

SPARKS FLY OVER PAPAL TRANSFER

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The lead story in this edition of *Catalyst* covers the effusive praise heaped on Pope Francis, and the warm reception he received from leaders of other religions. But we would be remiss if we didn't address the explosion of hatred that the papal transfer engendered.

All of the following comments were made within the first 24 hours of the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI:

Adele M. Stan, AlterNet: "Because of the rigging done to the College of Cardinals by Benedict's predecessor [sic], the next pope will likely be no less authoritarian, no less women-hating, no less gay-bashing, and no more reform-minded."

Andrew Sullivan, The Dish: "What fascinates me is whether he can now be prosecuted for 'crimes against humanity' for having enabled and concealed the rape of countless children in an institution under his direct authority."

Michael Brendan Dougherty, Slate: "Pope Benedict set out to reform a Catholic Church in tatters—but failed."

Rabbi Arthur Waskow, The Shalom Center: "Pope Benedict does not deserve praise from any religious leader who sees women as worthy of full respect."

Chez Pazienza, Huffington Post: "Maybe, if the world is lucky, the next pope won't be so stubborn in the face of overwhelming evidence of children being sexually abused by priests or even complicit in the cover-up of those priests' actions."

Kristen Houghton, Huffington Post: "The almost-unheard of step of resignation by a reigning pontiff has touched off a feeding

frenzy of speculation...Certainly the Catholic Church is under investigation, as is the pope himself, concerning the horrible, disreputable crime of pedophilia which has been pretty much swept under the expensive Vatican rugs."

Margaret Carlson, Bloomberg: "Under his leadership, the church continued to deny its perfidy."

All of the following comments were made within the first 24 hours of Pope Francis' election:

Mary Johnson, former nun, on "Morning Joe": "My hope is that this new pope might take a look at the Catholics who have felt marginalized recently, gay and lesbian Catholics, divorced Catholics. Catholics who see their home in the church, but don't feel entirely welcome."

Eduardo Peñalver, writing at *Commonweal*: "I'm going to take a break from my Lenten 'fast' from blogging to just note that it seems likely to me that picking a man as Pope who held a position of authority in the Church in Buenos Aires during Argentina's dirty war seems likely to dredge up some bad memories and perhaps even a few inconvenient truths."

Herndon Graddick, GLAAD: After criticizing Pope Francis for not accepting the gay agenda, he said, "Pedophilia has run rampant in the Catholic Church with little more than collusion from the Vatican."

Luke Russert, NBC: "Instead of a Catholic faith where priests are expected to completely suppress their sexuality, an acknowledgment [from Pope Francis] that many of the Church's recent problems stem from the unnatural requirement of celibacy."

Salon: The pope "unsurprisingly has terrible views on gay and reproductive rights."

Huffington Post: "Papa Don't Preach! Pope Called Gay Marriage

‘Destructive Attack on God’s Plan’...Staunchly Opposes Abortion, Contraception.”

There were many other comments like these, especially from dissident Catholic groups like Voice of the Faithful, as well as from anti-Catholic organizations like Catholics for Choice.

In one way, we should welcome these remarks. They show that there’s absolutely nothing any pope can do to satisfy those who hate us. Ergo, attempts to appease them are not only bound to fail, they’re misguided: those who left the Church and don’t want to return—except on their own terms—are as wrongheaded as they are incorrigible.

As for those who smear us and are not Catholic, they can take a walk.

Few things are more troubling than intellectual dishonesty. If those ripping the Church about women priests were sincere, they’d focus on real sex segregation. Muslims, for example, routinely exclude women from public gatherings: demonstrations and prayer vigils are typically all-male events. Does anyone call them out on this? Not on your life (pun intended).

Last year, Orthodox Jews in New York held a rally at Citi Field, home of the Mets, to combat the evils of the Internet and the alleged damages caused by electronic devices. They filled the stadium—tens of thousands showed up. Not one was a woman, yet no one complained. Nor has anyone ever complained about the many Orthodox Jewish traditions that are reserved for men only.

It should also be noted that virtually every Catholic teaching on sexuality we have was first broached by our Jewish brothers. Yet all the scorn is targeted at us. Hypocrisy is too kind a word to describe this condition.

At the end of the day, none of this will affect Pope Francis. He has seen adversity before, and he has prevailed. We will do

what we can to see that he succeeds.