

PRAISE FROM STRANGE QUARTERS

The following is a sampling of praise for Pope Francis from some rather strange quarters.

Ian Bassin (former associate counsel to President Obama): “Finally, there’s our new, gay-friendly Pope. In one of the most die-hard bastions of conservatism, the Vatican, Pope Francis is rewriting the playbook by breaking the longest fever of them all—a reactionary agenda that dates back centuries. And he’s not just expressing toleration for people of all sexual orientations; in recent days he’s reasserted the Church’s role as a promoter of the needs of the vulnerable over narrow ideological crusades and even took on the corruption of our global financial order.” (Huffington Post, 10/3)

Taylor Berman (Gawker staff writer): “Pope Francis’s statements in the interview are important and will hopefully help the Catholic Church move past some of its more controversial and backward concerns.” (Gawker, 9/19)

Frank Bruni (New York Times columnist): “It’s about time. The leader of the Roman Catholic Church has surveyed the haughty scolds in its ranks, noted their fixation on matters of sexual morality above all others and said enough is enough....Hallelujah.” (New York Times, 9/21)

Sister Simone Campbell (President of NETWORK): “I can only imagine that those who have been focused on abortion and same sex marriage are angry at the sea change. Their crafty plans of using faith for a right-wing political agenda are crashing down around their ears. Pope Francis is saying that the Gospel cannot be used to benefit one political party.” (NYTimes.com, 9/23)

Wilson Cruz (GLAAD spokesman): “...this is the first time that a Pope has recognized the harm that the Roman Catholic

hierarchy's campaigns against LGBT people and families have caused." (GLAAD, 9/19)

Chris Cuomo (CNN host): "I feel like this may count as the pope's first miracle. Because to hear Bill Donohue saying these things is going to be very shocking. Because it really sounds like you're one of the people he's sending this message to, to be fair, Mr. Donohue, isn't it?" (CNN, "New Day," 9/20)

Jane Fonda (actress): "Gotta love new Pope. He cares about poor, hates dogma." (Twitter, 9/20)

Whoopi Goldberg ("The View" co-host): "He's been saying some very provocative things, you know. First, he said you don't need to believe in God to go to heaven because God believes in you. I like that. Then, he said the Church has to stop obsessing about abortion, gay marriage, and contraception. I think that's fantastic." ("The View," 9/23)

Chad Griffin (president of Human Rights Campaign): "Pope Francis has pressed the reset button on the Roman Catholic Church's treatment of LGBT people...For the sake of LGBT Catholics, it's essential that Pope Francis' inspiring words lead to transformative change throughout the Church hierarchy." (Human Rights Campaign, 9/19)

Melissa Harris-Perry (MSNBC host): "Anyone with even a passing understanding of church history knows that it is implicated in war and conflict and oppression, but this pope says it's time to recalibrate..." (MSNBC, "Mel-issa Harris-Perry," 9/21)

Chris Hayes (MSNBC host): "Last week, I confessed I had a growing crush on the new pope, Pope Francis, who has been melting my lefty heart...Pope Francis knows what he is doing and he is sending a signal about making a break with the past." (MSNBC, "All In with Chris Hayes," 9/19)

Frances Kissling (former president of Catholics for Choice): "It would be better still if there were no pope, no

infallibility and no bishops with fiefdoms, and if a democratic church emerged. In that church, same-sex marriage would be celebrated, contraception would be the prelude to responsible parenthood and abortion would be understood as a necessary right. It is no accident that many Christian denominations without a pope have moved in that direction.”
(*The Nation*, 9/25)

Daniel C. Maguire (ethics professor at Marquette Univ.):
“Never before has so much fresh air flowed through musty Vatican halls. Never has a pope said that conscience must not be sacrificed to hierarchical edicts....The second Vatican Council opened doors, while popes like John Paul II and Benedict set out to slam them shut. But Pope Francis has not only unscrewed the locks from the doors, but he’s also unscrewed the doors themselves from their jambs. Never has a pope broken so sharply from his immediate predecessor and done it all with a gentle human voice. ‘Recovering Catholics’ who long since abandoned the pelvically obsessed church of the hierarchy are taking a second look. Right wing Catholics are aghast....Church history is turning a corner. Reform from the top is a rarity but it is happening right now. Time will tell how far it goes, but right now Viva il Papa!” (Religion Dispatches, 9/20)