



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on September 20, 2015

Vatican Recoils at White House Invitation List

"I can't wait to host him because I think it will help spark an even broader conversation of the sort that we're having today."

President Obama gushed this sentiment regarding Pope Francis last May at Georgetown University during a panel discussion entitled [Conversation on Poverty](#).

Yet the Pope's [meeting](#) with President Obama is already sparking intense debate, days before the scheduled event. The White House is planning a welcome ceremony on the South Lawn the morning of Wednesday, September 23. Though it is not clear how many impoverished Americans have tickets to this invitation-only event, Obama has invited homosexual activists, dissenting Catholic groups, an openly gay Episcopalian bishop, and a pro-abortion Catholic sister reprimanded in 2012 by the Vatican for her "radical feminist" views.



"According to a senior Vatican official," writes Francis Rocca for the [Wall Street Journal](#), "the Holy See worries that any photos of the pope with these guests ... could be interpreted as an endorsement of their activities." Rocca reported that White House press secretary Josh Earnest "cautioned against drawing any conclusions on specific guests 'because there will be 15,000 other people there, too.'" But Earnest denied knowing individual names on the guest list.

Others do not so readily dismiss the Vatican's objections. In his [American Thinker](#) blog, Rick Moran notes:

Is Obama ignorant of Catholic doctrine regarding same-sex marriage, transgenderism and abortion? Of course not. This is the gigantic pettiness of the man, who seeks to embarrass his guest to make a domestic political point about "tolerance" and "diversity."

The Catholic Church is not a democracy. The pope can't "change his mind" about gay marriage like most Democrats. The Catholic Church will never alter its position on abortion, nor will it recognize a human being's "right" to alter his sex whenever he feels like it.

It's like inviting a neo-Nazi to meet Benjamin Netanyahu. The inappropriateness of the gesture is astounding. But all the Vatican can do is protest — unless they cancel Francis' visit, which isn't going to happen.

The controversial invitees include retired Episcopal bishop Gene Robinson, who made headlines when he was ordained in New Hampshire in 2003, becoming his denomination's first openly homosexual bishop. In response, hundreds of parishes broke away from the Episcopal Church, forming the [Anglican Church in North America](#). Last year Robinson divorced his partner of 25 years, Mark Andrew. This was



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his second divorce, the first taking place in 1985 from his wife, with whom he has two children. Their split was over his homosexuality.

Also slated to welcome Pope Francis at the White House is Matteo Williamson, former co-chair of DignityUSA Transgender Caucus, a dissenting Catholic group that aims to change Catholic teaching on homosexuality. Born female, Williamson now “identifies as a transgender male,” according to her [bio](#) on the organization’s website. Williamson has received funding from leftist organizations such as the Davis-Putter Foundation and the National Organization of Gay and Lesbian Scientists for “efforts to create awareness about spiritual abuse” toward LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people.

Joining Williamson is Aaron Ledesma, a biological man who authors a blog called *The Gay Catholic*. After receiving his invitation from President Obama, Ledesma wrote on the [Huffington Post](#), “SCOTUS legalized gay marriage in the United States this year and we have a Pope who speaks of compassion, love and less judgement [sic] of the LGBT community. The two governing bodies I love and believe in are coming together. Both of which have expressed acceptance and support of the LGBT community. That’s why I want to be there at the White House.”

Obama has also invited the LGBT activist group [GLAAD](#), which unsuccessfully petitioned the pontiff to meet with them during his U.S. tour. Among GLAAD’s representatives will be Frank DeBernardo and Sister Jeannine Gramick, both of whom earned a Vatican rebuke in 1999 for their involvement in homosexual advocacy with their organization, New Ways Ministry. Other dissenting Catholic organizations slated to attend include Call to Action, which advocates for a number of measures in defiance of Church teaching such as women priests, an end to priestly celibacy, and acceptance of homosexuality in the Catholic Church.

