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OPINION | OUR VIEW

Pope Charts Fresh
Course For Church

These are interesting times in the Catholic church, due in part to the very interesting man who is now the church's shepherd.

Pope Francis came to the Vatican earlier this year as the first Latin American and Jesuit pontiff. That singular stature, it turns out, represented a very fresh wind of change that the man once known as Jorge Mario Bergoglio would bring to the ancient halls in Rome.

The change was widely noted Monday when the pope, speaking with reporters in an extraordinary impromptu press conference aboard the Vatican jet as he flew from Brazil back to Rome, was asked about priests who are gay though not sexually active. Francis broke with what has been the traditional Vatican line when he said, rather simply, "Who am I to judge a gay person of goodwill who seeks the Lord? You can't marginalize these people."

While he also reinforced church doctrine by labeling homosexual acts a sin, his response to the question opened a new door for the church, which in 1986 sternly defined homosexuality as an "objective disorder."

But there is much more more to these changing times in the Catholic church than Pope Francis's remarks on Monday.

Other examples could be found throughout his trip to his Latin American home turf. No advocate of the status quo, Pope Francis exhorted a crowd of young Argentine Catholics to "make a mess" in their home diocese and "stir things up. ... I want trouble in the dioceses!"

Speaking at a cathedral in Rio de Janeiro, Francis declared that the Catholic church "must be taken to the streets," according to the BBC. "Don't forget to disturb complacency," he pleaded, "but please don't water down the faith!"

He also cited the importance of females to Catholicism — saying the church would be "sterile" without women. While he still said the issue of female priests was a closed door, he did call for dynamically expanded roles for women.

These fit in with many other acts and gestures during his first five months that have showcased Francis's engaging humility and compassion. He broke a historical precedent by washing the feet of a Muslim woman. He's also invited homeless people to dine at the Vatican. He has chosen not to live in the luxurious papal apartment, he dresses simply, lugs his own carry-on bag onto the Vatican jet, opts for a used Ford Focus and has taken to Twitter.

Pope Francis appears to be a leader determined to shake up his church — that is, to shake out the doldrums that have arguably hindered the church's hierarchy in recent decades. He is reaching out to a 21st century world where old rules and customs don't necessarily apply but, he believes, where the church's core teachings are as relevant and practical as ever. But to do that, the church must also be responsive to the people, and not simply vice versa. That's why he calls for "trouble in the diocese" and taking the church "to the streets."

It will be fascinating to watch Pope Francis and the course on which he guides the church in the days ahead. While there are controversies, scandals and headaches that must be confronted, there are also opportunities to be seized. The Catholic church seems to have found a leader who can do both.

kmh

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, July 31, the 212th day of 2013. There are 153 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On July 31, 1777, the Marquis de Lafayette, a 19-year-old French nobleman, was made a major-general in the American Continental Army.

On this date: In 1556, St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus, died in Rome.

In 1875, the 17th president of the United States, Andrew Johnson, died in Carter County, Tenn., at age 66.

In 1919, Germany's Weimar Constitution was adopted by the republic's National Assembly.

In 1930, the radio character "The Shadow" made his debut as narrator of the "Detective Story Hour" on CBS Radio.

In 1933, the radio series "Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy," made its debut on CBS radio station WBBM in Chicago.

In 1942, Oxfam International had its beginnings as the Oxford Committee for Famine Relief was founded in England.

In 1953, Sen. Robert A. Taft of Ohio, known as "Mr. Republican," died in New York at age 63.

In 1971, Apollo 15 crew members David Scott and James Irwin became the first astronauts to use a lunar rover on the surface of the moon.

In 1972, Democratic vice-presidential candidate Thomas Eagleton withdrew from the ticket with George McGovern following disclosures that Eagleton had once undergone psychiatric treatment.

In 1973, Delta Air Lines Flight 723, a DC-9, crashed while trying to land at Boston's Logan International Airport, killing all 89 people on board.

In 1989, a pro-Iranian group in Lebanon released a grisly videotape showing the body of American hostage William R. Higgins, a Marine lieutenant-colonel, dangling from a rope.

In 1991, President George H.W. Bush and Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty in Moscow.

Ten years ago: The Vatican launched a global campaign against gay marriages, warning Catholic politicians that support of same-sex unions was "gravely immoral" and urging non-Catholics to join the offensive. Two of ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's daughters and their nine children were granted refuge in Jordan.

Five years ago: Three teenagers were shot to death when a gunman opened fire on a group of young people who'd gathered to go swimming in

the Menominee River near Niagara, Wis. (The gunman, Scott J. Johnson, was later sentenced to life in prison without parole.) Scientists reported the Phoenix spacecraft had confirmed the presence of frozen water in Martian soil.

