

# DAVID HOROWITZ, R.I.P.

Bill Donohue

David Horowitz, the former radical turned conservative, died April 29 after battling cancer. He was 86. He was a good friend, a brilliant speaker and writer, and a man of tremendous courage.

David was born and raised in Queens. To this day, when I take the Long Island Rail Road leaving Manhattan, passing into Queens, I look out the window and see the sign for Skillman Avenue. I think of David—that is where he grew up, in Long Island City.

His parents were diehard communists, and raised him as a “Red Diaper Baby.” Their indoctrination paid off, at least initially. In the 1960s and 1970s, he was a leader of the New Left, stoking anti-Americanism. He befriended Huey Newton, founder of the Black Panther Party, but later split with them once he learned they were involved in the death of a friend of his, Betty Van Patter.

David, and his friend, Peter Collier, founded *Ramparts*, a radical magazine that cheered for a communist victory in Vietnam. But as he watched what the communists did in Vietnam, his enthusiasm for Marxism soured. The final straw came in the late 1970s when Pol Pot murdered two-in-five of his fellow Cambodians. This shook him intellectually.

Then came the election of Ronald Reagan. This further triggered the reset: David became a rabid pro-American conservative. In 1987, he held a “Second Thoughts Conference” in Washington D.C. This is where he, and other ex-New Left activists, explained why they had had “Second Thoughts” about their political philosophy. Communist genocide has a way of shaking honest people up.

In the early 1990s, he and Peter founded *Heterodoxy*, a brilliant monthly that broke new grounds. Later in the decade, the David Horowitz Freedom Center was launched, and with it the influential publication, *FrontPage* magazine.

Peter had made such a turnaround that he called me at the Catholic League in the late 1990s to congratulate me on my work. More important, he said he made his way back to Catholicism.

It was about that time when David asked me to speak at a conference in Los Angeles that would assess the cultural impact that Hollywood was having. I was scheduled to be there anyway—Jeffrey Katzenberg invited me to review his yet-to-be released movie, *Prince of Egypt* (which I applauded), so I agreed.

It was an enormous room—full of actors, producers and directors—and virtually all of the speakers put a positive face on Hollywood. Until I spoke. After I finished with my remarks, the man sitting next to me on the platform turned to me and said, “They are going to have to get extra security to escort you out of here.”

What did I say that upset the elites? I told them they were a bunch of phonies. One after another, I said, you came to the microphone to tell us that you don’t allow your children to watch the television shows that you make. No, you said, your children watch Nickelodeon. I asked, “So whose children are your shows good for?” They knew exactly what I meant. The room was dead silent. But David loved it.

David was fond of saying that many conservatives don’t get it. They are so nice. The problem with that is they seriously underestimate how vicious the Left is. They need to toughen up. They don’t understand how driven and malicious radicals are.

In more recent years, David wrote a blurb for one my books,

and I endorsed one of his. He was always honest and full of energy.

As he grew intellectually, David, who was Jewish, became a staunch advocate of Christianity. He saw the cultural rot that militant secularism wrought, concluding that an ascendant Christianity was badly needed.

Not surprisingly, the Left turned on him, hating his slide to conservatism. But he didn't care—all he cared about was telling the truth.

America has lost a great one. I was honored to have known David Horowitz as a friend. May he rest in peace.

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## MAHER MOCKS EUCHARIST

[Michael P. McDonald](#)

While most people treated the news of the passing of Pope Francis with somberness and dignity, notorious Catholic-basher Bill Maher could not keep himself from making crude and irreverent comments. On the April 25 episode of “Real Time,” the bigoted HBO host used the eve of the papal funeral to insult a central tenet of the Catholic faith, the Eucharist.

On Friday, Maher began talking about Pope Francis with some of the clichéd lines about priests that we have seen far too often from him. He seems to think it is the pinnacle of wit to say that “the outpouring of grief” for the pope has led to priests asking altar boys to “just hold me.”

Continuing this theme, later while Maher was trying to explain why conservatives had disagreements with Pope Francis, he ran through a litany of things that supposedly conservatives found

infuriating about the late-Holy Father. One thing that supposedly got the goat of conservatives, according to Maher, was Pope Francis' "child sex ring took the focus off Hillary's child sex ring."