However, Sister Simone Campbell is perhaps the most controversial name on the President Obama’s guest list. Campbell, a liberal activist who directs the left-leaning Catholic lobby group NETWORK, made waves in 2010 by penning the infamous “[Nun’s Letter](#)” in support of ObamaCare. President Obama [praised](#) the sisters involved for helping to pass the Affordable Care Act, despite opposition from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The year before, Campbell had enthusiastically lobbied for pro-abortion legislation so offensive to church doctrine that the USCCB [denounced](#) it as “the Planned Parenthood Economic Stimulus Plan.” In 2012, the Vatican [reprimanded](#) Campbell for her “serious doctrinal problems” and “radical feminist themes incompatible with the Catholic faith.”

What’s the point of Obama’s political indecorum, inviting opponents of Catholic teaching and raising the ire of the Vatican on the eve of the Pope’s visit? Kevin Jones of the [Catholic News Agency](#) notes that each of these “activist allies” is “working to target Catholic beliefs and to influence the Synod on the Family.” The synod Jones refers to will be held at the Vatican in October and is the second of two meetings — the first held last October. The pope has convened these summits to “respond to new challenges of the family,” according to the first synod’s working document, [Instrumentum laboris](#). Though it merely sets an agenda for this October, Catholic religious and laity worldwide are [complaining](#) that out of it, “much confusion has arisen concerning Catholic moral teaching.” Many believe it gives an unprecedented papal nod to contraception, sodomy, and Communion for divorced-and-remarried individuals.

Below is the pontiff’s U.S. [itinerary](#), marking the first time in his life Pope Francis has visited this country. The USCCB is providing live streaming coverage of all the events of the Holy Father’s visit. To access this live coverage, click [here](#).



Tuesday, September 22

4:00 pm: [Arrives](#) Joint Base Andrews military facility, Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, September 23

9:15 am: Attends White House arrival ceremony and personal meeting with President Obama. There will be a livestream of this event [here](#).

11:00 am: Rides in [papal parade](#) from White House to the National Mall.

11:30 am: Prays privately with U.S. bishops, [St. Matthew's Cathedral](#).

4:15 am: Celebrates Junipero Serra Canonization Mass, [Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception](#).

Thursday, September 24

9:20 am: Delivers speech to joint houses of U.S. Congress. Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-Ohio) provides a live stream video of the speech [here](#).

11:15 am: Visits [St. Patrick's Catholic Church](#) and [Catholic Charities](#) of the Archdiocese of Washington.

4:00 pm: Departs for New York, arriving 5:00 pm at John F. Kennedy International Airport.

6:45 pm: Prays Vespers at [St. Patrick's Cathedral](#).

Friday, September 25

8:30 am: Addresses the United Nations General Assembly. (This kicks off the [2015 UN Sustainable Development Summit](#), September 25-27, New York).

11:30 am: Participates in multi-religious service at [9/11 Memorial and Museum](#) at the World Trade Center.

4:00 pm: Visits [Our Lady, Queen of Angels School](#) in East Harlem.

5:00 pm: Rides in [papal motorcade](#) through Central Park.

6:00 pm: Celebrates Mass at [Madison Square Garden](#).

Saturday, September 26, 2015

8:30 am: Departs New York for Philadelphia, arriving at 9:30 am at the Philadelphia International Airport.

10:30 am: Celebrates Mass at the [Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul](#).

4:45 pm: Visits [Independence Mall](#).

7:30 pm: Visits Festival of Families at Benjamin Franklin Parkway and prayer vigil with [World Meeting of Families](#).

Sunday, September 27

9:15 am: Meets with bishops at St. Martin's Chapel, [St. Charles Borromeo Seminary](#).

11:00 am: Visits [Curran-Fromhold Correctional Facility](#).

4:00 pm: Celebrates Mass at the [World Meeting of Families](#).



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7:00 pm: Meets with World Meeting of Families organizers at [Atlantic Aviation](#).

8:00 pm: Departs for Rome.



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