

# Pope Francis Breaking Catholic Traditions

Kim Dixon, staff writer



Pope Francis at his inauguration  
photo via latimes.com

In the first few weeks as leader of the Catholic Church, Pope Francis has attracted a lot of attention for breaking traditions. The announcement of Pope Francis came with several firsts: the first Jesuit pope, the first to be elected from the Western Hemisphere, and the first in over 1,000 years not to take the name of a previous pontiff. In his first appearance before a crowd in Saint Peter's Square, Pope Francis began with a moment of silence and asked the people to pray for him as their new leader. Then, he gave them his blessing.

As the world learned more about the former Archbishop Jorge Bergoglio of Buenos Aires, much of the conversation focused on the simple and humble life

he has led. Many wondered if he would continue this modest way of life as the newly elected pontiff. His actions since that day have held up to his reputation. In a Washington Post article of March 29, Jena McGregor called Pope Francis' actions "one act of humility after another."

In a March 14 article on Catholic News Agency's website, David Uebbing quoted Father Thomas Rosica, English language assistant for the Vatican Press Office, as saying, "we're going to get used to a new way of doing things." Pope Francis has continued to do things a new way. He has rejected the extravagances of the papal position in several ways: wearing more modest at-

tire instead of the red, ermine-trimmed cape, known as the mozzetta, insisting on carrying his own luggage and traveling in a minibus with other bishops when moving from the Vatican Hotel, wearing the same iron pectoral cross he wore as Archbishop instead of the traditionally worn gold cross, and choosing simple living quarters over the palatial apartment that popes have lived in for many years.

In what seems to be a desire to be

closer to church members, Pope Francis has made himself accessible. On Easter Sunday, he moved through Saint Peter's Square in an open-top Popemobile free of the bulletproof glass, which was

added after an assassination attempt of Pope John Paul II. In a crowd estimated at 300,000, the Pope stepped down off of his vehicle and prayed individually for some gathered there.

One of the more controversial actions of Pope Francis took place on Holy Thursday at the Casal del Marmo Penitentiary Institute for Minors. After hosting Mass at the prison, the pope washed the feet of 12 inmates, two of which were women and one a Muslim.

Until now this tradition has been reserved for men only. According to Alessandro Speciale of Religion News Service on March 30, the Vatican defended Pope Francis' decision to wash the women's feet after the move was questioned by a group of "Catholic traditionalists."

Although many have criticized the pope's move away from some traditions, others are excited about the changes. Hannah Palko, a Meredith student and a member of the Catholic faith, is "personally very inspired by Pope Francis." She says, "One of the titles of the papacy is 'Servant of the Servants of God,' meaning

that the pope is elected as a servant to the church so that all of its members may serve God better. By his actions, Pope Francis has embodied his title and has called each one of us personally to also

walk humbly with Christ" Palko adds that "the breaking of traditions, such as the washing of the feet of women and a Muslim on Holy Thursday, is refreshing, and I believe that it will touch a lot more members of the younger generation, who are prone to identify with justice and equality. I am excited to see what kind of actions he takes as the pope, and I am confident that the Holy Spirit will be with him as he serves us in our faith."

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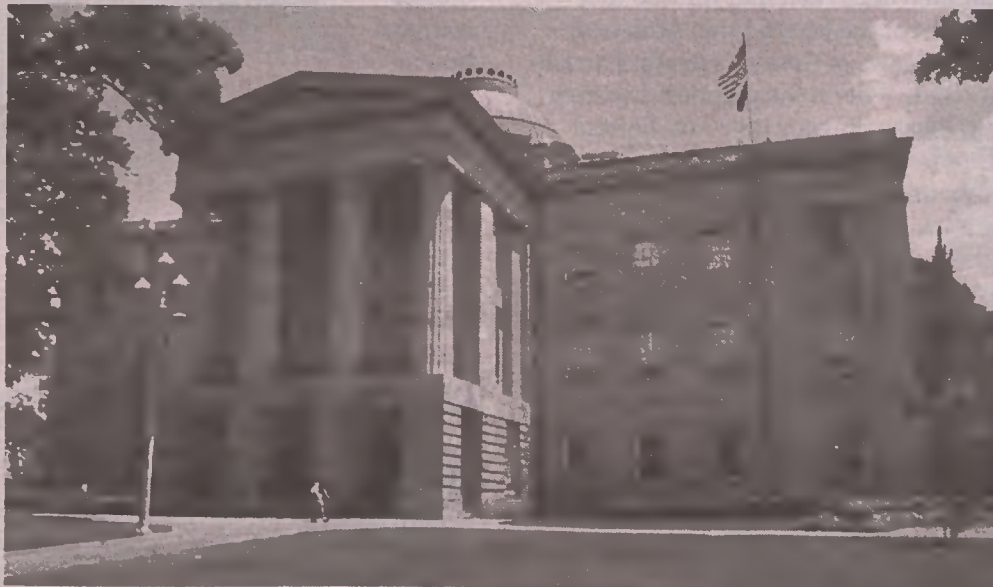
## Proposed Religion Bill in North Carolina Shot Down

Marlena Brown, staff writer

Controversy over establishing state religion has been at the forefront of the North Carolina Legislature in early April. After a proposal from two representatives from Rowan County, Representative Carl Ford of China Grove and Representative Harry Warren of Salisbury, a bill for establishing Christianity as the state religion was proposed. Both representatives claimed that the bill does not breach the First Amendment, as it does not

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apply at the state level, and that the federal government and court do not have the final authority on state matters. Known in the legislature as the "Defense of Religion Act", the idea of the bill was to establish an official



North Carolina Capitol Building  
photo via slate.com

state religion, which would result in a precedent being set for the state to have control over certain matters instead of immediately being brought to the federal government. According to Andrew Dunn of the News and Observer, part of the bill reads "Each state in the union is sovereign and may independently determine how that state may independently determine how that state may make laws respecting an establishment of religion."

The intention of Rep. Ford and Rep. Warren's proposed piece of legislation was to support Rowan County

commissioners. Yet, on Thursday, April 4th, it was announced that the bill was killed on the House floor, as it did not receive the amount of support needed to have it pass. Prior to the bill being killed, there were at least a dozen sponsors, but did not receive any support from the House leadership. The issue of religion in state matters arose from an American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) suit last month when accusations of violating the First Amendment from Rowan county commissioners during a meeting were brought before the court. ACLU said

that terms such as "in Jesus' name" and opening with a prayer are "divisive and violate the Constitution." The ACLU received much national support on this issue, while Rowan commissioners have promised to fight the suit.

The idea of church and state being combined together is not an unfamiliar idea in North Carolina. Brian Palmer of Slate Magazine commented, explaining that in Article VI, Section 8 of the North Carolina State Constitution, non-Christian believers are banned from holding public office. While this law has been deemed unconstitutional, it still remains in the language of the law. Church and state are often combined together, used as both an instrument of power to keep certain people out of

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office, but also as a means of attaining control at the state level to cut the bureaucratic red tape that muddles the divide between federal and state government.