

Pope opens foot-washing rite to women

BY NICOLE WINFIELD
Associated Press

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis has changed church regulations to explicitly allow women and girls to participate in the Easter Week foot-washing ritual, after having shocked many Catholics by performing the rite on women and Muslims just weeks after he was elected.

Proponents of women's ordination hailed Francis' decree, while traditionalist Catholics warned that it would weaken the church and lead to questions about the inviolability of the all-male priesthood.

Vatican rules for the Holy Thursday rite had long called for only men to participate. Popes past and many priests traditionally performed the ritual on 12 Catholic men, recalling Jesus' 12 apostles and further cementing the doctrine of an all-male priesthood.

Shortly after he was elected, Francis raised conservative eyebrows by performing the rite on men and women, Catholics as well as Muslims, at a juvenile detention facility in Rome.

He has continued to include men and women, young and old, sick and healthy and people of different faiths, traveling each year to encounter them to show his willingness to serve. It was a tradition he began as archbishop in Buenos Aires.

Last week, the Vatican published a decree from the Vatican's liturgy office introducing an "innovation" to the church's rules that better corresponds to Francis' way of doing things.

The decree said the rite can now be performed on anyone "chosen from among the people of God." It specifies that the group can include "men and women, and ideally young and old, healthy and sick, clerical, consecrated and lay."

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Photo provided by L'Osservatore Romano

Pope Francis kisses the foot of an inmate at a juvenile detention center in Rome in 2013. Francis washed the feet of a dozen inmates at the juvenile detention center in a Holy Thursday ritual that he celebrated for years as archbishop and is continuing as pope.



Photo provided by Caged Movie LLC

Skye, played by Cassidy Gifford, is auctioned at a Greek brothel in 'Caged No More,' a new film which shines a light on human trafficking.

INSPIRED CINEMA

La. filmmakers' faith fuels movie projects

BY GEORGE MORRIS
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Jarred Coates always wanted to work in movies. He just took a roundabout way to get there.

"When I graduated from high school in '88, the option of doing film here in Louisiana was not even thought about," Coates said.

Now it is, and Coates is half of a Louisiana collaboration that helped produce the surprise Christian cinematic hit "God's Not Dead," and now has another faith-inspired movie in theaters.

"Caged No More," which shines a spotlight on human sexual trafficking, opened Jan. 22 in selected theaters, includ-



Photo provided by Icon Media Group

Louisiana filmmakers Lisa Arnold and Jarred Coates wrote, directed and produced 'Caged No More,' and were behind the surprise Christian hit 'God's Not Dead.'

ing Cinemark Perkins Rowe. It's the latest project of Film Incito, which was founded by Coates and Lisa Arnold, of Covington, who both have production companies.

They formed Film Incito (the Latin word meaning "inspire") because they share the goal of making films with inspirational themes that appeal to

Christian audiences. Coates, however, said he'd be doing this whether the market was big or small.

"It was never something I decided to do because I thought there was an opportunity," he said. "I felt like that was a calling."

Coates, 46, was born in Baton Rouge, graduated from Traf-

ton Academy (now The Dunham School), LSU and Bethany World Prayer Center's Minister's Training Institute.

He taught at Christian Life Academy, became an associate pastor in Memphis, Tennessee, and directed a Christian work-release program in Monroe for

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Special services put emphasis on mercy

Last spring, Pope Francis announced that 2016 would be a jubilee year, or holy year.

This Extraordinary Jubilee Year for the Church is being hailed as a "Holy Year of Mercy."

It began Dec. 8, the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second Vatican Council, and will end Nov. 20, the Feast of Christ the King.

In honor of the jubilee, St. Agnes Catholic Church is holding a special Wednesday night emphasis during Lent. Starting at 6:15 p.m., Feb. 17, and running Wednesdays through Holy Week, March 23, the church is holding special reflections on mercy.