What really stood out on Maher's list were his loutish remarks about the Eucharist. Maher went on to say that another thing that Pope Francis did to raise the ire of conservatives was that he advocated for "men eating another man's body." At that exact moment, on screen appeared an image of Pope Francis consecrating the Eucharist.

To take a sacrament and a core pillar of Catholicism and turn it into some sort of sick, sexualized "joke" is grotesque, but to provide such an insult at the moment 1.4 billion Catholics around the world are commemorating the death of Pope Francis is beyond the pale.

Maher is an irreverent bigot who has not been funny in years. As his star continues to diminish, he is forced to rely on mean-spirited attacks to get cheap chuckles from the handful of people who still find him interesting.

*Contact Maher's director of media relations:*  
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## MISSION CREEP IN LEFT-WING ORGANIZATIONS

**Bill Donohue**

What happens when an organization achieves its goal? It either folds or it develops a new one. The March of Dimes was founded

to cure polio, and when the Salk vaccine proved effective, those who worked there could have declared victory and packed up their bags and left. But they didn't. Instead, they chose a new mission: combating birth defects and infant mortality.

When it comes to civil rights organizations, this situation is much trickier.

Prejudice and discrimination exist in many quarters of America. People are still treated unfairly on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, age, disability, and the like, but in almost every instance there has been much progress. A related, though separate, issue is the perception of progress. It is entirely possible for people of one demographic group or another to feel they are still treated unfairly when objective measures prove otherwise.

The progress made by minorities and women—in every aspect of society—is undeniably impressive. So much so that organizations founded to protect their civil rights have often experienced mission creep. Flush with money, they find themselves treading into new territories, seeking to address the latest civil rights issue. It helps enormously when big bucks are involved.

A case in point is the discovery of LGBT rights by organizations that were never founded—even remotely—to deal with this issue. But the fact that they are spending so much more time addressing the gay and transgender agenda is a sign that they have made tremendous progress in achieving their original goal. But they will never admit it. Victim advocates need victims.

For a majority of these groups, their shift to LGBT issues began in the late 2000s and early 2010s. At this point, the issue of gay rights, particularly marriage equality, was beginning to become a major civil rights issue. Soon the issue of transgender rights took center stage.

The following organizations have drifted into the LGBT arena. They are listed chronological in terms of when they embraced gay and transgender rights.

*NAACP Legal Defense Fund*

Year founded: 1940

Original mission: To secure laws that advance racial equality.

First mention of LGBT advocacy: 1990s.

Actions taken: Starting in 1996, it filed amicus briefs in cases that affected the rights of lesbians and gay men. It later fought for marriage equality.

*Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights*

Year founded: 1950

Original mission: The Conference's original mission was "grounded in commitment to social justice and the firm conviction that the struggle for civil rights would be won not by one group, but through coalition." It focused mostly on civil rights for African Americans.

First mention of LGBT advocacy: 2003

Actions taken: Its first foray defending LGBT rights came in 2003 when it applauded the Supreme Court's decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*, which offered new rights for gays and lesbians.

*NAACP*

Year founded: 1909

Original mission: To fight for racial equality.

First mention of LGBT advocacy: 2008

Actions taken: In 2008 the NAACP's California state chapter opposed the state's Proposition 8. It later defended marriage equality.

### *National Urban League*

Year founded: 1910

Original mission: To fight for racial equality.

First mention of LGBT advocacy: 2009

Actions taken: Its first goal was to fight for the Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

### *ADL*

Year founded: 1913

Original mission: To combat anti-Semitism.

First mention of LGBT advocacy: 2010

Actions taken: It filed an amicus brief in a marriage equality case.

### *National Women's Law Center*

Year founded: 1972

Original mission: To fight for the rights of women.

First mention of LGBT advocacy: 2012

Actions taken: In October 2012, it released a fact sheet on Title IX protections for LGBT and gender non-conforming students. It later became more active in combating discrimination.

### *The Ruth Bader Ginsburg Center for Liberty at the ACLU*

Year founded: In 1972, Ruth Bader Ginsburg founded

the Women's Rights Project at the ACLU. In 2010, the Center for Liberty, which included the Women's Rights Project, was established. In 2020, the Center was renamed the Ruth Bader Ginsburg Center for Liberty.

