

The Making of a Papacy: A Report on the First One Hundred Days of Pope Benedict XVI

Prepared by Catholics for a Free Choice
July 2005

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ISBN # 0-915365-69-3

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1.0 Introduction

On 19 April 2005, Cardinal Josef Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict XVI. Upon his election, Benedict XVI inherited a church divided. One of the enduring legacies of the long reign of Pope John Paul II is the tension within the church between men and women, the global north and global south, conservatives and liberals, gay and straight.

After affirming his commitment to Vatican II on the second day of his papacy and during his first mass as pope, Benedict XVI promised on Sunday, 24 April (Day 6), “My real program of governance is not to do my own will, not to pursue my own ideas, but to listen, together with the whole church.”¹ By immediately establishing a tone of openness, he gave what could be perceived as a nod to Catholics alarmed by the election of the former “doctrinal watchdog.” His pledge suggested a possibility, however optimistic, that he would use his papacy to foster an environment that welcomed Catholics who have been estranged. That he might heal a church battered and bruised by an internationally pervasive sex abuse scandal. That he would address the HIV/AIDS pandemic with courage, compassion and justice. That he might reinvigorate a priesthood of dwindling numbers. Catholics and non-Catholics around the world prepared themselves to wait and watch.

From the moment Cardinal Ratzinger was elected pope, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) closely monitored the actions and statements of the new pontiff, his emissaries, the Vatican and the Holy See. CFFC logged these events with interest, concern and a commitment to call attention to the steps that the institutional church would make — or not make — toward addressing the needs of Catholics and non-Catholics throughout the world. Through a website called *www.Pope-Watch.org*, CFFC reported on the quotidian activities of the new pope with four questions in mind:

- Will operations at the Vatican remain business as usual?
- Will Pope Benedict XVI address some of the greatest problems that face the church today?
- Will the new pontiff create a climate of freedom and tolerance in the church?
- Will Benedict XVI as pope be any different from Ratzinger as doctrinal watchdog?

The information contained in this report is critical to an understanding of the profound differences in worldview and values that divide many of the laity from the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic church. It also addresses key challenges that the institutional church faces at this point in history, with an eye toward assessing the initial response of this papacy.

1.1 About Catholics for a Free Choice

Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) is an international non governmental organization that shapes and advances sexual and reproductive ethics that are based on justice, reflect a commitment to women’s well-being and respect and affirm the moral capacity of women and men to make sound decisions about their lives. Through discourse, education and advocacy, CFFC works in the United States and internationally to infuse these values into public policy, community life, feminist analysis and Catholic social thinking and teaching.

2.0 The First One Hundred Days Campaign

As with any transition of power, the first one hundred days are a crucial indicator and opportunity to establish the values and priorities of a new administration. As Benedict XVI assumed his new role, Catholics for a Free Choice (CFFC) developed an outline for how the pontiff might approach the essential work to ensure that the Roman Catholic church symbolizes justice and compassion throughout the world.

The first one hundred days of this new papacy represented a starting point for the critical work that needed to be done. While we did not expect that every issue could be addressed—nor every problem solved—during that time, there were specific steps that Benedict XVI had the opportunity to take to set a tone for the future of his papacy, to heal fractures within the church and to redress wrongs done under the name of the Vatican.

As part of the *First 100 Days Campaign*, CFFC issued critical and easy recommendations that Benedict XVI could and should have done in his first one hundred days:

- Meet with survivors of clergy sex abuse, listen and apologize.
- Promote a culture of life by lifting the ban on condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS.
- Open top curial positions to women and appoint qualified women to 25% of senior positions within the Vatican.
- Reassign 25% of long-term curial officials to parish work or direct social services.
- Integrate currently married priests into official ministries and move towards optional celibacy for all priests and religious.
- Promote intellectual and theological freedom throughout the church, especially in universities and health care institutions.
- Clarify the right of all Catholics, including divorced and remarried Catholics and policy makers, to examine their consciences and determine for themselves their suitability to receive the Eucharist.
- Celebrate the Eucharist with those whom the church has hurt, including married priests and advocates for women's ordination, nuns and young people abused by clergy, theologians who have been silenced by the church and people living with HIV and AIDS.²

None of the recommendations of the *First 100 Days Campaign* requires theological change on the part of the Roman Catholic church; each is possible. Each of these actions could have been done immediately, and they still should be done for the integrity of the church. These things remain undone not because of doctrinal restriction, but because the Vatican has chosen not to act.