Different speakers will comment on aspects of mercy, such as God's mercy in the Bible, mercy in the liturgy and sacraments, and ways to show mercy to one's family.

The New Oxford American Dictionary defines mercy as "compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm" or something "performed out of a desire to relieve suffering; motivated by

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compassion."

The Rev. Charbel Jamhoury, pastor at St. Agnes, discussed in email the importance of mercy and the jubilee year.

"Pope Francis is convinced the conversion of the world needs to come, at this time, through

mercy," Jamhoury said. "... He noted how clergy sex abuse, corruption and clericalism had hurt so many. (Francis) said, 'The Church is a mother, she has to go out to heal those who are hurting, with mercy. ... She must travel this path of mercy, and find a form of mercy for all.'"

The pastor said mercy allows people to experience the truth about God.

"This is a call to everyone, every human being, every Catholic, and especially to those alienated from God and his church," he said. "But, like the prodigal son, seeking a way back, judgment only reinforces the exclusion. For those who have been hurt, the pope encouraged us to carry them on our shoulders. And this is called Mercy."

Jamhoury said the pope declared, "God has the power to transform lives and heal the planet."

"No one can be excluded from the mercy of God; everyone knows the way to access it and the Church is the house that welcomes all and refuses no one," he said. "Its doors remain wide open, so that those who are touched by grace can find the certainty of forgiveness. The greater the sin, so much the greater must be the love that the Church expresses toward those who convert."

He also took time to explain the concept of jubilee, which dates to the time of Moses. In the Old Testament, it was a time of forgiveness. Debts were to be forgiven and slaves set free.

The Catholic Church has continued that tradition by using a holy year or jubilee to emphasize something through the liturgy, for example, faith or consecrated life, Jamhoury said.

These special years have happened every 25 years since 1475.

This year, 2016, is an extraordinary jubilee year, which has happened four times.

Jamhoury said extraordinary jubilees are called for special occasions. John Paul II called one in 1983 on the 1950th anniversary of the Year of Redemption, when Jesus was crucified. The most recent jubilee was known as the "Great Jubilee" in 2000.

Hour of Mercy Lenten Reflections

St. Agnes Catholic Church, 749 East Blvd., is marking the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy — Holy Year of Mercy with a series of meetings, which will be held at 6:15 p.m. Wednesdays during Lent. Mass starts at 5:30 p.m.

FEB. 17: INTRODUCTION TO MERCY AND THE HOUR OF MERCY SERIES

What is mercy? Why the misery and lack of peace in our lives? Trust, our response to God's mercy. The Our Father and steps to forgiveness. Presented by Monsignor Robert H. Berggreen, pastor of St. Mary of False River Church, New Roads.

FEB. 24: GOD'S MERCY REVEALED IN THE BIBLE

Mercy in the Old Testament and Psalms, the Great Hallel. The Mercy parables and St. Luke. How lectio divina leads us to experience God's divine mercy and helps us show mercy to others. Presented by Stephen J. Binz, Catholic biblical scholar, licensed clinical social worker and award-winning author.

MARCH 2: JESUS, GIFT OF DIVINE MERCY IN THE LITURGY AND IN THE SACRAMENTS

Liturgy, Holy Eucharist, Reconciliation, Sacrament of Reconciliation. Presented by the Rev. Michael H. Champagne, of Commu-

nity of Jesus Crucified, a Catholic private association of the Christian faithful, canonically erected in the Diocese of Lafayette.

MARCH 9: FORGIVENESS IN THE FAMILY AND BECOMING A WITNESS TO MERCY

"Be merciful just as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:36). Presented by James and Karen Broussard, married couples retreat rectors for Our Lady of Sorrows Retreat Center, St. Martinville; past presenters/coordinators for Retrouvaille of Acadiana.

MARCH 16: IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BARRIERS TO TRUST

Steps to self-awareness. Seeking the right help. Presented by Sister Dulce Maria Flores, regional superior, Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

HOLY WEEK, MARCH 23: THE SACRED HEART AND DIVINE MERCY.

