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Finding the humor in news of the papal resignation

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NCR Today

Since pretty much everyone had an opinion about the announced papal resignation yesterday, of course comedians had to get in their two cents, too. Uber-Catholic Stephen Colbert dedicated most of his show to the topic, with guests Jesuit Fr. James Martin and author Garry Wills. The best line of the night had to be: "The pope is quitting? Popes don't quit. God has a way of telling popes when it's time to retire. It's called death."

Colbert got out the "Papal Speculatron 7500" and did some handicapping, giving the "Colbert bump" to New York's Cardinal Timothy Dolan. (The Colbert bump is the increase in popularity of a person after they appear with Colbert. Dolan, Colbert and Martin appeared together last year at Fordham University.)

The Colbert Report

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Colbert also slammed Chris Matthews, who compared papal handicapping a horse race: "The heir of St. Peter, the Vicar of Christ, the rock on whom Jesus built his church? Yeah, basically the same as the Iowa straw polls."

Martin, the "chaplain of the Colbert Nation," was pretty funny, too, holding his own with Colbert. When Colbert asserted that America has the best Catholics, Martin responded, "It's shocking that other people don't see that." Colbert gets kudos for coming up with the papal name "Urban" when Martin asks him

what name he would choose if he were pope. "Not Suburban the first?" Martin quipped.

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Jon Stewart also did a bit on the papal resignation with a segment titled, "Holy quit!"

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The Daily Show with Jon Stewart

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The satirical Onion also had its say with a story headlined: "Resigning pope no longer has strength to lead church backward." And blogger Claire Zulkey at WBEZ, the NPR station in Chicago, penned a pretty funny list of "Reasons why I'd make a pretty good pope," including:

"When pop culture makes fun of Catholicism, instead of embarrassing us by getting all outraged I'll say something more along the lines of 'Okay, you got us, that was pretty good.' "

Here's hoping Catholics can have the same response to the inevitable pokes of Catholicism that will be coming during the attention that comes from this historic transition.

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