3.0 The First One Hundred Days of Pope Benedict XVI

3.1 Recommendations & Actions

In order to conduct an assessment of the progress the Vatican has made on the recommendations of the *First 100 Days Campaign*, the following section lays out the specific requests and those steps that Benedict XVI has taken toward—or away from—the necessary reforms.

3.2 The Clergy Sex Abuse Scandal

Recommendations of the First 100 Days Campaign

Pope Benedict XVI can and should immediately meet with survivors of clergy sexual abuse, listen and apologize.

As one of his first acts as pope, Benedict XVI should appoint a commission to investigate the clergy sexual abuse scandal:

- Benedict XVI should meet with an international group of survivors who have been abused by Catholic clergy.
- Survivors should be granted a public apology and a reconciliation mass in St. Peter's Square.
- The Holy See must cooperate with local civil authorities investigating abuse.
- The Holy See should renounce the use of diplomatic immunity in sex abuse cases.
- The Vatican and its agencies should fully comply with the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- The Vatican telecommunications office should schedule a televised series of encounters between

What Pope Benedict XVI Has Done

The Holy See is accountable to the world community. It is responsible for the sexual abuse and abuse of power by its representatives, employees and leaders. Yet despite the vast and pervasive accounts from around the world of sexual abuse by priests of children, teens and nuns during the last papacy, Pope John Paul II did not meet with a single victim of clerical sexual abuse.

While CFFC proposed a series of steps to investigate clergy sex abuse and implement reforms to protect children, teens and nuns, Benedict XVI has taken the following steps that can only be interpreted as a dismissal of the severity and importance of this issue.

- *Days 12 & 19:*
Benedict XVI's first meeting with an American cardinal, followed shortly with a personal visit, was with none other than Bernard Francis Law, archpriest of the Basilica of St. Mary Major. Law once presided over the crisis in Boston, Mass., where it was revealed that he had known about and participated in cover-ups of clergy sex abuse for decades.
- *Day 25:*
On 13 May, Benedict XVI delivered another slap to survivors by appointing San Francisco Archbishop William Levada as his successor as guardian of church doctrine. Levada shielded a pedophile in the Diocese of Portland, Ore., for approximately nine years, which helped lead to the bankruptcy of the diocese and earned the wrath of survivor groups for his actions on the Vatican's commission to revise the

- bishops and victims.
- Clerics who have abused children and nuns should be denied further access to youth and nuns.
 - A publicly accessible database of proven child-abusing clergy and religious should be created and maintained.
 - The Vatican should make reparations to victims of clergy sex abuse.

US bishops' sex abuse norms. He has been criticized by the Survivors Network of Those Abused by Priests (SNAP) for failing to remove priests accused of sexual abuse from active ministry and for keeping documents about those priests secret.

- *Day 32:*

The *Houston Chronicle* reported that on 20 May, Vatican officials contacted the US State Department seeking immunity for Pope Benedict XVI as a head of a foreign state in a sex abuse lawsuit filed in Houston, Texas. The lawsuit, filed by three anonymous victims, accused the pope, then Cardinal Ratzinger, of participating in a cover-up conspiracy.³

- *Day 35:*

On 23 May, a spokesman for the Vatican informed reporters that the Vatican would not investigate allegations of abuse against the Rev. Marcial Maciel Degollado, who stands accused of molestation and sexual abuse by nine former seminarians.⁴ While this came from the Secretary of State's office rather than the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), the usual investigative body of sex abuse allegations, the CDF declined to comment.

As of the 91st day of his papacy, Benedict XVI has made no overtures to survivors of sexual abuse to seek forgiveness, nor has he implemented any reforms that would protect children, teens, nuns and other vulnerable persons from predatory clergy and religious. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has still failed to issue a statement regarding its intentions toward Rev. Marcial Maciel Degollado.