One year ago: Three Indian electric grids collapsed in a cascade, cutting power to 620 million people in the world's biggest blackout. Wrapping up an overseas trip, Republican presidential contender Mitt Romney said in Warsaw that Poland's economy was a model of small government and free enterprise that other nations should emulate. At the London games, the team of Gabrielle Douglas, McKayla Maroney, Alexandra Raisman, Kyla Ross and Jordyn Wieber won the first U.S. Olympic team title in women's gymnastics since 1996. Michael Phelps broke the Olympic medals record with his 19th as the United States romped to a dominating win in the 4 x 200-meter freestyle relay. Author, playwright, politician and commentator Gore Vidal, 86, died in Los Angeles.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Don Murray is 84. Jazz composer-musician Kenny Burrell is 82. Actor Geoffrey Lewis is 78. Actress France Nuyen is 74. Actress Susan Flannery is 74. Singer Lobo is 70. Actress Geraldine Chaplin is 69. Former movie studio executive Sherry Lansing is 69. Singer Gary Lewis is 68. Actor Lane Davies is 63. International Tennis Hall of Famer Evonne Goolagong Cawley is 62. Actor Barry Van Dyke is 62. Actor Alan Autry is 61. Jazz composer-musician Michael Wolff is 61. Actor James Read is 60. Actor Michael Biehn is 57. Massachusetts Gov. Deval Patrick is 57. Rock singer-musician Daniel Ash (Love and Rockets) is 56. Entrepreneur Mark Cuban is 55. Rock musician Bill Berry is 55. Actor Wesley Snipes is 51. Country singer Chad Brock is 50. Musician Fatboy Slim is 50. Rock musician Jim Corr is 49. Author J.K. Rowling is 48. Actor Dean Cain is 47. Actor Ben Chaplin is 44. Actor Loren Dean is 44. Actress Eve Best is 42. Retired NFL quarterback Gus Frerotte is 42. Actress Annie Parisse is 38. Actor Robert Telfer is 36. Country singer-musician Zac Brown is 35. Actor-producer-writer B.J. Novak is 34. Actor Eric Lively is 32. Country singer Blaire Stroud (3 of Hearts) is 30. Singer Shannon Curfman is 28. Actor Rico Rodriguez (TV: "Modern Family") is 15.

Thought for Today: "History is idle gossip about a happening whose truth is lost the instant it has taken place." — Gore Vidal (1925-2012).

FROM THE BIBLE

To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen. Jude 25. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Check Out 'Oklahoma!'

Toots Marchand, Yankton

Tired of sitting and watching TV reruns? Here's help.

Go to the Dakota Theatre in downtown Yankton and buy a

ticket for the Lewis and Clark Theatre Company's production of "Oklahoma!" The show will entertain you with great music, humorous dialogue, fun dancing and super showmanship. Catch it this weekend.



Paying For Executive Pay

BY ROBERT B. REICH

American Voices

Almost everyone knows CEO pay is out of control. It surged 16 percent at big companies last year, according to the *New York Times*, and the typical CEO raked in \$15.1 million.

Meanwhile, the median wage continued to drop, adjusted for inflation.

What's less well-known is that you and I and other taxpayers are subsidizing this sky-high executive compensation. That's because corporations deduct it from their income taxes, causing the rest of us to pay more in taxes to make up the difference.

This tax subsidy to corporate executives from the rest of us ought to be one of the first tax expenditures to go, when and if Congress turns to reforming the tax code.

We almost got there 20 years ago. When he was campaigning for the presidency, Bill Clinton promised that if elected he'd end the deductibility of executive pay in excess of \$1 million.

Once in office, though, his economic advisers urged him to modify his pledge to allow corporations to deduct executive pay in excess of \$1 million if the pay was linked to corporate performance — that is, to the value of the company's shares.

(I hate to sound like a told-you-so, but I was the one adviser who wanted the new president to stick to his campaign promise without creating the pay-for-performance loophole.)

Clinton agreed with the majority of his advisers, and a new provision was added to the Internal Revenue Code, Section 162(m), allowing corporations to deduct from their tax bills executive compensation in excess of \$1 million — but only if the compensation is tied to company performance.

How has it worked out? Even Sen. Charles Grassley, the ranking Republican on the Senate Finance Committee, agrees it's been a sham: "162(m) is broken. ... It was well-intentioned. But it really hasn't worked at all. Companies have found it easy to get around the law. It has more holes than Swiss cheese. And it seems to have encouraged the options industry. These sophisticated folks are working with Swiss-watch-like devices to game this Swiss-cheese-like rule."

One such game has been to hand out performance awards on the basis of nothing more than an upward drift in the value of the stock market as a whole, over which the executives

Robert
REICH

played no role other than watch as their company's stock price rose along with that of almost every other company.

There's no reason top executives should get a tax subsidy from the rest of us simply because the entire stock market has done well. Logically, a company's share price — and any executive performance tied to it — should be measured only relative to a broad index of the market as a whole.

Another game has been to back-date executive stock options to match past dips in the companies' share price, thereby exaggerating the subsequent upswing and creating fatter "performance" bonuses.

Officially, companies are required to report all options issuances within two days of the date of issue. Unofficially, companies — and their executives — still have huge discretion over when they issue options, aided by a small industry of compensation experts and accountants.

