

Cross-Section Of Religious Life To Greet Pope Francis In US

BY ALANNA DURKIN
Associated Press

When Pope Francis arrives at the White House at the start his U.S. visit, he will be greeted by a cross-section of American religious life — from leaders of major evangelical groups to liberal Protestants and a Roman Catholic nun who leads bus tours advocating for social justice.

Also present will be a gay Catholic blogger who credits compassionate statements by the pontiff for bringing him back to the church.

Thousands are expected on the South Lawn on Sept. 23 to help President Barack Obama greet Francis as he embarks on a tour through Washington, New York and Philadelphia that will include Masses, meetings with immigrants and speeches to Congress and the United Nations.

Among those who confirmed their attendance at the White House reception are the Rev. Joel Hunter, an evangelical megachurch pastor from Florida who is a confidant of Obama on

spiritual matters; the Rev. Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals, which represents about 40 conservative Christian denominations; and the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, a major U.S. Latino evangelical group that, along with the U.S. Roman Catholic bishops, has pressed lawmakers for immigration reform.

Also in the audience will be Episcopal Bishop Gene Robinson, the first openly gay Anglican bishop who's now a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress, a think-tank with ties to the Democratic Party, and Sister Simone Campbell, executive director of the Catholic social justice lobby NETWORK, and a leader of the "Nuns on the Bus" advocacy tours.

Campbell's group had been singled out in the Vatican investigation of the main umbrella group of U.S. nuns, an inquiry that began under Francis' predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. The investigation ended this year with no

major changes for the nuns' leadership group, and with a thank you from Francis for the work of religious sisters.

On this visit, the pope is expected to highlight the need for a generous welcome to immigrants and protection of the environment — two priorities of his pontificate.

"I think it's so important that the pope is visiting because his global message is especially important for the United States," said Campbell, who will also attend the pope's speech to a joint meeting of Congress. "His message of changing our throwaway culture and to address the crisis of exploitation is really the key to changing our world to be more inclusive in the economy and more caretaking about the earth — and a lot of this policy starts in the U.S."

A White House spokesman did not respond to requests for details of the reception. But more than 13,000 people filled the South Lawn when Pope Benedict XVI visited in 2008.

The ceremony for Francis

falls on Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement and one of the most important days of the year for Jews, which means American Jewish leaders aren't expected to attend. Still, the reception will showcase the theological breadth of the country's religious groups. Imam Mohamed Magid, who leads the All Dulles Area Muslim Society, a mosque with thousands of members in the Washington area, will also attend the event.

"I hope he'll see there's tremendous good in this country," said Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia, in recent remarks about the pope's five-day visit. Chaput will host Francis at the Vatican's World Meeting of Families on Sept. 26 and Sept. 27.

Francis and Obama will talk privately after the South Lawn reception. The president hopes to discuss the environment, immigrants and refugees, and "protecting religious minorities and promoting religious freedom around the world," the White House said.

Iran Nuclear Deal Survives

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Democrats voted to uphold the hard-fought nuclear accord with Iran on Thursday, overcoming ferocious GOP opposition and delivering President Barack Obama a legacy-making victory on his top foreign policy priority.

A disapproval resolution for the agreement fell two votes short of the 60 needed to move forward as most Democratic and independent senators banded together against it. Although House Republicans continued to pursue eleventh-hour strategies to derail the international accord and Senate Republicans promised a re-vote, Thursday's outcome all but guaranteed that the disapproval legislation would not reach Obama's desk.

As a result the nuclear deal will move forward unchecked by Congress, an improbable win by Obama in the face of unanimous opposition from Republicans who control Capitol Hill, GOP candidates seeking to replace him in the Oval Office and the state of Israel and its allied lobbyists in the U.S.

Beginning next week, Obama will be free to start scaling back U.S. sanctions to implement the agreement negotiated by Iran, the U.S. and five other world powers. The accord aims to constrain Iran's nuclear ambitions in exchange for hundreds of billions of dollars in relief from international sanctions.

"This vote is a victory for diplomacy, for American national security and for the safety and security of the world," the president said in a statement. "Going forward, we will turn to the critical work of implementing and verifying this deal so that Iran cannot pursue a nuclear weapon."

Asylum Seekers' Long Road Turns Cold

BUDAPEST, Hungary (AP) — Soaked to the bone and ankle deep in mud, thousands of people seeking refuge in Europe are finding that their path to a new life is growing harder by the hour.

Torrential rains poured as an unprecedented 7,000 trek-kers crossed the Greek border into Macedonia on Thursday past rows of camouflage-jacketed police. Children stumbled into mud-filled potholes and had to be pulled back out, bawling, into their mothers' arms. People struggled to find anything — plastic sheets, garbage bags, even a beach umbrella — to shield themselves from an unrelenting deluge.

And yet nothing could dampen their hopes of reaching the heart of Europe, where asylum and border security systems are already in danger of being overwhelmed in the migration crisis.

"I'm not going to be afraid of anything," said Waseem Absi, a 30-year-old from Ariha in northern Syria, as he held a disassembled pup tent over his head and trudged up a muddy slope alongside four friends. He said he hopes to reunite with relatives in the Netherlands.

The sudden onset of autumn has taken tens of thousands by surprise all along the Balkans route from Greece to Hungary, the main gateway to Western Europe for more than 160,000 asylum seekers already this year.

