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Colbert puts Pope Francis 'on notice'

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The Francis Chronicles

While much of the news coverage has praised Pope Francis for his exclusive interview, at least one American pundit has put the pontiff "on notice."

Comedian Stephen Colbert, a Catholic himself, spent part of his Sept. 24 episode talking about the one-on-one interview arranged with Francis by a global network of Jesuit publications, including U.S.-based *America* magazine. He took particular issue "humorously of course" with one line from the 12,000 word interview, in which Francis said, "the proclamation of the saving love of God comes before moral and religious imperatives."

Colbert responded: "Love before rules? My favorite part of Catholicism is the rule following. It's the scorecard for getting into heaven."

The talk show host then said he had no choice but to put the pope on his "on notice" board, to some booing from the audience. For infrequent viewers of "The Colbert Report," the board makes occasional appearances as a way for the comedian to light heartedly call out various people, ideas and objects; in cases of people, being put "on notice" is often a not-so-subtle request for an appearance on the show. Others "on notice" include forgiveness, the band OK Go, distractions, Jane Fonda and grizzly bears.

Colbert then invited Jesuit Fr. Jim Martin, editor-at-large of *America* magazine and the official Colbert Nation chaplain, to "answer for the pope himself."

Martin agreed with Colbert when he interpreted Francis' words as saying love is more important than the rules.

"He is saying that, and that's what Jesus was saying as well. So he is basically embodying and just

emulating the teachings of Jesus and kind of reminding us of what's important in the church, and it's not rules, it's a person," Martin said.

Continuing to play the jaded Catholic over Francis, Colbert said one of the great things with a more conservative pope was that you could engage in political discussions on social issues with other Catholics and say "You know who's on my side? The pope. He's my wingman. All right, and the pope's got a great wingman because his wingman has wings.

"But I can't say that with this pope, because he's telling me not to use, talk about abortion or contraception or gay marriage as a divisive issue any more," Colbert said.

Martin clarified, saying "[Francis is] not saying those things are not important; he's saying there are other things that we need to be focused on that we have not been as focused on, which are love, compassion and mercy."

Both the "on notice" segment and full interview with Martin are available online at Colbertnation.com.

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