Original mission: To fight for women's rights, principally abortion rights. It has since taken up the cause of gay and transgender people.

First mention of LGBT advocacy: 2015

Actions taken: To fight for passage of the Equality Act.

It is one thing for sister organizations to form coalitions; it is quite another when they engage in mission creep. But when there isn't enough work for employees to do, they must find new avenues to explore. Add to this the lure of foundation money, and the temptation is irresistible.

One more thing. Notice none of these left-wing civil rights organizations ever experience mission creep by taking up the cause of anti-Catholicism. That is not a civil rights issue that exercises them.

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## POPE FRANCIS AND THE POOR

[Bill Donohue](#)

Here's a thought experiment.

There are two teachers. One is known for his compassion for struggling students, but he is not a gifted teacher, and as a result his students do poorly in school. The other is known as lacking in compassion, but he is a gifted teacher, and as a



result his students do well in school.

There are two doctors. One is known for his compassionate bedside manners, but he is not a gifted doctor, and as a result his patients suffer. The other lacks bedside manners, but is regarded as a gifted doctor, and as a result his patients thrive.

Ideally, we would all like to be served by compassionate and competent teachers and doctors, but when given the choices afforded by the thought experiment, who would really choose the compassionate yet incompetent teacher or doctor over their insensitive yet competent counterparts?

No one doubts that Pope Francis showed great compassion for the poor. Indeed, that is one of the most heralded aspects of his legacy. But his harsh criticisms of capitalism, and his affinity for socialism, must be taken into account.

It is undeniably true that capitalism has done more to induce upward social mobility and alleviate poverty than any economic system in history. It is also undeniably true that socialism has proven to be the greatest generator of poverty in the world.

In capitalist countries, the leaders may talk more about economic efficiency than the interests of the poor, yet their free market policies invariably prove beneficial to them. The leaders in socialist countries talk a great deal about the interests of the poor, yet their statist policies invariably prove harmful to the poor.

In short, rhetoric means little in the end if the policies that are pursued result in failure.

When Mao took over in 1949, he dressed like a peasant and talked incessantly about the plight of the poor. Meanwhile, he owned 50 villas, and devastated the economy with his socialist policies.

When Fidel Castro, an affluent lawyer, took over in Cuba in 1959, he dressed down and talked incessantly about the plight of the poor. Meanwhile, he lived the high life and devastated the economy with his socialist policies.

When the Sandinistas took over in Nicaragua in 1979, they donned fatigues and talked incessantly about the plight of the poor. Meanwhile, they live in palaces and have devastated the economy with their socialist policies.

When Nicolás Maduro took over in Venezuela in 2019, he talked incessantly about the plight of the poor. Meanwhile, he is living a luxurious lifestyle and has devastated the economy with his socialist policies.

Pope Francis meant well in showing compassion for the poor. But his understanding of economics was not his strong suit, and the economic policies he championed did more to punish the poor than help them. On that score, the next pope has to do better.

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## GERMAN BISHOPS DISPUTE THERE ARE TWO SEXES

[Bill Donohue](#)

“In creating men ‘male and female,’ God gives man and woman an equal personal dignity.” That is what the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches. Pope Francis not only agreed with this fundamental Catholic tenet, he said that those who deny there are only two sexes, male and female, are fostering a false anthropology.

Evidently, the German bishops disagree. Indeed, they also disagree with Pope Francis' proclamations on gender ideology, which he called "demonic."

In a special handout prepared by the German Bishops' Conference that was recently published, the bishops made clear their vision of humanity. Indeed, the title of their document, "Blessings for Couples Who Love Each Other," says it all.

"Couples who love each other" obviously applies to same-sex couples. Indeed, it also applies to father-daughter and mother-son couples. That may not be their intent, but this is what happens when being "inclusive" becomes an obsession.

It gets worse. The handout speaks to extending blessings to "couples in all the diversity of sexual orientations and gender identities [that] are part of our society."