Experiencing God's unconditional love. Presented by the Rev. Miles D. Walsh, pastor of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church, Baton Rouge.

RELIGION BULLETINS

BAKER

Sunday

WORSHIP SERVICES: 11 a.m., New Covenant Christian Center, 6515 Myrtle St. (225) 775-3127.

Wednesday

HOOR OF POWER PRAYER: 6:30pm New Covenant Christian Center, 6515 Myrtle St. Followed by Bible study at 7:30 p.m. (225) 775-3127.

Friday

FELLOWSHIP FRIDAYS: 6:30 p.m., New Covenant Christian Center, 6515 Myrtle St. Men's fellowship every first and third Fridays; women's every second and fourth.

BATON ROUGE

Saturday

FOOD AND CLOTHING: 11 a.m., Highest Praise Family Worship Center, 1965 Highland Road. Free food and clothing.

Sunday

FELLOWSHIP PLEDGE DAY: 7 a.m., New Jerusalem Baton Church, 1627 Thomas H. Delpit Drive. Attorney Demince Rutledge will speak.

ANNIVERSARY: 11 a.m., Sweet Home Baptist Church, 343 W. Buchanan St. Deacon and Deacon-

ess Anniversary program. The Rev. Riley Harbor III, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Burtville and Rock Zion Baptist Church, will speak. (225) 343-0322.

DIALOGUE WITH MUSLIMS: 2 p.m., Broadmoor United Methodist Church, 10230 Mollylea Drive. Sponsored by the Interfaith Federation of Greater Baton Rouge, "A Dialogue with Muslims: Fact, Fiction and Faith" will be a conversation with local Muslims about their beliefs and misconceptions about Islam. The event will conclude with prayers for peace, understanding, kindness and compassion.

MINISTERIAL PROGRAM: 4:30-9 p.m., East Baton Rouge Parish Library, 7711 Goodwood Blvd. Minister Ginger London and others will give a free seminar on "Enlarge My Territory." Open to the public. (225) 603-7122.

CHOIR REUNION CONCERT: 5 p.m., Greater Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, 3155 Victoria Drive. The church choir will give its 20th Year Reunion Choir Concert. Former and current directors of music and arts Brother Amos Singleton, Elder Timothy Britten, Ernest Bowman, Pastor Trey Davis and the Rev. Jesse T. Caruthers Sr. will be part of the event. (225) 355-5155.

NEW BIBLE STUDY: 6 p.m., Broad-

moor Presbyterian Church, 9340 Florida Blvd. The last week of Jesus' life as recorded in the Gospel of Mark will be taught by the Rev. Joe Reggin, interim pastor, in the pastor's study. The sessions also will be taught on Mondays, from 10 until 11:30 a.m. in Naylor Hall. The study is based on a book, "The Last Week," by Marcus Borg and John D. Crossan. The public is invited. (225) 924-4271.

INTERNATIONAL POTLUCK DINNER: 6 p.m., Trinity Episcopal Church, 3552 Morning Glory Ave. Bring a dish that is popular in your family. Write the ingredients and a short description on a note card. RSVP at trinitybr.org or on Facebook.com/events/793211290807973/. For more information, call (225) 387-0396 or email zhgh11@isu.edu.

BOOK LAUNCH: 7 p.m., Beth Shalom Synagogue Winkler Social Hall, 9111 Jefferson Highway. The launch of Rabbi Mark Glickman's "Stolen Words: The Nazi Plunder of Jewish Books." The evening will feature a talk, book signing, drinks and hors d'oeuvres.

Tuesdays & Thursdays

FREE TUTORING: 6 p.m., Broadmoor Presbyterian, Naylor Hall, 9340 Florida Blvd. Free tutoring for middle and high school students. Students attending for the

first time must have an ID and be accompanied by an adult. Volunteer tutors are always needed. Call Mike Zobrist, (225) 336-4189.

