

SILLY SURVEYS GREET THE POPE

Only a few weeks before Pope Benedict XVI visited the United States, *The Journal News*, decided to conduct an online survey of non-Catholics. After we were done with them, there is no doubt that they regretted it.

The newspaper, which is owned by Gannet and covers the Lower Hudson New York counties of Westchester, Rockland, and Putnam, posted the following online survey on March 25 and March 26. The survey asked:

*"Are you a lapsed Catholic? As part of *The Journal News*' coverage of Pope Benedict XVI's visit to New York next month, we're hoping to interview Roman Catholics who consider themselves lapsed or non-practicing on their views about the pope's visit. If you're willing to be interviewed please contact Ernie Garcia at elgarcia@lohud.com"*

We had fun with this one and issued a news release as soon as we saw this survey. We bet that the pope couldn't wait to visit America to receive this gift—knowing how ex-Catholics feel about their former religion. We returned the favor and secured the e-mails of 134 *Journal News* employees, ranging from Publisher, Michael J. Fisch, to the Gardening and Horticultural Editor, and sent them the following survey:

Protestants: Given that no religious group switches denominations more than Protestants, can you tell us what it feels like to bounce around from one contiguous neighborhood to another in search of the ideal church?

Jews: Given that the vast majority of Jews do not attend synagogue and that 52 percent of them intermarry, can you tell us what it feels like to be a non-Jewish Jew?

Muslims: Given that Muslims who convert may be murdered, can you tell us if you've at least fantasized about converting?

We ended our news release by appointing Ernie Garcia *The Journal News* liaison to the Catholic League. Needless to say, Ernie was bombarded with e-mails and it wasn't long before they asked us to call off the dogs.

But they should have known better; we never back down from a fight.