

# Media's "Popebombing" Confusing Fact and Fiction

Shocking. Uplifting. Surprising. Controversial. Confusing. Inspiring.

These are all adjectives that can be used – even simultaneously – to explain comments made by Pope Francis in recent interviews, homilies and even off-the-cuff comments. From homosexuality to evangelism, our Pope has definitely brought attention to the Catholic faith in the secular media and world, which in the end can only be a good thing.

Pope Francis' open, unscripted and free-flowing way of communicating – especially with the media – has provided both hope and heartburn. Some Catholics – including yours truly initially – may have wondered if the Pope was leaning too liberally in expressing himself, thus appearing to contradict Church doctrine and teachings, especially on issues such as homosexuality, abortion and marriage. Non-Catholics or non-Christians have expressed hope that the Church may finally be “changing.”

When the Pope recently said who was he to judge a gay person seeking God, the media went berserk and couldn't get to the keyboard and in front of the cameras fast enough. There were big, bold headlines and long, complicated and misleading stories that implied that our new Pope supported homosexuality. When Pope Francis said as Catholics we must sometimes look past Church doctrine to focus first on bringing the unbelieving into a relationship with Jesus Christ, again the world of media sound bites and spin cut loose, writing and saying that this Pope is turning his back on the stodgy, old-fashioned “rules” of the Catholic Church and that more liberal Church will soon be coming.



*(CNS photo/Tony Gentile, Reuters)*

Taken on its face without investigation and education, Pope Francis' words can easily be spun and presented to appear as if he is advocating for sweeping doctrinal and social justice changes in the Church. When you dig a little deeper into the full

text of his comments, it's easy to discover that Pope Francis meant exactly what he said, not what the media reported.

On the issue of homosexuality, Pope Francis correctly asserted that the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that gay persons have dignity and are to be respected as children of God. At the same time, the act of homosexuality is still condemned.

Love the sinner, hate the sin. This, we know all too well, for we are all sinners, but if we are truly contrite, we seek the mercy and forgiveness of God.

When our Holy Father said that we need to sometimes focus on healing the brokenness that exists in the world by bringing people into the Church and to God, he wasn't suggesting a complete departure from doctrinal matters and truth.

While both conservative and liberal Catholics have been at different times concerned, irritated or in just plain head-scratching mode as they attempt to reconcile Pope Francis' words with their views of the Church, it is the media that has gone on what I call a "Popebombing" tirade, showing pictures of the Pope behind confusing, misleading or just plain untrue headlines and news reports, which proudly proclaim this Pope is finally going to break with tradition and undermine 2,000 years of Church teaching, dogma and doctrine.

We know it ain't so.

As Catholics, we can help set the record straight and cut through all the murkiness by educating ourselves in regard to Pope Francis' comments, so that we can educate and inform others. There will be more challenging and surprising statements from this Pope, you can be sure, so when they happen, be sure to understand the full context in which they were offered so you can educate and inform others who are being misled by the "Popebombing" media.

In the meantime, we can continue to pray for the blessings of Pope Francis' wisdom and for our own wisdom and understanding of how our Holy Father sees our Church, our opportunity to evangelize and our responsibility to bring those outside of the flock into our beautiful Catholic Church.

Peace to you!

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