3.3 The Ban on Condoms to Prevent HIV/AIDS

Recommendations of the First 100 Days Campaign

Pope Benedict XVI can and should promote a culture of life by lifting the ban on condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS.

Benedict XVI should immediately initiate an inquiry into the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. However, people with and at risk of HIV/AIDS should not need to wait for the results of the commission to be able to protect themselves.

The ban *must* be lifted, and officials of the church must be instructed to stop spreading misinformation about condoms.

What Pope Benedict XVI Has Done

During the papacy of Pope John Paul II, a Vatican official made inaccurate and irresponsible claims that condoms do not prevent HIV transmission. Bishops in AIDS-ravaged Africa staged condom burnings. Clerics who came forward with progressive and compassionate positions on condom use to prevent the spread of the pandemic were silenced or marginalized.

Instead of embracing condoms as a means to promote a culture of life by stemming the spread of HIV/AIDS, Benedict XVI has reaffirmed the hierarchy's opposition to the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS.

- *Day 53:*
At the conclusion of a 10 June *ad limina* visit of bishops from South Africa, Botswana, Swaziland, Namibia and Lesotho, Benedict XVI described abstinence as the only "fail safe" method accepted by the church. He also asserted that "divorce, abortion, prostitution, human trafficking and a contraceptive mentality" threaten the "fabric of African life," and "contribute to a breakdown in sexual morality."⁵

As of the 91st day of his papacy, Benedict XVI has given no sign that he will provide clear direction to the Catholic hierarchy to tell the truth about condoms' efficacy. Instead, he appears committed to the status quo, despite its grave toll.

3.4 Women in the Church

Recommendations of the First 100 Days Campaign

Pope Benedict XVI can and should open top curial positions to women and appoint qualified women to 25% of senior positions within the Vatican.

Benedict XVI should establish a Pontifical Academy on Women's Rights in the church:

- The pope should open top curial positions to women.
- A registry of qualified women candidates for eligible positions should be created and used when filling posts.
- Women should be appointed to at least 25% of senior posts at the Vatican.
- The pope, in conjunction with the Academy, should convene a forum on women in the church for the College of Cardinals to better understand the lived experiences of Catholic women.

What Pope Benedict XVI Has Done

In his first 91 days, Benedict XVI has made more than 117 appointments.* No women have been personally appointed by the pope, and he has engaged in only one serious, dedicated meeting with a woman: the President of the Republic of Latvia, Vaira Vike-Freiberga, on 30 June 2005 (Day 73).†

Not only has the pope failed to open additional curial posts for women, but he has neglected to grant women opportunities that exist, choosing instead to reinstall John Paul II's team and promote those who have demonstrated loyalty to the pope.

- *Day 30:*
Bishop Maximilian Aichern OSB of the Diocese of Linz, resigned under Canon 401, para. 2 of the Code of Canon Law, which reads, “§2 A diocesan Bishop who, because of illness or some other grave reason, has become unsuited for the fulfillment of his office, is earnestly requested to offer his resignation from office.”⁶ It was reported that he has committed “liturgical abuses,” such as encouraging women to wear liturgical vestments and lead ceremonies and that the bishop was part of a conference of theologians who discussed the possibility of giving women a “temporary assignment” to act as priests.⁷
- *Day 59:*
The closing of the Regina Mundi Pontifical Institute, the only pontifical university for women, delivers a blow to women's theological study and the advancement of women within the church. Regina Mundi trained religious and lay women for fifty years. School directors cited a decline in enrollment and financial difficulty as factors influencing the decision.

As of the 91st day of his papacy, Benedict XVI has not

* Some of the appointments made were reappointments of existing Curia positions, making the true count of individuals appointed number in the hundreds.

† On a handful of occasions, the wives of heads of state have accompanied their husbands in meetings with Benedict XVI.

demonstrated much interest in women, their roles in the Vatican or the institutional church, or their experiences as Catholics. It took 73 days for the pope to actually have a planned meeting with a woman, while all other encounters have been in passing or relegated to other staff.

