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Another media voice awakens to Francis phenom

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NCR Today

Check out what Chris Hayes of MSNBC is saying about Pope Francis. He asks: "Is it too early to say Francis is the best pope ever?"

In a way it is a bit sad it takes a personality to awaken someone to the faith. But, alas, such seems to be the case for many. In truth, the life styles and off putting excessive judgments from church bishops have turned many away. Now countless Catholics and others are taking a second take. Even more, they are seeing a personality on the international stage that is preaching the Gospels by his daily actions.

For the time being we are all so close to this story. It is so immediate. It is evolving every day. I mean every day there is something unexpected coming out of the Vatican. No other national or world leader I can remember has been so refreshingly present, so authentic and human. We've just not seen this in a Catholic prelate for ages.

Increasingly, it seems Francis is becoming the exclamation point behind the Second Vatican Council. He's not only preaching the council, he's living it by example, something more profound. Further, Francis is drawing so-called progressives and so-called conservatives together in the mission of the church as never before. Old fault lines between those who supported Vatican II and those who have been cool to it seem, for now, to have been diminished. In other words, Francis is acting as a pontiff, a bridge builder, should. He is a radical traditionalist. Now figure that out and tell me what you think.

By the way, check out NCR's new Francis Chronicles among the columnists and blogs below. In the words of *NCR* Editor Dennis Cody the new blog "reports on the ministry of the world's parish priest." It's not easy to keep up with Francis. The Chronicles will do what we can.

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