

# POPE STILL BEING BASHED FOR BAPTISM

Ever since Pope Benedict XVI baptized a Muslim-born journalist at the Easter Vigil, he has been highly criticized for doing so. Magdi Allam was one of seven adults baptized during the vigil, but because he has been an outspoken critic of Islamic extremism, his conversion set off a firestorm. Here's a sample:

- *"I cannot understand the Vatican's motivation. Why with preparations for dialogue underway...would the pope revive antagonism this way." [Shelia Musaji, founding editor, The American Muslim]*
- *"What amazes me is the high profile the Vatican has given this conversion. Why couldn't he have done this in his local parish?" [Yaha Sergio Yahe Pallavicini, VP of Italian Islamic Religious Community]*
- *"The problem lies in the vindictive atmosphere surrounding the conversion ceremony." [Palestinian journalist Khalid Amayreh]*
- *The baptism was a "deliberate and provocative act...made into a triumphalist tool for scoring points." [Aref Ali Nayed, head of Jordan's Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre]*
- *"A new provocation for the Islamic world." [Mohamed Yatim, commentator for the Moroccan daily Attajdid]*
- *"The Vatican's act seems unnecessarily incendiary and irresponsible." [Calgary Herald editorial]*

Catholic League president Bill Donohue responded as follows:

"This kind of incredibly defensive posture underscores the

need for Muslims to embrace religious liberty. People convert from Catholicism, Protestantism and Judaism every day, and no one blinks an eye. In any event, kudos to the *Jerusalem Post* for its analysis: 'Allam was not a practicing Muslim, was educated in a Catholic school as a teenager, has been married for years to an Italian Catholic, and credits Pope Benedict for having influenced his decision...[and] he has been living under police protection for years, primarily because of his criticism of Islamic terrorism and defense of Israel—which, of course, is the real story here.'