3.5 Curial Officials

Recommendations of the First 100 Days Campaign

Pope Benedict XVI can and should reassign 25% of long-term curial officials to parish work or direct social services.

In order to ensure that the Vatican and its attendant offices remain in touch with the lived experiences of Catholics from around the world, the pope should reassign long-term curial officials to the ministry and social services in regions where prelates are needed most.

What Pope Benedict XVI Has Done

While the *First 100 Days Campaign* suggested reassigning 25 percent of long-term curial officials to parish work or direct social services, instead Benedict XVI reappointed or promoted all those who served under John Paul II “donec aliter provideatur” (until otherwise provided) as one of his first acts as pope. Many of these officials have served in administrative capacity for a long period of time with little or no interaction with the Catholic people who are most affected by the decisions they make. This has enormous ramifications on policies ranging from HIV prevention to contraception to annulment.

While Vatican insiders have been speculating that Benedict XVI wants to completely reorganize the Roman Curia to reflect his personal ambition toward more orthodox and evangelical considerations,⁸ he has not made radical changes in his first months as pope.

3.6 A Married Priesthood

Recommendations of the First 100 Days Campaign

Pope Benedict XVI can and should integrate currently married priests into official ministries and move towards optional celibacy for all priests and religious.

- Benedict XVI should instruct the bishops to restore already married priests to official ministries.
- Pension rights should be immediately restored to married priests.
- A group should be convened to analyze the implementation of an optional celibacy policy for all priests and religious.

What Pope Benedict XVI Has Done

Under Pope John Paul II, married priests were denied both dispensation from their vows and the right to minister. According to CORPUS, a US-based association for an inclusive priesthood, close to 50 percent of parishes worldwide are without a resident priest. Additionally, as churches across the United States are closing, more priests are covering multiple parishes.

At the same time, more than 14,000 married deacons and 30,000 married women and men serve as lay ministers in Catholic parishes and institutions.

- *Day 68:*
During a meeting with the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands on June 25, Benedict XVI told the bishops that among their duties to bolster the priesthood is "to ensure careful selection of candidates... and to provide regular program of ongoing formation so necessary for deepening priestly and religious identity and enriching joyful commitment to celibacy."⁹

It would appear at the end of his first one hundred days as pope that Benedict XVI is not willing to consider the church's current position on celibacy in the priesthood, nor does it seem to be a priority to bolster the ministry.

3.7 Intellectual Freedom

Recommendations of the First 100 Days Campaign

Pope Benedict XVI can and should promote intellectual and theological freedom throughout the church, especially in universities and health care institutions.

Benedict XVI should reestablish positive relations with liberal theologians, progressives and bishops punished for exercising intellectual freedom.

- Benedict XVI should move forward on the canonization of Archbishop Oscar Romero.
- Benedict XVI should meet with Sister Yvonne Gebara of Brazil, a leading eco-feminist theologian who was penalized by John Paul II for her views on women.
- Benedict XVI should grant amnesty to all theologians stripped of honors and jobs for their challenge to the former papacy.
- Catholic writers and professors, including Hans Küng, Charles Curran and Edward Schillebeeckx, should have their teaching authority restored and be reinstated to their former positions.

What Pope Benedict XVI Has Done

As head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), Cardinal Josef Ratzinger was known for his enforcement of ultra orthodox positions within the church. Under his stewardship, the CDF became best known for silencing or excommunicating theologians, pressuring religious orders to suspend those out of line, banning books, rewriting liturgical translations and limiting the power of the bishops.