This means there is a sexual orientation that extends beyond heterosexual and homosexual. The German bishops should tell us what it is. It also means there are more than two gender identities. They should name them. In both instances, it would be helpful if they provided us with pictures of these people so we know what they look like.

In all seriousness, the dissemination of this handout comes at a critical juncture in the Church's history. We are on the cusp of electing a new pope, and Catholics everywhere are anxious to know what direction the voting cardinals want to take us.

Will they ratify the African Catholic vision of sexuality, which emphasizes fidelity to the Church's teachings? Or will they opt to ratify the German Catholic vision, which rejects those teachings?

There is a reason why Catholic attendance in Germany is abysmal. In a vain attempt to be "inclusive," the bishops' conference has unwittingly alienated orthodox Catholics,

making them feel *excluded*. By contrast, Catholic attendance in most parts of Africa is surging, and that is due in no small way to its embrace of traditionalism.

Bishops who are prepared to believe there are a multiplicity of sexual orientations and gender identities are not only rejecting the teachings of the Catholic Church, they are rejecting what science affirms. Moreover, they are driving the faithful to exit the Catholic Church. Strike three.

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## Fr. MARTIN DISTORTS TRUTH ABOUT DISSIDENT NUN

[Bill Donohue](#)

Fr. James Martin, the Jesuit champion of gay and transgender rights, has a column in today's *New York Times* that is intellectually dishonest. I will be very specific.

He cites the case of Sister Jeannine Gramick as testimony to Pope Francis' outreach to "L.G.B.T.Q. people." He notes that "Her saga began in 1999, during the papacy of St. John Paul II. That year, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, later to become Pope Benedict XVI, barred Sister Gramick and the Rev. Robert Nugent, two Americans, from ministering to 'homosexual persons.'" He goes on to say that Pope Francis met with Gramick and praised her for her work.

It is not clear how much Pope Francis knew about Gramick. At the time, I assumed he was given a selective interpretation of her work, which is why I accused his handlers of "[manipulating](#)" him. In any event, Fr. Martin gives the impression that Benedict is the ogre. In fact, what he did was

long overdue. Here is what happened. [See my book, [\*The Truth about Clergy Sexual Abuse: Clarifying the Facts and the Causes\*](#), for the citations.]

In 1999, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, written by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, issued a "Notification Regarding Sister Jeannine Gramick, SSND, and Father Robert Nugent, SDS." It was directed at the work of New Ways Ministry (NWM), which was founded by Gramick and Nugent in 1977.

Ratzinger noted that in 1984, "James Cardinal Hickey, the Archbishop of Washington, following the failure of a number of attempts at clarification, informed them [NWM] that they could no longer undertake their activities in that Archdiocese. At the same time, the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life ordered them to separate themselves totally and completely from *New Ways Ministry*, adding that they were not to exercise any apostolate without faithfully presenting the Church's teaching regarding the intrinsic evil of homosexual acts."

Ratzinger then detailed the many attempts by Church officials to persuade Gramick and Nugent to abide by Church teachings on this subject. He concluded that they "are permanently prohibited from any pastoral work involving homosexual persons and are ineligible, for an undetermined period, for any office in their respective religious institutes."

Three years later, in 2002, Archbishop Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, wrote that "New Ways Ministry does not promote the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church."

In that same year, Archbishop Thomas Kelly of Louisville told organizers of the group's conference that they should not celebrate the Eucharist at the NWM event. Following suit in 2007 was St. Paul-Minneapolis Archbishop Harry Flynn: he barred NWM's national conference from celebrating the

Eucharist.

In 2010, Cardinal Francis George, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, stated that he can assure Catholics that “in no manner is the position proposed by New Ways Ministry in conformity with Catholic teaching and in no manner is this organization authorized to speak on behalf of the Catholic Church or to identify itself as a Catholic organization.”

In 2011, Cardinal Donald Wuerl of the Washington Archdiocese, and chairman of the Committee on Doctrine, joined with Oakland Bishop Salvatore Cordileone, and chairman of the bishops’ Ad Hoc Committee on the Defense of Marriage, issuing an affirmation of Cardinal George’s denunciation of NWM.