Thursday

FREE CONCERT: 7 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, 763 North Blvd. A free concert featuring Concertmaster Borislava Ilcheva, of the Baton Rouge Symphony, and Magnolia Strings performing Vivaldi's "Four Seasons" and Bach's "Double Concerto."

Saturday, Feb. 6

FOURTH DISTRICT USHERS MEETING: 2 p.m., Mount Zion First Baptist Church, 356 T.J. Jemison Blvd. First bimonthly meeting of 2016.

NEGRO SPIRITUALS: 3 p.m., Christian Life Fellowship & Academy, 2037 Quail Drive. Heritage's 40th anniversary Festival of Negro Spirituals, featuring 11 choirs and choral groups. Free admission.

Sunday, Feb. 7

THE LORD'S SUPPER: 12:30 p.m., Highest Praise Family Worship Center, 1965 Highland Road. Pastor Cynthia Howard Anderson will speak.

BRUSLY

Saturday

PRAYER BREAKFAST: 9 a.m., An-

tioc Missionary Baptist Church, 2778 Billups Lane.

ETHEL

Sunday, Feb. 7

THE LORD'S SUPPER: 11 a.m., Beachum Grove Baptist Church, 8877 Battle Road. (225) 683-8119.

GROSSE TETE

Sunday

FRIED CHICKEN DINNER: 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., St. Joseph Catholic Church Parish Hall, 76950 Gum St. Sponsored by the Ladies Altar Society, dinners are \$7. Tickets can be purchased from any Altar Society member or at the door. Homemade desserts and sweets also will be sold.

PLAQUEMINE

Sunday

MUSICIAN NEEDED: 10:45 a.m., St. Peter Baptist Church, 58116 Court St. The church is looking for a musician. Call (225) 687-2506 or (225) 687-6618

ST. FRANCISVILLE

Sunday

WOMEN'S MINISTRY PROGRAM: 11 a.m., Sherobee Baptist Church, 10064 Jones Vaughn Creek Road.

Minister Bobbie Hannah, of St. Paul Baptist Church, will speak.

CHURCH ANNIVERSARY: 2 p.m., Magnolia Full Gospel Baptist Church, 7910 La. 61. Speaker is Pastor Eddie Sulcer Jr., of Agape Missionary and Ebenezer Baptist Churches.

SLAUGHTER

Sunday

WORSHIP SERVICE: 10 a.m., New Fellowship Baptist Church, 4756 La. 412 E.

TICKFAW

Friday

SOUTHERN GOSPEL CONCERT: 5:30 p.m., Mike Vaughn Ministries/Good News Fellowship Church, 13101 La. 442 W. Special guest artists will be the Allen Family. This is a free concert, a love offering will be taken.

ZACHARY

Sunday

WORSHIP SERVICE: 9 a.m., Open Door Fellowship Life Center, 4415 Ave. A.

Thursday

BACK-TO-THE-BIBLE STUDY HOUR: 7:30pm Open Door Fellowship Life Center, 4415 Ave. A.

Voters warm to candidates who are not religious

BY CATHY LYNN GROSSMAN

Religion News Service

On the growing list of ways the "outsiders" election of 2016 is upsetting conventional political wisdom, here's a new entry:

A contender's lack of strong faith is not the deal breaker it once was for voters, according to a survey released Wednesday.

The "Religion and Politics" survey by Pew Research even finds Americans have a kinder view of atheists as potential presidential timber than before. The share of Americans who said they'd be less likely to vote for an atheist is down from 61 percent in August 2007 to 51 percent in the new survey.

"Religion, by and large, remains an asset for potential political candidates," said Greg Smith, associate director of research and an author of the Pew report. "Far more people say they'd be less likely to vote for a hypothetical candidate who doesn't believe in God than would vote for one that does."

Yet they're much less concerned that candidates mirror their own personal religious convictions.