A third game has been to lowball the earnings estimates that set the initial thresholds for performance pay. Then, when the real earnings come in over those estimates (as they almost always do), companies give out fat "performance" awards.

Shareholders get taken to the cleaners by all these maneuvers. Executive pay is skyrocketing even at companies whose share prices have dropped.

But it's not only shareholders who lose. You and I and other taxpayers are also being ripped off, because this so-called "performance" pay is deducted from corporations' taxable earnings.

The Economic Policy Institute estimates that from 2007 to 2010, a total of \$121.5 billion in executive compensation was deducted from corporate earnings, and roughly 55 percent of this total was for performance-based compensation. Given all the games, it's likely much of this "performance" was baloney.

So what's the answer? As I argued 20 years ago, keep the pay cap at \$1 million and get rid of the performance-pay loophole. Corporations shouldn't be able to deduct executive pay in excess of \$1 million, period.

Robert Reich, former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of "Beyond Outrage," now available in paperback. He blogs at www.robertreich.org.

The Case Of Weiner's Schnitzel

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

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WASHINGTON — Would that Anthony Weiner were old news.

But no. He won't quit. Only a man who distributed online photos of His Own Self could imagine denial as virtue.

Weiner's stubbornness is likely based on two probabilities: First is that he can outlast the electorate's attention span, which gnats regard with envy. A second pertains to Daniel Patrick Moynihan's observation that our nation was defining deviancy down — normalizing the deviant to accommodate our moral decay.

If you can't fix it, in other words, make it "normal." Divorce, pornography, unwed parenthood, "sexting," whatever. If everyone's doing it, then it can't be wrong. Right?

Moynihan, the great New York senator, was prescient by any standard and politically incorrect by today's. He spoke truth in ways that would earn him exile from our current silly state. If only we could figure out how to swap him with this other New Yorker, whose fixation on his Johnny Rocket puts one in mind not of a statesman but of a baby on the changing table.

Indeed, Weiner's concerns are so little removed from a kindergartner's (allowing a slight chronological progression out of respect for the recently born), that his persistent campaign is incomprehensible. Equally so is the complicity of his steadfast, obviously ambitious (if well-liked, as all Washington is required to concede) wife.

There is a third operative probability — that

The People, who once forgave Weiner in the spirit of second chances, would forgive him again. But this time, it isn't only that Weiner was tweeting shots of his barely concealed appendage. It is that, posing online as "Carlos Danger" (not "Peligroso?"), he continued to send similar tweets to much-younger female strangers, inviting them to comment on his assets while playing up his political power.

"I'm huge," he said, while doubtless winking at himself in a mirror.

Specifically, Weiner sought the approval of one "Sydney Leathers," 23, who now is featured in a two-piece swimsuit spread on the New York Post's website — cavorting, splashing and telegraphing non-verbal come-hithers of a sort that must have kept Weiner riveted to his palm pilot.

What a perfect pair.

The exhibitionist compulsion, now a viral plague thanks to the mixed blessing of social media, was once considered not de rigueur but repugnant. In Moynihan's time, the well-bred

Kathleen
PARKER

kept their private concerns (including politics and religion) private, not only because it was no one's business but because it was otherwise boorish.

Showing one's schnitzel to a random collection of "friends" and "followers" was, needless to say, inconceivable to any but the occasional pervers, who was recognized as such. What is Anthony Weiner but a flasher who, in a saner world, would be arrested for indecent exposure? But for the missing rumpled raincoat, what's the difference between a man tweeting his shenanigan to strangers online and exposing himself to a stranger on the street?

Not much except for our acceptance of deviant behavior. Community standards are impossible to impose on a global horde and so there are no standards. The liberated id — uninhibited, impulsive and self-gratifying — thrives without restraint, tyrannizing the culture under the banner of freedom. As a result, we have erased the line between adult behavior (as in grown-up, not X-rated) and childish expression.

Technology, ironically, seems to have produced an inverse effect on behavior. The more advanced our ability to express ourselves, the more primitive our expressions. Pornography is the perfect vehicle for the animal tendency toward exhibitionism so perfectly mastered by our baboon brethren. To make the obscene more palatable, we have cutesified the language, inventing new words that make the serious seem silly and inconsequential. Weiner was only "sexting," sending out explicit "selfies" to the virtual world.

Besides, say Weiner's few remaining defenders, he's still smart! Really? How smart can a man be who tweets his parts to countless "followers," tries to blame a hacker, then continues to pursue online fantasies with strangers well after he allegedly stopped — and still thinks he should be mayor of New York City?

Who follows such a man? Apparently, Rome does, at least in the news sense. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, recently said he won't judge Weiner and cited both the compassion of Pope Francis and God's redemptive preference.

So noted. But for those whose immediate concerns are more secular than divine, the voting booth provides a parallel confessional. To forgive may be divine, but to reward obscene behavior is deviancy of a lower order.

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