- *Day 18:*
Within the first month of Benedict XVI's reign, Jesuit Rev. Thomas J. Reese resigned his editorship of *America* magazine, reportedly under orders from the Vatican. According to the *New York Times*, "The order to dismiss the editor... was issued by the Vatican's office of doctrinal enforcement – the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – in mid-March when that office was still headed by Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger." The reason, credited by the *Times* to "several Catholic officials in the United States," was "because he had published articles critical of church positions."¹⁰
- *Day 19:*
As he was officially inaugurated as Bishop of Rome, Benedict XVI reiterated his commitment to orthodoxy in the church. In his first homily as pope, Benedict XVI rebuked theologians: "The Church does not present anything different or new next to Christ; there is no pneumatic revelation next to that of Christ, as some believe, there is no second level of revelation."¹¹
- *Day 72:*
Before 7,000 guests at a "Party for the Pope" at the Vatican on 29 June, Benedict XVI exhorted those in attendance to adhere to his teachings, stressing the importance of praying for the pope and acting in unity with him.¹²

With his emphasis on unity and a single vision or interpretation of gospel, Benedict XVI has exacerbated the sense that intellectual freedom is being severely

circumscribed by the church. While the Reese ouster may have been put in motion long before Benedict XVI became pope, by allowing it to occur, the Vatican has revealed an enormous weakness. According to an editorial by the *National Catholic Reporter*, “This was not an act to defend truth, for truth was never in danger in the pages of *America*. This was an act fearful that the truth cannot withstand the challenges that come its way. It’s a debilitating fear for a church to exhibit.”¹³

3.8 The Eucharist

Recommendations of the First 100 Days Campaign

Pope Benedict XVI can and should clarify the rights of all Catholics, including divorced and remarried Catholics and policy makers, to examine their consciences and determine for themselves their suitability to receive the Eucharist.

The pope should make clear that participation in the sacramental life of the church is the right of all Catholics.

- Benedict XVI should instruct the bishops that there is no basis in modern church law or theology for denying communion to policy makers who support the right of individuals to choose abortion.
- Benedict XVI should instruct the bishops that canon law does not allow for a sweeping prohibition of the reception of communion.
- While a bishop or the pope has the authority to restrict the rights of and take punitive action against individuals, Benedict XVI should use the opportunity of the Year of the Eucharist (October 2004-October 2005) to establish a climate that invites more Catholics, including divorced and remarried Catholics and policy makers, into full sacramental participation in the church.

What Pope Benedict XVI Has Done

In 2004, Nigerian Cardinal Francis Arinze, Prefect of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, announced at a Vatican press conference that prochoice Catholic politicians were “not fit” to receive communion.¹⁴ A handful of US bishops followed suit and issued communion bans against prochoice policy makers, and some even threatened to withhold the Eucharist from individuals who voted for politicians who support a woman’s right to make conscience-based decisions about continuing a pregnancy.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) clarified that Catholic policy makers have the freedom to follow their consciences—even when they disagree with church teaching—when voting on specific legislative measures.

- *Day 80:*
On 7 July, as part of a document that will be used at the Eleventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, the pope stated communion should be denied to Catholics “living in sin,” Catholics who divorce and remarry in a civil ceremony and Catholics who support prochoice politicians. Benedict XVI says Catholics engaged in those activities who take communion are “committing an act of grave personal dishonesty and causing scandal.”

At this point in the papacy, it appears that the pope’s tenure will be marked by actions and statements that reject the reforms of Vatican II, alienating and estranging even more of the laity.

3.9 Reconciliation

Recommendations of the First 100 Days Campaign

Pope Benedict XVI can and should celebrate the Eucharist with those whom the church has hurt, including married priests and advocates for women's ordination, nuns and young people abused by clergy, theologians who have been silenced by the church and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Benedict XVI should welcome back Catholics who have been estranged from the church. In the spirit of forgiveness and healing, the pope should celebrate the Eucharist with those who have been hurt most by policies and practices originating from the Vatican. The pope should make special recognition of and invitation to the women, the gays and lesbians, the theologians and bishops, the sexually abused, the poor and marginalized and others who have felt excluded from the church.

What Pope Benedict XVI Has Done

As we reach the conclusion of the first one hundred days of this new papacy, Benedict XVI has met with approximately 500 individuals in 150 meetings. He has given 32 public addresses[‡] and he has released 59 speeches, statements, letters and messages. Despite an initial tone of welcoming, Benedict XVI has demonstrated that reconciling with estranged Catholics is certainly not his priority. It remains to be seen if it is even his interest.

[‡] Since 19 April 2005, Benedict XVI has made statements at 11 general audiences, and he has delivered 13 Angelus and eight homilies.

