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## Young progressive Catholics react to Pope Francis' election

by Kate Childs Graham

NCR Today  
Pope Francis

As the red velvet curtains were pulled back and Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio -- now Pope Francis -- spoke the first words of his papacy, young Catholics took to the Internet, sharing their thoughts and hopes about the new pope through email, Facebook and Twitter. Here are initial reactions, sent to me moments after the announcement, from six young progressive Catholics:

"I am relieved to hear that the Latin American Jesuit Cardinal Bergoglio has been elected as Bishop of Rome and took the name Francis. By asking for blessings from the gathered community -- both present and throughout the world -- before he gave his own blessing, I am hopeful that Pope Francis will be a priest for the people, following in the footsteps of other Latin American Jesuits." ? Cody Maynus, 23, St. Joseph, Minn.

"Francis I has chosen the name of Francis of Assisi, who God told to 'rebuild my church.' While he is a man of great simplicity and compassion for the poor, he brings nothing revolutionary in terms of the equality for women or inclusion of our LGBT sisters and brothers. Pope Francis I, I pray that you will be open to the Spirit of God moving in all parts of the church, especially in the voices of survivors of sexual assault and violence, women, the poor, and our LGBT sisters and brothers. We are ready to rebuild the church with you." -- Johanna Hatch, 30, Verona, Wis.

"Wow! I am shocked at the election of the new pontiff. As an alumnus of Loyola High School of Los Angeles and Loyola Marymount University's M.A. Theology program -- and as a longtime devotee of St. Ignatius of Loyola -- I'm overjoyed to see the first ever Jesuit pope! Additionally, I'm surprised he took the name Francis I. Clearly, he aims to be a reformer in taking such a name as St. Francis of Asissi ...

Francis probably embodied the ideals of the Gospel more than any other Christian in history. I believe the Holy Spirit was truly at work! May Saints Ignatius of Loyola & Francis of Assisi -- and of course Saint Peter the Apostle -- pray for the new bishop of Rome." -- Ryan Ignatius Pratt, 34, Los Angeles

"I am excited to learn that Cardinal Bergoglio has been elected Pope of our Church. In what comes as a surprise selection to myself and many, I do appreciate the tremendous emphasis Cardinal Bergoglio has placed on caring for those on the margins of society back in Argentina. I suspect he will carry that emphasis to his new home: Vatican City!" -- Ryan Fecteau, 20, Cape Town, South Africa

"I am thrilled that the Cardinals chose a Pope with a well-established commitment to the world's poor. His choice of the name Francis signals his commitment to solidarity with the poor. I hope he'll use his global platform to remind those of us in rich countries how our lifestyles can harm the poor elsewhere, and to speak for simplicity and against inequality." -- Kate Ward, Boston

"As Pope Francis addressed the world for the first time I was initially unimpressed, especially as he has a reputation for being a rather traditional Jesuit, who is not as fervent about justice-oriented advocacy as many of his counterparts within his order may be. But as he spoke, I perceived a sincere humility emanating from his heart. Moreover, the choice of the name Francis evokes a spirit of genuine compassion, modesty, and concerted reform. Even if this choice seems like more of the same, I'll be doing my best to give the new pope the benefit of the doubt." -- Phillip Clark, 22, Baltimore

What are your initial reactions?

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