

New Vatican spokesman follows the church's latest trend

Maureen Fiedler | Jun. 26, 2012 NCR Today

[The Guardian reports](#) [1] that Pope Benedict has selected Greg Burke, 52, the Rome correspondent for Fox News, to take on the strategic communications role at the Vatican Secretariat of State. Burke is also a member of the traditionalist group, Opus Dei.

Moreover, Burke is apparently a "numerary" member of Opus Dei. In other words, the Opus Dei membership for him is central to his life, not just another affiliation. Numeraries are unmarried, usually live in Opus Dei houses and contribute much of their earnings to Opus Dei. Burke is an American who grew up in St. Louis.

A major part of Burke's job is apparently to improve the Vatican's image in the media worldwide. No small task. Just in the last few months, the head of the Vatican Bank has been sacked, there have been serious leaks of private information, and the pope's personal butler has been arrested.

There are also signs of a shake-up in the Vatican bureaucracy, since -- again, [according to The Guardian](#) [1] -- Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, the Secretary of State, was apparently not consulted about this appointment.

All this provides stark new evidence of the mentality of the Vatican these days. It has been falling backward toward the 19th century for some time now, and the choice of a Fox News/Opus Dei person is one more piece of evidence of that trend.

Is it any wonder that the friend of mine who sent me this story asked wistfully, "Are the Vatican and the tea party now consubstantial?"

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[1] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/24/pope-fox-news-reporter?newsfeed=true>