And that can make a difference for candidates such as Democratic contender Sen. Bernie Sanders, who is proudly irreligious, or Republican Donald Trump, who is nominally Presbyterian.

Past Pew surveys found that 7 in 10 Americans said it was important that a president have strong religious beliefs. However, the new survey of 2,009 U.S. adults, conducted Jan. 7-14, asked a different, related question instead, said Smith.

"We asked, 'How important is it to



Photo provided by Reuters/BRIAN SNYDER

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton speaks at a campaign townhall meeting in December at South Church in Portsmouth, N.H.

you to have a president who shares your religious beliefs?' And that turned up much smaller numbers," he said.

It was very or somewhat important for 64 percent of Republicans but for only 41 percent of Democrats.

How much a candidate's religion or religiosity matters is only one consideration that people take with them into

the caucus room or the voting booth, said Smith.

"There are other things they care about more."

Hot topics in the 2016 campaign include the economy, foreign policy, taxes, terrorism and climate change.

Signs that voters respond to a matrix of issues, not only one, already were evident in 2012, said Smith.

Evangelicals, who fretted during the primaries about Gov. Mitt Romney's Mormon faith, set that concern aside to vote for him in the race against Barack Obama, a mainline Protestant.

Neither do voters care deeply about a candidate's theological sophistication — whether Trump says "Two Corinthians" instead of Second Corinthians or his rival,

Texas Sen. Ted Cruz, admits he failed to tithe, or give 10 percent to charity, like a proper Southern Baptist.

Trump, as one might expect of the high-profile business magnate with "HUGE" self-regard, breaks new ground in this survey, said Smith.

He is viewed as a potentially good, even a great, president by many Republicans overall (56 percent), the survey found — despite a high share of GOP voters who don't see him as religious.

"Among those Republicans and those who lean toward the GOP who think that Trump is religious, most (73 percent) said he would be a good president. But we can also see lots of Republicans (41 percent) who think Trump would be a good, even a great, president even through they don't think he's particularly religious," said Smith.

"That's a different pattern than you see for any other candidate," Smith said.

"Virtually all" Republicans who said Sen. Ted Cruz, Sen. Marco Rubio or retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson would be successful presidents view these candidates as at least somewhat religious.

For white evangelicals, the largest single bloc of GOP voters, it's a statistical three-way tie.

Roughly 6 in 10 see Trump, Cruz

and Carson as religious. Only 44 percent say so for Rubio, a Catholic who recently released an ad touting his Christian faith and promoting salvation through Christ.

However, the report also points out considerable wariness about Trump among evangelicals: 29 percent said he would be a "poor" or "terrible" president, which is roughly twice the share of those who say this about Cruz or Carson.

Among Democratic front-runners in the 2016 race, the survey came up with some curious findings.

■ 48 percent overall say former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, a lifelong active Methodist, is not a religious person. Divided by parties: 65 percent of Democrats think she is at least somewhat religious. But the exact same 65 percent of Republicans say she's not.

■ About two-thirds of Democrats and those who lean toward the Democratic Party say Clinton is very or somewhat religious. Roughly half of Democrats (47 percent) say Sanders is at least somewhat religious.

■ Evangelicals are skeptical of both Clinton and Sanders. Only 16 percent think Sanders would be a good president and 15 percent say so about Clinton. But 74 percent say she'd be "poor or terrible" and 50 percent say Sanders would be equally bad.

■ Both Democrats find their greatest support among "nones" — people with no religious identity — and among black Protestants. Sanders scored a good-or-great rating from 51 percent of nones and 36 percent of black Protestants. By contrast, Clinton drew high praise from 42 percent of nones and 62 percent of black Protestants.

CINEMA

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state and federal inmates.

When Louisiana began offering tax credits in 2002 to encourage movie production in the state, Coates' desire to work in film awakened. He attended the Full Sail film school in Florida, then started the Red Entertainment Group.

