

What sort of Pope do we need?

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The choice of the next Pope is all about a power play between the left and right, liberals and conservatives. What Pope do we need?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMkqeNUW_3o?si=9a2bhxPU8tQf44G6

The world needs a liberal Pope. What happens in Rome over the next few weeks is part of the power play that is shaping the world we will live in.

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=nrajn-1890669-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

What sort of Pope do we need? The question is obviously very relevant.

Pope Francis was a surprisingly radical Pope in the terminology of the Catholic church, I wish to make clear. But his successor may not be.

There will be a conclave.

There will be a vote amongst the cardinals.

The vast majority of the Cardinals who are going to vote on Pope Francis' successor were, in fact, appointed to their position by Pope Francis. You might think, as a result, that he has stacked the odds in favour of his own chosen successor, but apparently that's not the way this works.

Most of the people who in recent papal conclaves have gone in as the front runner to become Pope have failed to achieve the post. In fact, it's now recognised that if you want to be Pope, the last thing you want to be is the papal front runner.

So what is it that the church needs? But more importantly, what is it that the world needs?

The Catholic Church is really powerful. It is the biggest single Christian denomination around the world, and it is, right now, probably the only one that is growing around the world, particularly in the global south. It has an appeal that, at present, the protestant church does not seem to be able to emulate. There's a mysticism to it that actually meets a need in people, and I sort of get that. With a name like mine, it's unsurprising that I come from a Catholic background, even though my father gave up Catholicism to marry my mother, who was a Baptist, and they compromised on the Church of England, which is the ultimate compromise when it comes to faith. I then chose to be a Quaker, but that's a different story.

The fact is that the Pope has influence over maybe a billion people around the world. That's one in eight people on this planet. And that soft power goes way beyond the limits of the church itself.

A Pope who is liberal minded, who is open to the idea of the influence of women within the church, leads the way for women everywhere.

A Pope who is open to the marriage of priests changes the perception of the role, or lack of role, of sex within the ministry of the church.

A Pope who is in favour of condoning gay relationships and other relationships that are outside the formal structure of marriage clearly sets a social purpose for the church, which is much broader than just for those who are believers.

A pope who believed, as this last one did, that there was a threat from inequality and who believed that the power structures of the world that created inequality are actually undermining the wellbeing of the vast majority of people who live on this planet is a powerful voice for those who are being threatened by the current structure of worldwide capitalism.

So, the Pope is a major influencer.

When a Pope speaks, then the world notices.

If we get a right-wing pope, somebody who wants to be anti-abortion in a way that the church has become a little soft on of late, or who is opposed to the role of women, or who is anti-gay rights, and who is anti-trans rights, and who is anti the idea of using the power of the church to actually support the wellbeing of the poor by questioning the role of worldwide capitalism; such a pope would be a deeply regrade step.

Now, in my opinion, they would also not be following the teachings of Christ, but that's my opinion, and you don't have to take any notice of that.

But the point is, for those who are not believers, and the vast majority of people, of course, are not Christian believers around the world, such a Pope would represent a rise in right wing power, a rise in the power of the male hierarchy, and a rise in the power of the maintenance of the status quo as opposed to the development of human rights.

This choice of a new Pope is therefore really important.

I'm unambiguous in my wish. I want a liberal Pope.

I want a Pope who will be broad-minded.

A Pope who will understand where people are.

A Pope, who will understand that there is no such thing as a single human being of a common type who is uniform and across the whole world is the same.

That men and women need to be respected for who they are.

That straight and gay people need to be respected for who they are.

That those people who are living in poverty need to be protected and need to be supported.

That so many other groups in society, the young, the elderly, need care and support, and that government must therefore do it, and that the charity that has been provided by churches in the past is not enough to ensure that their well-being can be maintained.

That there need to be constraints on the power of some in the world to ensure that everybody else has a chance.

All of these things matter.

All of these things can be influenced by a liberal Pope. We need a liberal Pope.

Over the next few weeks, we have another of the major litmus tests that are going to go on around the world right now in elections, in power play, in political economy as a

result, and the election of this new Pope can be seen as nothing less than that.

It is a power play between liberals and conservatives, between the status quo and moving on, between the hierarchies of power and the rights of the vulnerable.

That's why we need a liberal Pope.

We need a Pope who's willing to see that people are more important than the power of a few. And if we get a conservative Pope, it will be the few who win, and that's why we need a liberal Pope so that the many do instead.