

# ROLLING STONE LIKES THE POPE

The February 13th cover story in *Rolling Stone* was a lengthy piece by Mark Binelli on Pope Francis. The article was respectful, though hardly without flaws. Like so many of the pope's new fans, Binelli's bouquets come at the price of exaggerating the Holy Father's uniqueness, and unfairly characterizing his predecessors.

Binelli likes it that Francis smiles a lot in public, but anyone who is objective would extend the same compliment to both Pope Benedict XVI and Blessed Pope John Paul II. Francis is praised for saying "go without fear." Yet "Be Not Afraid" was John Paul's signature statement. The new pope is applauded for reaching out to liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, yet a bolder move was made when Benedict invited dissident theologian Hans Küng to meet with him. Francis wins points for kissing the feet of AIDS patients, yet such acts of kindness are hardly unique—the late Cardinal John O'Connor emptied their bed pans.

Binelli says that Francis "still considers abortion an evil." Still? I bet the pope "still" regards all forms of unjust killing to be evil. Binelli is so excited by the pope's words, "Who am I to judge?", that he mentions them twice. But like so many others, he fails to cite what the pope really said: "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?" The pope's qualifiers should tell Binelli something.

To build Francis up, the others must be knocked down. John Paul was a "reactionary," and Benedict was a "dour academic" who had a "disastrous papacy." It is amusing to read that bad-guy Pope Benedict described homosexuality as an "intrinsic moral evil," as if good-guy Pope Francis thinks otherwise. Binelli should reread his closing remark where he rightly quotes Francis as saying that his positions on gay marriage

and abortion are “That of the Church.”

Binelli says “petrified Catholic traditionalists” objected to priests who “actually took up arms” in Latin America in the 1980s. But if liberal Catholics are truly horrified by violence, why didn’t they feel the same way?