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Released: **Thursday, September 17, 2015**

NATIONAL: U.S. CATHOLICS LOOK FORWARD TO POPE'S VISIT

But show partisan differences over his issue stands

West Long Branch, NJ – Most Catholic Americans have a favorable view of Pope Francis and are looking forward to his upcoming visit. However, the *Monmouth University Poll* also finds a partisan divide among U.S. Catholics about which global issues the pontiff should take a stand.

Among all Americans, 37% are looking forward to Pope Francis' upcoming visit to Washington, New York, and Philadelphia, while half (50%) are not particularly looking forward to it. Among Catholics, though, fully 68% are looking forward to the pope's visit next week and 24% are not.

Overall, 42% of all Americans have a favorable opinion of Pope Francis, just 6% hold an unfavorable view and 52% have no opinion. Among Catholics, 68% have a favorable opinion, only 4% have an unfavorable opinion, and 28% have no opinion. About half (51%) of all Americans say Francis is taking the Catholic Church in the right direction while only 13% say he is veering off in the wrong direction. Among U.S. Catholics, this sentiment stands at 72% right direction to 9% wrong direction.

"The pope understands the power of the media and has been able to parlay this into strong approval numbers. Responses to Pope Francis among American Catholics might be greatly affected by a symbolic politics based on reporting of his shift in tone and Franciscan gestures of simplicity and humility," said Dr. George Gonzalez, assistant professor of philosophy and religion at Monmouth University.

Pope Francis has gained attention for his statements on a wide range of global issues that some feel put him at odds with more conservative members of his flock. In the United States, this seems to have led to a slight partisan divide among Catholics on their views of the pope. For example, while 8-in-10 (79%) Catholics who politically identify themselves as either Democrat or independent say Francis is moving the church in the right direction, a somewhat smaller two-thirds (65%) majority of Catholic Republicans feel the same.

“Since the Reagan Revolution, American religion has been associated with politics of the right. However, a myriad of factors are influencing the emergence of a new religious left. The American reception toward Pope Francis stands at the intersection of these changes,” said Dr. Gonzalez, who holds a doctorate in Theology from Harvard Divinity School.

With the pope expected to address a number of controversial issues in his address to the GOP-led Congress, the poll finds that Catholic Republicans (56%) are less excited than Catholic Democrats and independents (77%) about his upcoming trip. While Catholics of all political stripes agree that Pope Francis should speak out on such issues as human rights, abortion, and even gay rights, there is a noted partisan divide on him taking positions on climate change and economic inequality in capitalist systems.

Overall, 87% of all Americans, including 89% of Catholics, say it is appropriate for the pope to speak out about human rights; 72% of Americans, including 82% of Catholics, say the same on abortion; and 70% of Americans, including 74% of Catholics, say the same about gay rights. Six-in-ten Americans (61%), including Catholics (61%), say Pope Francis should feel free to speak out about nuclear weapons. There are no significant partisan differences among Catholics on the appropriateness of the pontiff addressing these issues, although Catholic women (76%) are slightly less likely than Catholic men (91%) to say he should speak out on abortion.

A smaller majority of Americans and Catholics alike say the pope should speak out about immigration (56% all Americans and 59% Catholics), economic inequality and capitalism (59% and 55%, respectively), and climate change (55%, and 51%, respectively). However, only 35% of Catholic Republicans say Francis should talk about climate change, while 59% say he should not. This opinion is reversed among Catholic Democrats and independents, where 63% say the pope should take a stand on climate change versus 34% who say he should not. On economic inequality, just 45% of Republican Catholics feel comfortable with Francis speaking out while 53% say he should not address this issue. Among Catholic Democrats and independents, 64% say Francis should speak out on economic inequality and capitalism and just 28% say he should not. There is a smaller partisan divide on Pope Francis speaking out on immigration – 50% of Catholic Republicans compared to 65% of Catholic Democrats and independents say he should.

“It is important to note that American Catholicism is not uniform and that American Catholics do not blindly follow Church teaching. Indeed, many American Catholics do not even know what official Church teaching is,” said Dr. Gonzalez.

The poll found a similar partisan split for whether Catholics agree with the pope’s views on these seven issues. But what may be more interesting is the large number of Catholics who are simply unsure whether they agree or disagree with the pope. On human rights issues, 60% of Catholics say they agree with Pope Francis and just 4% disagree, but 35% haven’t heard enough about the pope’s stance to form an opinion. On abortion, 46% of Catholics agree with the pope and 19% disagree, with 32% not having heard enough. For gay rights, 44% agree, 13% disagree, and 40% don’t know enough about Francis’s position.

For the other controversial issues, most Catholics say they are not sure whether they side with the pope or not. This includes nuclear weapons, where 25% say they agree with the pope and 12% disagree, but 60% have not heard enough about the pope’s views. On climate change, 30% agree with the pope, 16% disagree, and 50% are not sure. On economic inequality and capitalism, 26% agree with the pope, 16% disagree, and 53% have no opinion. On immigration, 30% agree with the pope, 12% disagree, and 53% have not heard enough about where the pontiff stands. [Note: the poll was conducted before the pope asked every Catholic parish in Europe to take in a migrant family.]