Trials For Officers Will Stay In Baltimore

BALTIMORE (AP) — Despite the days of riots, protests and a multimillion-dollar settlement that followed the death of Freddie Gray, a fair trial can be held in Baltimore for the six officers charged in Gray's arrest and death, a judge ruled Thursday.

While the decision may be a blow to defense attorneys, the judge left open the possibility of revisiting his ruling if they cannot find impartial jurors who have not been influenced by coverage of the case. Legal experts say it's likely the defense will continue to ask for the trials to be moved outside of the city.

Baltimore Circuit Judge Barry Williams said finding a place that hasn't been inundated by coverage would be nearly impossible.

Cappel

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"He was a really good people person," the YAPG official said. "Bob always had a smile on his face and a skip in his step. It just didn't seem like anything let him down."

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

As the Chamber economic development director at the time, Ron Kraft worked with Cappel for a number of years. During their tenure, the new Chamber offices were built.

Cappel showed a willingness to take on any project, Kraft said. "If Bob had a fault, it was that he couldn't say no to anything," he added.

While upbeat and soft spoken, Cappel also showed a firm resolve in promoting Yankton and telling the community's story, Steward said.

"Bob always fought for the members here. He was really an advocate for them, whether it was local, state or federal issues," Steward said. "He went to Washington and Pierre, and he fought on their behalf."

Chamber Executive Director Carmen Schramm saw the similar commitment in Cappel as her predecessor. Through her previous sales job, Schramm had met Cappel when he worked for the Lexington, Nebraska, Chamber before coming to Yankton.

"Bob was incredibly passionate about his service to the business community. He was a dedicated servant to non-profits as well," she said. "He helped establish Keep Yankton Beautiful (KYB), whose projects continue to create beauty throughout Yankton. Bob has left a legacy of service in our community."

Cappel showed a deep patriotism and respect for the military and veterans, Schramm said. He also showed calmness in handling any situation.

"Bob was a very caring soul," she said. "I had never seen that man get angry. I

can't imagine he ever raised his voice."

Lynn Peterson, market president at CorTrust Bank, served with Cappel on Chamber committees and saw the same even temperament along with a fair treatment of each person. Cappel also showed a dry, witty sense of humor.

Those attributes served Cappel well in dealing with the widely diverse viewpoints and expectations from around 500 Chamber members, Peterson said.

In his personal life, Cappel showed devotion to his family and a passion for baseball and the University of Nebraska teams, Peterson added.

"My oldest son was in a Legion baseball game this past summer, and Bob was at the game," Peterson said. "We had a great conversation, and he was in great spirits."

Nate Franzen, president of the agri-business division at First Dakota National Bank, saw similar Cappel attributes while serving as Chamber president.

"Bob was always very supportive of Yankton. He understood the importance of telling our story," Franzen said. "He always wanted to do what was right for the community. He was real strong in his values and his commitments."

A LEAP OF FAITH

Both Peterson and Franzen said they weren't surprised that Cappel left his Chamber position after 11 years to enter the ministry in 2009.

"You're totally shifting gears when you go from serving around (500) members in a Chamber to serving 500 people in a church. But that was Bob's true calling," Peterson said. "You have to respect somebody willing to make that change and start an entirely new career."

Johnson has served First United Methodist Church in Yankton for the past five years. However, he previously knew Cappel for three years when they served together on a district committee.

In fact, the district superintendent told Johnson that Cappel would be a major asset in serving as senior pastor for the Yankton church.

Cappel was already providing strong leadership as a church member but felt the call to take it further, Johnson said. In deciding to pursue the ministry, Cappel became a licensed pastor through a course of study offered at Morningside College in Sioux City, affiliated with the United Methodist Church.

When the Yankton church had a vacancy, Cappel applied for and was chosen as associate pastor.

"Bob had many gifts and graces. He was working with the different kinds of people (throughout his career). He tried to build bridges and make sure that people would meet each other halfway," Johnson said. "He was a visionary and had lots of ideas, thoughts and dreams. He was able to listen to people. In turn, people loved sitting down and sharing their lives and concerns with him."

However, the career change challenged Cappel in a number of ways, Johnson said.

"You have been doing things a certain way, and just the fact that you have done one thing most of your life. All of a sudden, you're thrown into a different routine with different demands," Johnson said. "But in every situation, Bob handled it with grace and with joy and a passion that people really felt around him."

Cappel filled a number of roles, from preparing the church for worship and delivering sermons to working with programs to visiting and providing communion for the elderly and shut-ins, Johnson said.

"Last Sunday, during a sermon, I asked people how many of were here today (in church) because Bob reached out to us," Johnson said. "A number of hands went up. One couple came up to me after church, and the woman had tears in her eyes. She wanted us to make sure that

Bob knew they wouldn't have been (at the church) if it wasn't for Bob reaching out to them."

Cappel was also active in groups such as the retirees called the XYZ club – Extra Years of Zest – which met monthly for coffee, Johnson said.

"He was the kind of guy that made you feel better about life," Johnson said.

Funeral services are set for 11 a.m. Tuesday at the church. Visitation is set for 5-8 p.m. Monday at the church with a prayer service at 7 p.m.

In honor of Cappel's love for the University of Nebraska, plans call for playing the Husker fight song, Johnson said.

"We want to celebrate his life and bring comfort to his family, and we want to give thanks to God for having had Bob," he added.

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