For Fr. Martin not to make mention of any of this is to completely distort the record. He was also wrong not to mention that Gramick continued to defy Church teachings as late as a few years ago. On January 7, 2022, she said that in 1999 the Vatican wanted her and Nugent “to say that homosexual activity is objectively immoral and that we personally believed that. And I could not do that.”

Worse, Gramick showed more sympathy for the greatest child rapist priest in American history, Father Paul Shanley, than she did his many victims. For decades, the Boston priest raped males of all ages, and he liked to blame the victims, famously saying, “the kid is the seducer.”

In 2005, Gramick said that she “grieved for this man I had not seen in almost 20 years, but whose principles and whose advocacy for the downtrodden I had applauded for three decades.” Journalist Maureen Orth, who was married to “Meet the Press” host Tim Russert, was horrified by what she said, adding that she interviewed nine of Shanley’s victims, and that Gramick never spoke to one of them.

Pope Benedict XVI acted honorably when, as a cardinal, he

called out Sr. Jeannine Gramick. To imply otherwise is scurrilous.

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# PASSING THE PAPAL BATON

[Bill Donohue](#)

The death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday caught many as a surprise, though not as a shock. He definitely rebounded from the time he was hospitalized, but he never regained his normal stature.

His funeral on April 26 will draw media coverage from all over the world. After the funeral, the voting cardinals will meet to discuss his successor; the voting will begin in two weeks.

Pope Francis appointed approximately 80 percent of the cardinals who will make that choice. This suggests that someone closer to his vision of the Church will be chosen. On the other hand, he has chosen men from the hinterland, from far away places where a penchant for orthodoxy, not change, is commonplace. This suggests that the new pope may be more of a traditionalist.

It does seem likely that whoever is chosen will have to bring about more clarity than we have been accustomed to under Pope Francis. Quite frankly, the Holy Father often made pronouncements that fostered confusion. The time has come to promote a more coherent vision; this will require a gentle push of the pendulum back to the middle.

If the cardinals decide to choose someone who is a traditionalist, they can do no better than to look to Africa. It is home to the most brilliant orthodox clergy in the world.

If the cardinals want to choose someone more like Francis, they will look to Europe.

It appeared that Pope Francis would have liked to have made more changes, especially with regard to the Church's teachings on sexuality. He made that apparent by the appointments he made of cardinals to senior positions. But he also knew his authority was limited by Scripture and tradition.

Those cardinals who share Pope Francis' vision of the Church will find it easier to organize, and that is because most of them know each other. On the other hand, those who prefer the traditionalist vision of the Church favored by Pope Benedict XVI and Pope John Paul II are at a decided disadvantage, and that is because so many of them are from the peripheries; they really don't know each other.

There will be time, however, for everyone to meet and discuss their concerns and preferences. The voting cardinals will travel to Rome today and tomorrow, and they have the rest of the week—especially next week—to familiarize themselves with each other.

In many ways, the passing of the papal baton will bring about a showdown between those who identify with Pope Francis, as many in Europe do, and those who want a return to a more coherent vision for the Church, as exemplified by the African clergy. In short, will it be the cardinals in the developed world who will prevail, or will it be those in the developing countries who will prove triumphant?

Of course, there are traditionalists in Europe, and there are progressives in Africa, but the generalization holds true. One thing is certain: wherever progressivism reigns, the churches are increasingly empty; where traditionalism is the norm, the churches are mostly thriving. That alone should count a great deal. Orthodoxy is a winner; heterodoxy is a loser.



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# MARJORIE TAYLOR GREENE SHOULD BE CENSURED

*This letter explains why we want her censured. Contact Tom Rust, Staff Director House Ethics Committee: [tom.rust@mail.house.gov](mailto:tom.rust@mail.house.gov)*

April 21, 2025

Rep. Michael Guest  
Chairman House Ethics Committee  
1015 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Rep. Mark DeSaulnier  
Ranking Member  
House Ethics Committee  
1015 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Rep. Guest and Rep. DeSaulnier:

I am neither a Republican nor a Democrat; I am independent. I am writing to you in my capacity as president of the nation's largest Catholic civil rights organization. I have one request: Do what you can to have Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene censured.

Today, on the day that Pope Francis died, Greene wrote on X, "Today there were major shifts in global leadership. Evil is being defeated by the hand of God." This was posted just hours after the pope died.

