

Current Events :: Pope Francis Could Foster Ecumenism, Help Decentralize Catholic Church, Latino Christian Leaders Claim - posted by pr

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Pope Francis' installment as pontiff could lead to a major and significant impact not only in the Catholic Church, but also across all religions as well as the political area, a number of Catholic and Evangelical leaders in Latin America have said.

According to numerous Latino Christian leaders, Pope Francis could help to tackle the drop in adherents in the region, as well as become a bridge between the Catholic Church and evangelicals. His impact may not just stop there though, and they have also suggested that he could help connect the Catholic Church with other faiths, and ultimately decentralize the Catholic Church.

These claims have been made by the Vice President of the Alliance of Evangelical Churches of the Republic of Argentina (ACIERA), Gaston Bruno. In an email to The Christian Post, he suggested that Francis' election may have come about after Cardinals took into account the recent evangelical growth in the region, as well as the large number of Catholics in South America.

"Of course, this reality weighed in a certain way in determining the election of the new Roman Pontiff," Bruno wrote to CP.

However, Bruno also insisted that even if Pope Francis was partly elected to help the Catholic Church rival the evangelical growth in the region, it should not be a major concern for the evangelical Church. He told CP: "As Christians of evangelical faith, we will continue to preach the Lord Jesus."

Latin America accounts for around 40 percent of world's 1.2 billion Catholics, according to a recent study released by Pew Research Center on religions around the world. Brazil is the world's most populous Catholic country with some 134 million worshippers. Mexico comes in second on the list, with an estimated 96 million Catholics, and Colombia was listed as third with 38 million. Meanwhile, Argentina was not far behind with another 31 million Catholics.

However, despite boasting 432 million Catholics, Latin America is experiencing a huge growth of Protestantism, and over recent years there has been a distinct shift, with the evangelical Church experiencing extensive growth, whereas the Catholic Church numbers have declined.

Statistics for 2010 in a study by Jason Mandry of the Province College and Theological Seminary in Canada suggested that the evangelical population of Latin America had reached 91 million out of the region's total population of 546 million people. That same study suggested that the nations with highest concentration of evangelicals were Brazil, Chile and Guatemala.

Despite the differences between Catholics and evangelicals, Bruno has said that the ACIERA welcomes the new pope and urged him to continue his fight for defending life, as well as making a clear affirmation that the true meaning of marriage remained a union between one man and one woman.

Bruno said, "We salute him, follow him, and pray for him for his wisdom and grace of God for his life and management."

Several other Latin American Christian leaders have also stated their belief that Pope Francis could be a key ecumenical bridge builder.

Francis has become well known as a strong driver of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue in Argentina.

Well-known evangelist Luis Palau, who knows and has prayed with Pope Francis, has testified that he is good friend of evangelicals.

"I've met him several times, gone to his place, we've talked, we've prayed together you know. He builds bridges to other Christian groups, like evangelical Christians, which is a high percentage in Latin America. He's a friend. He's a real friend," Palau, 78, told KGW.

ACIERA's President, Ruben Proietti, has said also stated on numerous occasions that Pope Francis and he are good friends of 13 years. He also testified that dialogue on common issues between Francis and evangelical churches had always been good.

In October 2012, Pope Francis, or as he was then known Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, spoke to about 6,000 evangelicals and Catholics in the Luna Park stadium in Buenos Aires, Argentina. During that message he said, "Jesus was essentially in the street, walking among the people and doing good. He still does it today, even when we do not recognize him."

For Leonardo Boff, one of the most prominent advocates of Liberation Theology, Pope Francis' installation could potentially represent a decentralization of the Catholic Church's government, and also lead to a greater impact in the political arena.

Boff has stated to The Christian Post that he believes the new pope will delegate greater decisional powers to the Synod of Bishops, "creating more autonomy to continental and national churches in the name of collegiality."

Boff points out that the new pope could also bring a deeper reformation and help bring an end to the crisis the Church is currently facing. The institution is currently facing a string of scandals as well as rumors of internal strife.

Boff told CP: "They have called someone from periphery, where living and innovative churches grow, to act with courage in the Curia and Vatican Bank and clean them up."

The move to install Pope Francis as pontiff also marks a shift of the center of the Church to Latin America, and this could lead to a greater impact in the political realms, according to Boff.

According to him, Pope Francis' emphasis on issues such as social justice and care for the poor, more than philanthropy, will strengthen new popular democracies with social policies focused on the poor. He highlighted Brazil, Uruguay, Venezuela among others that could see such an influence displayed.

This, Boff insists, will also help lower emigration from the Catholic Church to other Churches, and could help reinvigorate the Catholic Church. He explained, "A more social and less doctrinaire pope will facilitate the acceptance by Catholics who desire changes aligned with people's interests."

Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio's election as the new pontiff came after the resignation of Pope Benedict XVI, who cited ill health as his reason for his retirement on February 28, 2013.

<http://www.christianpost.com/news/pope-francis-could-foster-ecumenism-help-decentralize-catholic-church-latino-christian-leaders-claim-92285/>

Pope urges dialogue with Islam, more help for the poor - posted by proudpapa, on: 2013/3/22 14:27

By Philip Pullella

VATICAN CITY | Fri Mar 22, 2013 10:45am EDT

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) - Pope Francis urged the West on Friday to intensify dialogue with Islam and appealed to the world to do more to combat poverty and protect the environment.

Speaking in Italian, the new pontiff said richer countries should fight what he called "the spiritual poverty of our times" by re-forging links with God.

"How many poor people there still are in the world! And what great suffering they have to endure!" he told the diplomats in the Vatican's frescoed Sala Regia.

Some critics of the Catholic Church, which has been struggling with scandals and internal divisions, say its rejection of contraception in particular harms the poor.

Others say it does much good in the developing world, running thousands of hospitals, schools, orphanages and hospices.

Francis made his appeal in an address to diplomats accredited to the Vatican, sending a message through them to the leaders of the 180 states with which the Vatican has diplomatic relations.

He urged them to help keep religion central in public life and promote inter-religious dialogue as a catalyst for efforts to build peace.

"In this work (peace building), the role of religion is fundamental. It is not possible to build bridges between people while forgetting God," he said.

"But the converse is also true: it is not possible to establish true links with God while ignoring other people. Hence it is important to intensify dialogue among the various religions, and I am thinking particularly of dialogue with Islam."

Francis, the former Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina, said he was grateful that many Muslim religious and civilian leaders attended his inaugural Mass on Tuesday.

DIALOGUE, NOT RIVALRY

Dialogue, he said, "should help to build bridges connecting all people, in such a way that everyone can see in the other not an enemy, not a rival, but a brother or sister."

He underlined the importance of defending the poor when he explained why he had decided to take the name of St. Francis of Assisi, who is associated with austerity and help for the poor.

"Fighting poverty, both material and spiritual, building peace and constructing bridges: these, as it were, are the reference points for a journey that I want to invite each of the countries here represented to take up," he said.

In his speech, the pope thanked Christians in the developing world "who dedicate themselves to helping the sick, orphans, the homeless and all the marginalized, thus striving to make society more humane and just".

African Catholics have said they want the new pope to champion traditional Church teachings, such as opposing contraception, abortion and same-sex marriage.

Since his election, Francis has drawn attention to the need to defend nature and included it in his speech to the diplomats.

"Here too, it helps me to think of the name of (Saint) Francis, who teaches us profound respect for the whole of creation and the protection of our environment, which all too often, instead of using for the good, we exploit greedily, to one another's detriment," he said.

Francis has set the tone for a humbler papacy. The Vatican said he will hold a Holy Thursday ceremony next week in the chapel of a youth prison instead of in the Vatican or a Rome basilica where it has been held before.

He has also begun inviting outsiders to attend his morning Mass, something which Pope John Paul II did but which Benedict XVI, who is now "pope emeritus", discontinued.

On Thursday, Francis invited staff of the Santa Martha residence in the Vatican and on Friday it was the turn of Vatican gardeners to attend the morning Mass in the chapel of residence, a spokesman said.

On Saturday, Francis will fly to the papal summer retreat south of Rome to visit Benedict, who last month became the first pope in 600 years to abdicate instead of ruling for life, saying he no longer had the strength to carry out his mission.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/22/us-pope-diplomats-idUSBRE92L0BH20130322>

Re: Pope Francis Could Foster Ecumenism, Help Decentralize Catholic Church, Latino Ch - posted by proudpapa, on: 2

I am finding all of this ecumenism a bit alarming,

RE:/// "the Vice President of the Alliance of Evangelical Churches of the Republic of Argentina (ACIERA), Gaston Bruno" /
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RE:/// Bruno said, "We salute him, follow him, and pray for him for his wisdom and grace of God for his life and management." ///

We salute him and follow him ??

Re: , on: 2013/3/22 17:11

I share your concerns proudpapa.....bro Frank

Re: Pope urges dialogue with Islam, more help for the poor - posted by romanchog (), on: 2013/3/22 23:24

When this Pope was elected, my prayer was that God can use him to turn the Catholic Church back to Christ. A lot of what he said and did was very biblical. However, as I told my children, this may also be how the son of perdition may appear, who will create such a great deception that even the elect could be deceived, if Christ did not protect them. We should continue to pray for this Pope, nonetheless.

It is a time to be in prayer for discernment.