4.0 Key Themes and Actions of Benedict XVI

While just three months have passed, it would be misleading to suggest that Benedict XVI has not had time to implement reforms. On the contrary, a quick inventory of the daily activities of the Vatican and its attendant agencies over the past ninety-plus days indicates that Benedict XVI has set a very aggressive tone with this papacy.

4.1 The Christian Roots of Europe

One of the key themes that Benedict XVI has promoted throughout the course of his tenure has been the promotion of the “Christian roots of Europe.” From the selection of his name to his very first general audience on April 27 (Day 9) to his first published book as pope (Day 64), Benedict XVI has stressed the “the irrefutable Christian roots of European culture and civilization” and made clear his intention to unite Europe around its Christian identity.¹⁵

- *Days 15 & 67:*
He met with the president of the Italian Republic to discuss diplomatic relations and the “European situation” and “helping [Europe] to rediscover those Christian roots that enabled it to be great in the past.”¹⁶
- *Day 29:*
He sent Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, Secretary for Relations with States to the third Summit of Heads of State and Governments of the Council of Europe in Warsaw, Poland, to assert that “the pre-eminent role that Christianity has played in forming and developing this cultural, religious and humanistic patrimony is well known to all and cannot be ignored.”¹⁷
- *Days 31 & 35:*
The pope has encouraged Catholic countries such as Macedonia and Bulgaria to join the EU.

As a counterpoint to his advocacy, Benedict XVI has issued a strong denouncement of the “dictatorship of relativism.”¹⁸ On the eve of his election, Cardinal Ratzinger presided over a mass where he warned the cardinal electors: “[F]rom Marxism to liberalism, even to libertarianism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism... St. Paul’s words concerning the deception of men and the cunning that leads into error come true.”¹⁹

4.2 Ultra Orthodoxy: Abortion, Gay Marriage and Assisted Fertility

Benedict XVI has exhorted the bishops to fight against secularism, gay marriage, a contraceptive mentality and abortion. In addition to its moral arguments, the Vatican has insinuated itself into the political working of individual states to influence outcome.

As previously mentioned, it took just 53 days for Benedict XVI to reaffirm the hierarchy’s opposition to the use of condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS. Instead he focused on the issue of “sexual morality.”²⁰ Similarly, at his installation mass on 8 May (Day 20), the pope did not miss the opportunity to articulate his support of the bans on abortion and euthanasia.²¹ When the parents of Terri Schiavo, an American woman who came to symbolize

the euthanasia debate, visited the Vatican on 17 May (Day 29), they were granted a high-level meeting with Cardinal Renato Martino and were personally greeted by Benedict XVI the next day.

Abortion

At his installation mass on Sunday, 8 May, at St. John Lateran Basilica, Benedict XVI proclaimed his opposition to abortion. Using a phrase that refers to the church's bans on abortion and euthanasia, Benedict XVI stated, "[Pope John Paul II] underlined in an unequivocal way the inviolability of human beings, the inviolability of human life from conception to natural death."

- *Day 64:*
In the 21 June release of *The Europe of Benedict: In the Crisis of Cultures*, Benedict XVI's first book as pope (although written beforehand), he argues that the church can never accept legal abortion and that anyone who supports abortion "ends by losing his own identity."²²
- *Day 80:*
In a working draft of a document on the Eucharist being prepared for October, Benedict XVI accused Roman Catholics of failing in their practice of religion and behaving "scandalously" for receiving communion despite their support of the right of a woman to choose abortion. According to the document, "Some receive communion while denying the teachings of the Church or publicly supporting immoral choices in life, such as abortion, without thinking that they are committing an act of grave personal dishonesty and causing scandal."²³

Gay Marriage & Civil Unions

From the earliest days of his papacy, the new pontiff has taken a firm stand against:

- *Day 4:*
Same-sex marriage legislation in Spain;
- *Day 25:*
The Episcopal church's willingness to bless same-sex couples;
- *Day 59:*
Switzerland's changing moral code and policies that threaten "the perpetuation of life, respect for the ill and the dying, the role of family and the unquestionability of marriage," and
- *Day 60:*
A wide-reaching civil union bill in New Zealand.^{24,25}

