance to meet the pope briefly following the prayer service at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle. It was a moment I will never forget. Whatever Cardinal Donald Wuerl said to him as he introduced me must have struck a chord: the pope broke out into a radiant smile. Bernadette Brady-Egan, our vice president, was also thrilled to meet the Holy Father.

Of course, not everyone is pleased with the pope. From that preppy school-boy atheist George Will on the right, to the militant atheist Catholic-bashers at the Freedom From Religion Foundation on the left, cheap shots abound. And, of course, the professional victims' advocates are cashing in on this historic trip. No matter, as we saw at the canonization Mass yesterday, those who love the pope represent the most diverse

community on earth. Go Pope Francis!