"I think God had me go through the different experiences he did and running ministries to businesses that eventually brought me into doing film," he said.

Arnold, a Georgia native, had a head start at Sherwood Pictures, which had produced highly successful, low-budget Christian films "Flywheel" and "Facing the Giants" while she worked there. She decided to expand the faith and family genre in Louisiana's increasingly fertile film environment.

"Back in '05, the Georgia film work had really slowed down," she said. "There were two areas that were really booming — North Carolina and Louisiana. We had family in Mobile, (Alabama) so it seemed this way made more sense. At the time, I had a couple of agents that said this was going to be the hot spot, this was going to be the next Hollywood South, which it definitely turned out to be."

Their common goals started bringing them together on projects, including co-producer roles in "God's Not Dead," which was shot in Baton Rouge. It grossed more than \$60 million in theaters and a roughly equal amount in DVD sales despite a budget of under \$2 million, Coates said. It featured a student, played

by Shane Harper, against a philosophy professor, played by Kevin Sorbo, who challenged the student's belief in God.

Though it features characters with strong Christian beliefs, "Caged No More" has a less overt religious theme, telling the story of a young girl who is sold to traffickers to pay off drug debts. It is based on Molly Venzke's novel, "Caged," and Arnold and Venzke worked for 18 months to convert it into a screenplay. Along with Loreta Devine ("Grey's Anatomy") and Alan Powell ("The Song"), Sorbo also stars in "Caged No More," which was filmed primarily in Baton Rouge and Athens, Greece. It includes appearances by Kathie Lee Gifford, Gretchen Carlson and former Gov. Bobby Jindal.

"It's not only a message for the church," Arnold said. "It's a message for anybody with a beating heart. We all have to care that human trafficking is happening all around us, and we have to keep our children safe. We have to start those conversations. We have to start educating our youth. That has a very wide reach."

After the theatrical run, Film Incito plans showings in churches, where audiences will receive a free, four-week study guide about trafficking. The strategy will allow the film to reach audiences in areas where it won't appear on the big screen, Coates said. Interested groups can inquire at filmincito.com.

Coates and Arnold have more movies in the pipeline, including "Camp Cool Kids," which was shot at Camp Istrouma in Baton Rouge.

"We want people to see the love of God," Coates said.



Photo provided by Icon Media Group

Jarred Coates, left, of Baton Rouge, and Lisa Arnold, of Covington, walk down a street in Athens, Greece, during the filming of "Caged No More."

FOOT-WASHING

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Priests must make sure that those participating are instructed beforehand as to the significance of the gesture, the decree said. While the phrase "people of God" generally refers to baptized Christians, the

decree also said that pastors should instruct "both the chosen faithful and others so that they may participate in the rite consciously actively and fruitfully."

That could suggest that the rite could be open to non-Catholics as well.

In an accompanying letter, Francis wrote to the head of the

liturgy office saying he wanted to change the current rules "to fully express the significance of Jesus' gesture ... his giving of himself to the end for the salvation of the world and his unending charity."

The Women's Ordination Conference, a group that has long advocated for female priests, celebrated the decree as a sign

that "change is possible." But it noted that Francis' wishes clearly met resistance within the Vatican, given his letter requesting the change was dated more than a year ago.

Cardinal Robert Sarah, head of the liturgy office, is a staunch conservative.

"Our prayer during this Year of Mercy is that the inclusion

of women in the church not stop at our feet, but will be one of many signs to include women fully in the institutional church," the group said in a statement.

The traditionalist blog Rorate Caeli, meanwhile, warned that the accommodation could lead to questions about the inviolability of the all-male

priesthood and bring the Catholic Church the way of the Anglican Communion, which has been badly divided over allowing female priests and bishops and blessing same-sex unions.

"What is most tragic is to see the very same impulses that imploded Anglicanism imposed on Latin Church decades later," Rorate Caeli said.