As Newsweek journalist Gabe Whisnant noted, the two major world leadership changes that were announced today were the

death of Pope Francis and the resignation of Klaus Schwab as the head of the World Economic Forum. It is obvious that Greene's remark about God defeating "evil" was aimed at the Holy Father.

How can we be sure? In 2022, I asked the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Ethics Committee to sanction Greene for saying that "Satan's controlling the church." In short, she has a history of slandering Catholics.

If Greene, who is an ex-Catholic, wants to make reasoned criticisms of Pope Francis, she has every right to do so. But no sitting member of Congress has the right to denigrate the leader of a world religion.

To allow her to continue to smear Catholicism reflects badly on the Congress. Therefore, I am asking that Republicans and Democrats come together to censure Marjorie Taylor Greene for her bigoted remarks.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

William A. Donohue, Ph.D.  
President

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## POPE FRANCIS, R.I.P.

[Bill Donohue](#)

Catholics around the globe are mourning the death of Pope Francis. He touched millions of the faithful, including non-Catholics and non-believers.

When Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio assumed the role of Pope Francis, his down-to-earth style captured the plaudits of Catholics and non-Catholics alike. It was his unscripted, and often spontaneous, manner of speaking that made him so authentic and appealing.

It also got him into trouble, especially when speaking to reporters aboard the papal plane following a trip overseas. On many occasions, following a chat with journalists, the Vatican press corps had to clarify what he meant. But no one criticized him for not speaking from the heart.

Unfortunately, the end of his pontificate was troubling. His approval of a Vatican document that allows priests to bless same-sex couples was met with widespread criticism. Indeed, it was so divisive that it seriously undid much of the goodwill he previously earned.

For the most part, the media treated Francis with kindness, though they did not always accurately report what he said. For example, his much publicized remark, "Who am I to judge?", was misquoted by the media. What he actually said was, "Who am I to judge him?" That is not a small difference. He made his comment in response to a question about a particular priest who had been accused of a sexual impropriety; it was not an endorsement of homosexuality.

It spoke well for Pope Francis that he rejected the practice of publishing the names of accused priests, something that is unheard of in every other institution. Regrettably, his inability to see through the deceitful character of his friend and fellow Jesuit, Bishop Gustavo Zanchetta—he was sentenced to prison by an Argentine court for sexually abusing seminarians—revealed a serious blind spot, one that earlier emerged in his dealings with priestly sexual abuse in Chile. Zanchetta is still a bishop.

More recently, Pope Francis' passivity in dealing with accused

serial predator Fr. Marko Rupnik, another friend and fellow Jesuit—he was charged with grave, and indeed sacrilegious, sexual offenses—was another serious error in judgment. Rupnik was finally dismissed from the Society of Jesus in June 2023. After he was excommunicated, he was reinstated! Inexplicably, the pope allowed him to remain a priest in good standing. In fact, he kept a picture of him in his office.

Worse, Pope Francis chose as one of his most senior advisors, Luxembourg Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, a man whose passion for gay rights led him to say that the Church's opposition to gay sex is outdated. The pope knew this yet appointed him the "relator general" of the Church's "Synod on Synodality." The Synod, itself, proved to be a source of great consternation among many bishops.

The pope's strong defense of the rights of the unborn, and his condemnation of gender ideology, sat well with conservative Catholics. But they were not happy when he refused to honor questions regarding his apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*; prominent prelates sought clarification on some doctrinal issues. The Holy Father was clearly more critical of conservative bishops than he was their liberal counterparts.

Even more significant, his attack on traditionalists, especially those who favor the Latin Mass, were frequent and lacking in nuance. Yet at the same time, Francis welcomed known Catholic dissidents, men and women who were previously condemned by officials in Rome and the United States for sabotaging the Church. His embrace of Sister Jeannine Gramick was the most conspicuous example of this phenomenon.

Pope Francis often spoke about the need to decentralize the Church, yet he did more to centralize the power of the papacy than any of his predecessors in modern times.