The survey also asked whether Pope Francis has been doing enough to address concerns about sexual abuse scandals that have rocked the church over the past few years. Among all Americans, just 21% say he has been doing enough, 46% say he has not been doing enough, and 32% are unsure. Among U.S. Catholics, 35% say Francis has been doing enough, 40% say he has not, and 25% have no opinion.

The *Monmouth University Poll* was conducted by telephone from August 31 to September 2, 2015 with 1,009 adults in the United States. This sample has a margin of error of ± 3.1 percent. The poll was conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute in West Long Branch, NJ.

DATA TABLES

The questions referred to in this release are as follows:

(* Some columns may not add to 100% due to rounding.)

1. Pope Francis will be visiting the United State in September. Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of Pope Francis, or do you have no opinion of him?

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|-------------|------------|----------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/ Christian | Other/ None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Favorable | 42% | 68% | 35% | 39% | 63% | 71% | 54% | 78% |
| Unfavorable | 6% | 4% | 9% | 5% | 6% | 2% | 3% | 4% |
| No opinion | 52% | 28% | 56% | 57% | 30% | 27% | 43% | 18% |

2. Are you looking forward to the Pope's visit, or not?

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|---------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Looking forward | 37% | 68% | 31% | 29% | 56% | 77% | 58% | 75% |
| Not looking forward | 50% | 24% | 56% | 57% | 32% | 18% | 33% | 17% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 13% | 9% | 13% | 14% | 13% | 5% | 9% | 9% |

3. Do you think Pope Francis is moving the Catholic Church in the right direction or the wrong direction?

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Right direction | 51% | 72% | 43% | 55% | 65% | 79% | 69% | 75% |
| Wrong direction | 13% | 9% | 15% | 12% | 15% | 4% | 10% | 8% |
| (VOL) Neither | 9% | 6% | 9% | 11% | 12% | 2% | 11% | 3% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 27% | 12% | 33% | 23% | 8% | 15% | 10% | 14% |

4. I'm going to read you a list of issues Pope Francis has taken a stand on. In general, do you think the Pope should or should not speak out about [READ ITEM]? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Abortion

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Should speak out | 72% | 82% | 73% | 63% | 89% | 78% | 91% | 76% |
| Should not speak out | 21% | 15% | 19% | 30% | 11% | 19% | 6% | 22% |
| (VOL) Depends | 3% | 1% | 3% | 3% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 5% | 2% | 5% | 4% | 0% | 2% | 2% | 2% |

Gay rights

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Should speak out | 70% | 74% | 67% | 73% | 71% | 78% | 72% | 76% |
| Should not speak out | 23% | 20% | 24% | 22% | 27% | 15% | 25% | 17% |
| (VOL) Depends | 2% | 1% | 2% | 3% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 5% | 5% | 6% | 3% | 1% | 6% | 3% | 6% |

Climate change

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Should speak out | 55% | 51% | 51% | 67% | 35% | 63% | 51% | 52% |
| Should not speak out | 36% | 44% | 37% | 27% | 59% | 34% | 45% | 43% |
| (VOL) Depends | 3% | 2% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 2% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 6% | 3% | 9% | 4% | 3% | 1% | 2% | 3% |

Economic inequality and capitalism

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Should speak out | 59% | 55% | 57% | 67% | 45% | 64% | 49% | 60% |
| Should not speak out | 30% | 38% | 31% | 26% | 53% | 28% | 48% | 32% |
| (VOL) Depends | 2% | 1% | 3% | 2% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 8% | 6% | 10% | 5% | 2% | 7% | 3% | 8% |

Immigration

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Should speak out | 56% | 59% | 55% | 56% | 50% | 65% | 58% | 60% |
| Should not speak out | 35% | 33% | 36% | 37% | 48% | 22% | 36% | 30% |
| (VOL) Depends | 3% | 5% | 3% | 3% | 1% | 7% | 5% | 4% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 5% | 4% | 5% | 4% | 1% | 5% | 1% | 6% |

Human rights

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Should speak out | 87% | 89% | 88% | 86% | 90% | 91% | 91% | 88% |
| Should not speak out | 8% | 8% | 7% | 10% | 9% | 7% | 7% | 8% |
| (VOL) Depends | 1% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 0% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 4% | 2% | 4% | 3% | 1% | 1% | 1% | 3% |

Nuclear weapons

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Should speak out | 61% | 61% | 60% | 61% | 57% | 65% | 59% | 62% |
| Should not speak out | 32% | 36% | 30% | 33% | 42% | 32% | 41% | 32% |
| (VOL) Depends | 2% | 0% | 2% | 2% | 0% | 1% | 0% | 1% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 6% | 3% | 7% | 4% | 1% | 3% | 1% | 4% |

5. And based on what you know or have heard, do you agree or disagree with the Pope's position on [READ ITEM], or haven't you heard enough? [ITEMS WERE ROTATED]

