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The recent visit of Pope Francis to the United States has been cause for both celebration and controversy. The News Media has suggested that the pope has the popularity of a celebrity. The public has come out in droves just to catch a glimpse of the Pontiff. His affability and uniquely charismatic style, a style quite different from his predecessors, has made Pope Francis feel approachable and "human" to many. The Pope has been widely received by both Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Groups who have been on the "periphery" of religious society in the past, now describe a sense of acceptance with the current Pope. Although his message of love and acceptance has resounded with many, his open dialogue related to politically, charged issues such as immigration and global warming, has not been welcome, and has been in fact, met with negativism by many Washington conservatives. Some have boycotted his presentations. Arizona (Catholic) republican Paul Gosnar stated, "When the pope chooses to act and talk like a leftist politician, then he can expect to be treated like one". As well, catholic republican presidential candidate Chris Christie stated, "the fact is that the pope's infallibility is on religious matters, not political ones" (Sands, David R, 2015). Despite the views of some politicians, Pope Francis, as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church has the right to speak on religious views as well as politically charged topics such as immigration, global warming, poverty and religious freedom.

The Roman Catholic Religion recognizes the pope as the 'Universal pastor' with full authority over the entire Church. He is considered to be a teacher of all the faithful and represents Christ's love and concern for every single individual. He is thought to be the unifier of the people of God (Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research). Based on the church teachings, the Apostle Peter was given the position of leadership by Jesus Christ and was thus considered the first Pope. Catholics believe that Jesus gave Peter the authority to speak and act in his name. The successors of Peter are considered the Bishop of Rome (The Catholic Difference, Diocese of Lake Charles La, 1991). With this understanding, the pope is therefore considered the supreme authority in doctrinal decisions (Faith News Online, Orlando Diocese). Teacher and unifier are two of the major roles of the Bishop of Rome; and as such, it is the Pope that is supremely responsible for dispersing the tenets of the Catholic faith. The major themes of social teaching outlined by the conference of Catholic bishops (2005) focuses on the life and dignity of the human person. The measure of every institution is how it either embraces or threatens the life and dignity of the person. Another theme is the belief that society has a duty to seek together the common good and wellbeing of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. The Catholic tradition teaches that when human rights are protected and responsibilities are met, then human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be attained. The major focus of Catholic teachings is that we are one human family. Whatever our national, racial, ethnic, and economic differences may be, the promotion of justice and peace is paramount (The Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2005, 5-315). Equally important as protection of the weak and vulnerable people is the protection of our planet. It is believed that we show respect for our creator by our stewardship of our planet.

Pope Francis does not fit into either a liberal or a conservative model (Clayton, 2015). He is commanded as Pope to help all to understand the needs of the human family, while promoting the dignity of each individual. Pope Francis is considered to be theologically conservative on traditional church doctrine such as contraception, married priests, ordination of women, and gay marriage (Estrada, 2015). He is believed to be more liberal with regard to issues related to social justice, climate change and immigration (Estrada, 2015), which may be due to the theme of catholic teachings focusing on the world as one "human family". Therefore, when politicians balk at his perceived intrusiveness into politics, he is not taking a stand as a conservative or liberal politician, but rather, he is attempting to promote a greater understanding of issues that relate to the human family as a whole. In June of this year, Pope Francis issued the first encyclical (a papal letter of teachings associated with complex social or moral issues) in church history to address issues related to the environment. In it he called for transformation of economic systems and political policies to avert possible environmental catastrophes (Francis, Schussler Florenza. reflections on Pope Francis, Harvard Divinity School, vol 2014). The pope stated that the health of both people and planet requires transformation toward care for creation, and concerns for future generations.

Climate change is debated between liberals and conservatives in the country. Many conservatives do not recognize environmental change as scientific fact. However, evidence exists in areas of the world that climate change is indeed already an issue. In the Sundaban Islands, which are located between Bangladesh and India, there has been an average sea level rise that is double the sea level rise in other parts of the world. The phenomena that indicates that the water is rising while the land is sinking. The population in the region is very poor and vulnerable. It has been predicted that a large human migration will occur because the area which

was once considered, "inland" has now experienced a change in the tide which has surged more than 100 yards and resulted in erosion of the land. The 'environmental migrants ' as they are referred to - are expected to overwhelm the cities they flee to, ultimately causing instability and conflict (Wernick, 2015). The Pope is speaking out on climate change, not because of partisan political views, but rather to make mankind aware of the effects on our planet and our peoples.

During his visit to the US the pope not only spoke on issues related to the environment and climate change, but on the topic of immigration. Immigration has been a hotly contested topic among the 2016 presidential candidates. Pope Francis an immigrant himself who relocated from Italy to Argentina, espoused a compassionate approach stating governments must protect and assist immigrants. During his first address to the congress he stated that people of this continent should not be fearful of foreigners due to the fact that most here in the US were foreigners. A large number of United States citizens as well as citizens from other nations are concerned about the tremendous influx of immigrants from other countries who have been displaced because of political or religious views. There are concerns that these immigrants will place financial and social burdens on our country. In the book, " catholic update: Guide to a faithful citizenship, The Catholic Bishops indicate that there is a need for a change in society. The Catholic Church is advocating an approach for a "new kind of politics" which is neither polarized nor idealized, a political system where the focus is on moral principles.

While some Americans may view the pope's visit to the US as controversial due to his outspoken nature when relating to issues of climate change and immigration, it is his

responsibility as Pope, to stand for what is right and just for the human family. He is called to promote the dignity of the individual. It his expression of love for God to promote stewardship of the planet God created. The Pontiff's visit may have been an enlightening experience for some. Many who were unaware of issues affecting the world as a whole may now be motivated to make a change and be stewards of our resources. They may actually have a calling to help the poor and see immigrants with a more open mind. Perhaps Politicians will focus more on the common good than narrow interests.

In summary, Pope Francis has brought new interest in the Roman Catholic Church. His openness and willingness to discuss politically sensitive issues has met with both admiration and admonishment. Politically conservative Americans view him as engaging in dialogue which is not within his realm of expertise. He has been viewed by many catholic republicans as a "politically leftist" and admonished. Not only does the Pope have the title of head of the Catholic Church, he also is head of the Vatican. However, as Supreme pastor, the pope is the teacher of the church. He is responsible for providing guidance for Christians, standing for those who cannot speak for themselves and promoting justice. He is the word of Jesus on Earth. The pope must make every effort to make decisions and bring issues to the forefront which affect mankind as a whole, most especially the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable in society. As Jesus stated, "what so ever you do for the least of my people, so you do unto me"

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