He took away the right of bishops to approve new religious communities in their dioceses and changed canon law so he

could fire bishops. His decision to essentially take control of the Pontifical Academy of Life, and the former John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, angered many in the U.S. He also took control of the Sovereign Order of Malta, ordering a new constitution and new senior officers.

On foreign affairs, Francis took a soft and conciliatory approach to the Chinese Communist regime, which sought to crush the Catholic Church. The arrest of Cardinal Zen, and the silence with which the Vatican greeted the news, did not sit well with many Catholics.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine was condemned by the Vatican, though the Holy Father's statement blaming NATO, and not Putin, was seen as an example of his alleged anti-Western, and anti-American, bias.

In November 2024, the pope stunned Catholics and Jews alike when he called for an international probe of Israel's decision to defend itself from Hamas terrorists; he inquired whether this constituted genocide.

In what proved to be a real eye opener, the pope admitted that as a young man the person who did more to shape his thinking about politics was a female communist atheist, Esther Ballestrino. She introduced him to prominent communist publications.

Pope Francis made his mark on the Church, much as John Paul II and Benedict XVI did. It remains to be seen whether his successor will hew more closely to his stance than that of his predecessors. May he rest in peace.

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# EASTER BRINGS SIGNS OF HOPE

[Bill Donohue](#)

Mention the word Easter and what comes to mind is redemption. Ultimately, it's all about salvation. After the darkness of Good Friday comes the light of Easter. It's also a time of hope, and this year the hope is that the early signs of a religious renaissance in the West come to fruition.

*New York Times* Catholic columnist Ross Douthat is right to observe that it is too early to say we are witnessing a religious revival, but, he says, no one can dispute that there is a growing interest in religion. This includes some notables who are not content with what secularism has wrought.

Until recently, the biggest religion story in the United States was the increase in the "nones," those who answer "none" when asked what religion they belong to. But survey data now indicate that this phenomenon has hit a plateau.

The religiously unaffiliated are comprised of atheists (5 percent), agnostics (6 percent) and "nothing in particular" (19 percent). Seven-in-ten of the latter category—which is roughly two-thirds of the religiously unaffiliated—say they believe in God. This suggests that their status may only be temporary.

In a recent Barna survey, 66 percent of adults say they have made a personal commitment to Jesus. This struck me as odd given that a recent Pew survey found that 62 percent of Americans are Christian. But then I read that Barna researchers reported that three-in-ten of those who don't identify as Christian have made a personal commitment to Jesus. So religious matters are rather fluid these days. Another sign of hope.

It's not just in the United States where religious stirrings

are apparent.

In France, 2025 has seen a record 10,384 adult baptisms; this is an increase of 45 percent over last year. Indeed, adult baptisms have more than doubled since 2015. Importantly, this surge is being led by young Catholics. Another sign of hope is that young Catholics constitute the largest segment of converts.

In the United Kingdom, one study found that church attendance has increased by 55 percent since 2018. It is being led by Catholics, especially young Catholics. Among churchgoers aged 18 to 34, Catholics outnumber Anglicans by more than two to one. This is the first time since Henry VIII initiated the Protestant Reformation that Catholics outnumber Anglicans.

What's going on?

Some say it has to do with social media. They say it is easy to access information about Catholicism in the comfort of their own home, and it is also easy for young people to express themselves. Even if there is some truth to this, it doesn't explain the cultural dynamics that are bringing more young people to religion.

Justin Brierly is an English podcaster who has covered this subject. He believes that our post-Christian society has delivered much "confusion," including a "mental health crisis in the young."

An English Catholic priest, Fr. Daniel of the York Oratory, agrees. "There is a sense of moral chaos and lack of meaning in today's society. If people can find something that makes sense, provides meaning, and also gives a community, which the Catholic Church does, they are going to be attracted to this, and I think this is particularly true for young men."

No one can argue that the "confusion" and "moral chaos" that these men describe is not real. When young people are told to

follow their feelings, not science [read: the sexes are interchangeable], and they later realize that they have been had, it triggers a reaction that begs for truth and clarity. This is what Catholicism offers—a ready antidote to the meaninglessness and rootlessness of militant secularism.

In short, there is more reason for hope this Easter season than we have witnessed in some time. That's a net gain for the newcomers and a net gain for society.