Abortion

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Agree | 27% | 46% | 22% | 21% | 55% | 40% | 56% | 40% |
| Disagree | 20% | 19% | 18% | 27% | 23% | 17% | 15% | 21% |
| Haven't heard enough | 47% | 32% | 53% | 48% | 23% | 38% | 27% | 35% |
| (VOL) Refused | 6% | 3% | 7% | 3% | 0% | 4% | 2% | 4% |

Gay rights

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Agree | 27% | 44% | 19% | 32% | 43% | 45% | 48% | 41% |
| Disagree | 16% | 13% | 17% | 16% | 17% | 10% | 14% | 11% |
| Haven't heard enough | 52% | 40% | 58% | 49% | 39% | 42% | 35% | 44% |
| (VOL) Refused | 5% | 3% | 7% | 3% | 1% | 3% | 2% | 4% |

Climate change

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Agree | 24% | 30% | 17% | 30% | 17% | 40% | 30% | 30% |
| Disagree | 13% | 16% | 13% | 10% | 24% | 10% | 21% | 13% |
| Haven't heard enough | 58% | 50% | 61% | 57% | 58% | 47% | 45% | 54% |
| (VOL) Refused | 6% | 3% | 8% | 2% | 1% | 4% | 4% | 3% |

Economic inequality and capitalism

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Agree | 22% | 26% | 18% | 29% | 20% | 31% | 25% | 27% |
| Disagree | 12% | 16% | 12% | 9% | 28% | 8% | 22% | 11% |
| Haven't heard enough | 59% | 53% | 61% | 59% | 49% | 56% | 48% | 56% |
| (VOL) Refused | 7% | 5% | 10% | 3% | 4% | 5% | 4% | 6% |

Immigration

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Agree | 19% | 30% | 15% | 18% | 17% | 39% | 35% | 27% |
| Disagree | 11% | 12% | 12% | 9% | 22% | 5% | 13% | 11% |
| Haven't heard enough | 64% | 53% | 66% | 69% | 58% | 52% | 47% | 58% |
| (VOL) Refused | 5% | 5% | 6% | 3% | 3% | 4% | 5% | 4% |

Human rights

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Agree | 39% | 60% | 30% | 43% | 58% | 61% | 69% | 53% |
| Disagree | 5% | 4% | 6% | 5% | 3% | 5% | 3% | 4% |
| Haven't heard enough | 51% | 35% | 58% | 49% | 36% | 34% | 27% | 40% |
| (VOL) Refused | 5% | 2% | 6% | 3% | 2% | 0% | 1% | 2% |

Nuclear weapons

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|----------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Agree | 19% | 25% | 15% | 20% | 21% | 29% | 26% | 24% |
| Disagree | 11% | 12% | 12% | 10% | 15% | 9% | 14% | 10% |
| Haven't heard enough | 64% | 60% | 65% | 68% | 62% | 58% | 55% | 63% |
| (VOL) Refused | 6% | 4% | 7% | 3% | 2% | 3% | 5% | 3% |

6. Is Pope Francis doing enough or not doing enough to address concerns about the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests?

| | TOTAL | RELIGION | | | CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID | | CATHOLICS BY GENDER | |
|------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|------------|-----------------------|---------|---------------------|--------|
| | | Catholic | Protestant/Christian | Other/None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| Doing enough | 21% | 35% | 17% | 21% | 41% | 31% | 38% | 33% |
| Not doing enough | 46% | 40% | 47% | 52% | 41% | 38% | 41% | 39% |
| (VOL) Don't know | 32% | 25% | 36% | 27% | 18% | 31% | 21% | 28% |

The *Monmouth University Poll* was sponsored and conducted by the Monmouth University Polling Institute from August 31 to September 2, 2015 with a national random sample of 1,009 adults age 18 and older. This includes 707 contacted by a live interviewer on a landline telephone and 302 contacted by a live interviewer on a cell phone, in English. Monmouth is responsible for all aspects of the survey design, data weighting and analysis. Final sample is weighted for region, age, education, gender and race based on US Census information. Data collection support provided by Braun Research (field) and SSI (RDD sample). For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling has a maximum margin of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points (unadjusted for sample design). Sampling error can be larger for sub-groups (see table below). In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

| <i>POLL DEMOGRAPHICS (weighted)</i> | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------|----------------|
| 26% Rep | 49% Male | 32% 18-34 | 66% White |
| 43% Ind | 51% Female | 36% 35-54 | 12% Black |
| 31% Dem | | 32% 55+ | 15% Hispanic |
| | | | 7% Asian/Other |

| | | <i>MARGIN OF ERROR</i> | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------|----------------------------|--------|
| | | <i>RELIGION</i> | | | <i>CATHOLICS BY PARTY ID</i> | | <i>CATHOLICS BY GENDER</i> | |
| TOTAL | | Catholic | Protestant/ Christian | Other/ None | Rep | Dem/Ind | Male | Female |
| <i>Unweighted N</i> | 1,009 | 192 | 553 | 237 | 89 | 99 | 82 | 110 |
| <i>moe</i> | 3.1% | 7.1% | 4.2% | 6.4% | 10.4% | 9.9% | 10.8% | 9.4% |

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