Railing against "divorces and irregular unions," Benedict XVI declared that the church must continue to assert that only the life-long union of a man and woman can serve as the basis of the family (Day 47).²⁶ He echoed this theme at the Diocese of Rome's 6 June (Day 49) conference on the family, complaining that "free unions, trial marriages and ... pseudo-matrimonies by people of the same sex" as "expressions of an anarchic freedom."²⁷ On 1 July (Day 74), a day after Spain approved same-sex marriage and as Canada moved steadily toward legalization, the Vatican paper *L'Osservatore Romano* condemned the legislation in both countries as "violent and direct attacks against the family."

Italy's Assisted Fertility Referendum

On Day 42, the pope publicly backed a boycott of Italy's referendum on medically assisted fertility restrictions.²⁸ During his 24 June (Day 67) official visit with the Italian president, the pope acknowledged the importance of separation between church and State, but also made clear his intention to intervene on occasion. Italians must be especially vigilant regarding "the problem of safeguarding the family based on matrimony, as recognized by the Italian Constitution, the problem of the defense of human life," he told President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi.²⁹

4.3 The Church as State

From the earliest days of his papacy, Benedict XVI has demonstrated his keen interest in foreign affairs and the Vatican's role as a political entity. He has met with heads of states and ambassadors from all over the world, he has interceded in legislative initiatives and he has proffered advice on everything from EU membership to advancing rights for gays and lesbians.

- *Day 24:*

On 12 May, Benedict XVI called on all countries that had not yet established diplomatic relations with the Vatican to do so soon and publicly sent greetings to civil authorities of countries without Vatican missions, "hoping to see them represented very soon to the Holy See."³⁰ The move was widely perceived as an overture to China and a threat to Taiwan, and the following weeks proved this intent.

- *Day 65:*

Foreign Minister Archbishop Giovanni Lajolo, returning from a Vatican mission through Southeast Asia, declared on Vatican Radio on 22 June that "there are no insurmountable problems [with establishing diplomatic relations with China]. But we need to move forward with prudence and make sure some necessary conditions are met on both sides."³¹

- *Day 71:*

The Vatican and China demonstrated a warming in relations on Tuesday, 28 June when for the first time, the government-backed Chinese Catholic church ordained a new bishop of Shanghai that was approved by the Holy See.

5.0 Conclusion: Work Undone

Perhaps the most striking indicator of the new pope's intentions comes less from his actions than what he has not done. At the time of this writing, 91 days have passed. Benedict XVI has participated in 150 formal meetings, met with dozens of policy makers from around the world (including all the ambassadors to the Holy See, the heads of state of Italy, Bulgaria, Macedonia, the Slovak Republic, El Salvador and seven African nations, as well as influential Jewish leaders and other prominent religious figures), issued more than 91 public statements, published a book and released a new *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

During these early days, the pope has made multiple overtures toward the Jewish community and the Orthodox church. He has reached out to Africa, Latin America, Europe, China, Buddhists and the World Council of Churches. He has promoted the “evangelization” of the church and the importance of missionary work.

He has not held serious meetings with women, sex abuse survivors, gay and lesbian Catholics or reform groups.

Despite initial hopes, it appears that this papacy will not only operate as a true heir to the philosophy and agenda of John Paul II, but also one that reinforces and advances hard line positions against many of the reforms sought by Catholics throughout the world.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared and written by Michelle A. Ringuette, Communications Director of Catholics for a Free Choice. Molly O’Gorman participated in the research and preparation of this report. Final responsibility for the statements and views expressed herein rests with Catholics for a Free Choice.

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- ² A full list of the recommendations, as well as daily reports of the activities of the Vatican and its attendant agencies, can be found at www.Pope-Watch.org.
- ³ "Immunity in suit sought for pope," *Houston Chronicle*, 28 May 2005.
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Please cite as: Catholics for a Free Choice. *The Making of a Papacy: The First One Hundred Days of Pope Benedict XVI*. Washington, DC: Catholics for a Free Choice, 2005.