

The Wrath of God

The elevation of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger to head the Roman Catholic Church is a clear and concise message from the College of Cardinals: "We are royally teed off."

Everybody knows that the new Pontiff is a tough guy who will not only throw the moneychangers out of the Temple, he'll kick them in the behind as they leave the building. Pope Benedict believes strongly in good and evil and he's not shy about pointing fingers. His letter to American bishops about politicians and abortion cost John Kerry dearly in the last election.

The Cardinals, of course, perfectly understand that Benedict is not exactly a cuddly guy, and will not be "reaching out," as they say in California. But his hard-line theological approach appeals to Church elders who have had enough.

In the past three decades, church attendance in the USA and Western Europe has dropped through the floor. Just 25% of American Catholics attend mass weekly and the number is in the single digits in long-standing Catholic countries like France. Secularism now rules the western world, and there are not enough priests to serve the remaining faithful. How do you say things are not good in Latin?

In the face of this spiritual decline, the Catholic Church has decided to make a stand. It will not compromise and it will not pander. You either toe the line or hit the bricks. Up to you.

As a life-long Catholic, I don't like this approach, but I understand it. The west is now besieged by forces that want to wipe spirituality completely out of the public square. The American Civil Liberties Union is the point organization in this effort. It supports all abortion-on-demand, including late term, no parental consent for minors having abortions,

euthanasia with consent, gay marriage, and the free speech rights of the North American Man-Boy Love Association, which has posted instructions on how to rape children on its website.

The ACLU opposes public funding for the Boy Scouts because their oath mentions God, the Pledge of Allegiance in public schools, public displays of the baby Jesus at Christmas and any restraint on internet pornography in public libraries.

For the most part, the western media sympathizes with the ACLU and promotes its point-of-view. Thus, the secular message is a constant in our society, and the hits just keep on coming.

And where is the opposing point-of-view? Well, there are a few media outlets that give traditionalists a fair shake, but very few.

So the Catholic Cardinals feel isolated and surrounded. They can preach to the choir on Sunday but get battered by the news and entertainment media the rest of the week. A strong Papal voice countering that situation is soothing. And that's why Cardinal Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI.

I believe organized religion can be a champion of human rights and provide resistance to secular societies which, if they progress much further, will never be able to defeat the fanatical Islamic fundamentalists. The more permissive the western world becomes, the more it rejects discipline and avoids confronting evil, the greater the danger to freedom will be.

Pope Benedict is facing a rapidly changing world and perhaps he will be a strong and persuasive shepherd against evil. The danger is that he will be so rigid that he will erode the spiritual core even further, thereby helping the secularists.

But the new Pope may have an epiphany and realize good people will rally against evil if the case of clear and present

danger is made rationally and with compassion. I am praying that happens. The other side is hoping it will not.