

Pope Francis Named 'Time's Person of the Year'

Time magazine named **Pope Francis** its Person of the Year on Wednesday, crediting him with shifting the message of the Catholic Church while capturing the imagination of millions of people who had become disillusioned with the Vatican.

This is the third time the magazine has chosen a pope as its Person of the Year. *Time* gave that honor to Pope John Paul II in 1994 and to Pope John XXIII in 1963.

The Argentine pontiff—who, as archbishop of Buenos Aires was known as the slum cardinal for his visits to the poor and penchant for subway travel—beat former U.S. National Security Agency contractor Edward Snowden and gay rights activist Edith Windsor for the award.

Other finalists included Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and U.S. Senator Ted Cruz from Texas.

"What makes this Pope so important is the speed with which he has captured the imaginations of millions who had given up on hoping for the church at all," *Time* said in its cover story.

"In a matter of months, Francis has elevated the healing mission of the church—the church as servant and comforter of hurting people in an often harsh world—above the doctrinal police work so important to his recent predecessors."

Time said the final selection was made by its editors, who had considered suggestions from the magazine's more than 2 million Twitter followers.

Vatican spokesman Father Federico Lombardi said Pope Francis, the first non-European pope in 1,300 years, the first from Latin America and the first Jesuit, was not seeking fame.

“It is a positive sign that one of the most prestigious recognitions by the international media has been given to a person who proclaims to the world spiritual, religious and moral values and speaks out forcefully in favor of peace and greater justice,” Lombardi said in a statement.

“If this attracts men and women and gives them hope, the Pope is happy. If this choice of ‘Person of the Year’ means that many have understood this message, even implicitly, he is certainly glad.”

In September, Francis gave a groundbreaking and frank interview, in which he said the Vatican must shake off an obsession with teachings on abortion, contraception and homosexuality, and become more merciful.

And in July, Francis told reporters he was not in a position to judge homosexuals who are of good will and in search of God, marking a break from his predecessor, Benedict, who said homosexuality was an intrinsic disorder.

Francis replaced Benedict in March after he abdicated.

The new pope’s style is characterized by frugality. He shunned the spacious papal apartment in the Vatican’s Apostolic Palace to live in a small suite in a Vatican guest house, and he prefers a Ford Focus to the traditional pope’s Mercedes.

A champion of the downtrodden, he visited the island of Lampedusa in southern Italy in July to pay tribute to hundreds of migrants who had died crossing the sea from North Africa.

With the **Catholic Church** marred in recent years by sex abuse scandals, Francis formed a team of experts Thursday to consider ways to improve the screening of priests, to protect minors to help victims.

Still, Barbara Blaine, president of the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP), a victim advocacy group, said

in a statement Wednesday that more action was needed.

“After nine months of essentially ignoring the church’s most severe crisis, (Pope Francis) hastily announced last week that he’ll appoint an abuse study panel,” Blaine said. “He has not, however, made a single child safer.”

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