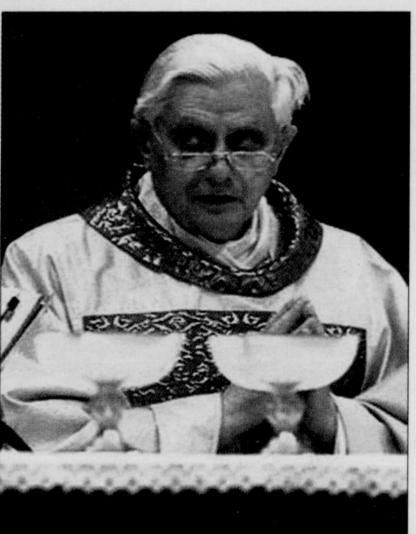


NATIONAL news

CONSERVATIVE HOMOPHOBE ELECTED POPE BENEDICT XVI

The College of Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church quickly selected German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as pope April 19. He



The new Pope calls homosexuality an "intrinsic moral evil."

chose the name of Benedict XVI and was installed in the office April 24.

The Italian press has referred to him as "God's Rottweiler" for the fierce, tenacious manner in which he enforced doctrinal discipline for the papacy during the past 24 years as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the successor organization to the Inquisition.

Conservatives within the Roman Catholic Church were pleased by the selection, but they were nearly alone in that rejoicing. Most members of the queer community were dismayed.

Ratzinger, 78, was raised in Nazi Germany and drafted into the army in the closing months of World War II. He was ordained as a priest in 1951 and began a career as a theologian and professor. He was named cardinal of Munich in 1977 and was called to the Vatican in 1981 by Pope John Paul II, with whom he became close.

He has been one of the leading anti-gay voices within the Catholic Church. In a 1986 pastoral letter to bishops, he called homosexuality "an intrinsic moral evil" and "an objective disorder."

More recently, in a book published last fall, he joined those voices seeking to restrict marriage to solely that of a man and a woman. He wrote, "To create a legal form of a kind of homosexual marriage, in reality, does not help these people."

Ratzinger sought to downplay the importance of allegations of sexual abuse within the church and to protect priests rather than aid their victims. In a 2002 interview with the press, he said, "I am personally convinced that the constant presence in the press of the sins of Catholic priests, especially in the United States, is a planned campaign, as the percentage of these offenses among priests is not higher than in other categories, and perhaps it is even laws."

Some members of the clergy have pushed for a loosening of the church's strictures against the use of condoms, particularly within the context of preventing HIV infections in Africa, where the epidemic is rampant. But Ratzinger has been dogmatic in his demands for adherence to opposition to condoms.

In a sermon delivered before his fellow cardinals April 18, immediately before they met to elect a new pope, Ratzinger decried "a dictatorship of relativism." He said the modern world has jumped "from one extreme to the other—

from Marxism to liberalism to libertinism, from collectivism to radical individualism, from atheism to vague religious mysticism." He offered a traditional values approach.

Reaction from the gay community was swift and uniformly negative.

"The elevation of Cardinal Ratzinger is being seen by many GLBT Catholics as a profound betrayal by the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church and betrayal of one of the most fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ as the loving good shepherd who reached out to the ones separated from the flock," said Sam Sinnett, president of DignityUSA.

Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, pulled no punches "as a longtime Catholic from a staunchly Catholic family."

"Today, the princes of the Roman Catholic Church elected as pope a man whose record has been one of unrelenting, venomous hatred for gay people." He called Ratzinger "the driving force behind

a long string of pronouncements using the term 'evil' to describe gay people, homosexuality and marriage equality."

—Bob Roehr

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST TO CONSIDER MARRIAGE RESOLUTION

The 1.3 million-member United Church of Christ announced April 21 that it will consider a landmark resolution at its General Synod this July that could make it the first mainline Christian denomination to support marriage equality for same-sex couples.

The resolution, titled "In Support of Equal Marriage Rights for All," was submitted by the Southern California/Nevada Conference and marks the first time the UCC's General Synod has been asked to directly address the issue of marriage equality. If approved, the resolution would declare, among other things, that the church's 25th General Synod "affirms equal access to the basic rights, institutional protections and quality of life conferred by the recognition of marriage" and would call on congregations "to prayerfully consider adopting wedding policies at their churches that do not discriminate against gay and lesbian couples."

—Sarah Dougher

SUPREME COURT TO HEAR SOLOMON AMENDMENT CASE

The U.S. Supreme Court will decide whether the federal government can force law schools to help military recruiters on campus or lose federal funding. The schools have argued that is a violation of their principles of nondiscrimination against gays and of their freedom of speech. Last November a lower federal court agreed.

The court said May 2 that it would hear the appeal of Rumsfeld vs. Forum for Academic and Institutional Rights (FAIR) during its session that begins next October. A decision is likely in the spring of 2006.

The issue has been bubbling for a generation. FAIR argued that law schools historically have had a policy of nondiscrimination and through the years have extended that to include sexual orientation. In 1990 the American Association of Law Schools unanimously voted to