

# The gift of the theology of the cross

By BRACH JENNINGS  
Special to The Daily Astorian



McKinley Smith/The Daily Astorian  
Brach Jennings outside First Lutheran Church.

Lutheranism offers a particular way of seeing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which can speak to life's greatest challenges and joys.

This lens is revealed through what Martin Luther termed the theology of the cross. The theology of the cross posits that the only way Christians can truly know God is through the crucified Christ. Christ on the cross shows God's profound love for humankind and creation in the last place humans consider looking for God — the

crucifixion of Christ. This understanding of God is not commonly found in American culture. However, the

theology of the cross is a gift of Luther's theology for today.

The theology of the cross

is contrasted with what Luther termed the theology of glory. The theology of glory seeks to know God in majesty, beauty, and power, through reasoning that God must be perceptible in events that seem to disclose the glorious and beautiful characteristics of God. Think of the number of times God is referenced in a gorgeous sunset, or a beautiful piece of music, but so often is not referenced in the child who goes hungry at night, or the person who escapes from an abusive and destructive relationship. The theology of the cross says God is first to be found in the latter examples, rather than the former.

Finding God decisively in



**'(That person) deserves to be called a theologian ... who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God as seen through suffering and the cross'**

— Martin Luther  
Heidelberg Disputation, 1518.

the sufferings of this world says that God suffers with us in the hells of this life, and frees us for serving our neigh-

bors in the world.  
Brach Jennings is an intern pastor at First Lutheran Church in Astoria.

# Pope and Congress: Francis is certain to push lawmakers

Messages on climate change, social justice, abortion could delight, unsettle, lawmakers

By ANDREW TAYLOR  
Associated Press



AP Photo/Gregorio Borgia  
Pope Francis poses for a photo as he arrives in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican in August for an audience with altar boys and girls. Francis thrills Democrats with his teachings on climate change, social justice and immigration. At the same time, his message on life and the Catholic Church's traditional opposition to abortion comfort Republicans.

WASHINGTON — A political pope is sure to seize his opportunity when he addresses a political body. So both Democrats and Republicans are looking forward to Pope Francis' remarks to Congress next month — and bracing for them, too.

The pope thrills Democrats with his teachings on climate change, social justice and immigration. At the same time, his message on life and the Catholic Church's traditional opposition to abortion comfort Republicans.

There is genuine giddiness among Catholic Democrats — many of whom have long been uncomfortably at odds with their church over abortion rights — about the pope's strong emphasis on addressing poverty and the environment.

"I've been waiting for this pope all my life," said liberal Massachusetts Democrat Jim McGovern, 57. "I find him inspirational and I know a lot of other people do, not just Catholics."

The pope comes to the Capitol on Sept. 24, where he will be the first pontiff to ever address a joint meeting of Congress. He will also appear on a West Front balcony to greet the public.

There's little doubt that Francis, who in a speech last month in Bolivia spoke out against unchecked capital-

ism before an assemblage of groups representing the poor, will seek to send a similar message to lawmakers representing the richest nation on earth.

"Whether it's climate change or hunger or taking care of the poor, the Pope's message is really the embodiment of what Catholic social teaching has been about, historically," said U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-Conn., who traveled to Rome to witness the pope's installation two years ago.

### Invited by Boehner

The pope was, of course, invited by the most powerful Catholic in Congress, House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio., who will be accompanied by Vice President Joe Biden, another Catholic, in

familiar seats behind Francis on the dais. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi of California, also a Catholic, will occupy a prominent seat on her party's side of the aisle.

For joint addresses like the State of the Union or even the recent appearance before Congress by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, partisan politics is unavoidable. One side will jump to their feet while the other will sit on their hands. In September, however, most hope and anticipate such grandstanding can be avoided.

"You will not know it's the Congress," said U.S. Rep. Bill Pascrell, D-N.J.

### No glad-handing

There's also no glad-handing the pope as he walks down the center aisle, unlike

the annual ritual in which lawmakers such as U.S. Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., and U.S. Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee, D-Texas, commandeer a seat to press the flesh. The pontiff is expected to keep his hands clasped as if in prayer.

A top adviser to Francis visited Washington in April and said the pope will speak "frankly but friendly" in his U.S. trip.

"Even the Congress people can listen to other voices, to counsels, to advisers," said Honduran Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga, according to Religion News Service. "The one who receives advice commits less errors and is not mistaken. The one who does not like to listen to advice will have a lot of trouble. So I think the Congress will receive very well the advice (of

the pope) — even if there are some things that will not be comfortable."

Francis' recent encyclical chastised policymakers across the globe for inaction on the environment as the skies warm and the oceans are ravaged by overfishing and pollution.

"We may well be leaving to coming generations debris, desolation and filth," the pope wrote. "The pace of consumption, waste and environmental change has so stretched the planet's capacity that our contemporary lifestyle, unsustainable as it is, can only precipitate catastrophes."

In September, such warnings could be seen as a challenge directed to a Congress populated by GOP skeptics of proposals to reduce greenhouse gases like new curbs on coal-fired power plants.

### Environmental warnings

"You're always stronger in terms of credibility when you stay closer to your church doctrine and church teaching and also what the Catholic Church has been about," said U.S. Sen. Dan Sullivan, R-Alaska. "Many people take a lot of pride, whether you're Catholic or not, in terms of focus on the poor, focus on helping the most vulnerable."

Francis, however, is not shy about expanding his reach beyond a traditional role as he leads the church in a rapidly changing century.

"He's a very different pope. He's defined himself in a very different way," said U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis, R-N.C., another Catholic. "He's talking about outcomes. We've got to work on means."

The recent encyclical also reiterated the church's long-time teachings on abortion.

"How can we genuinely teach the importance of concern for other vulnerable beings, however troublesome or inconvenient they may be, if we fail to protect a human embryo, even when its presence is uncomfortable and creates difficulties?" Francis wrote.

Whatever the pope's message, lawmakers in both parties hope it serves as a salve — however temporary — to a body that too often sees issues in black and white and seeks partisan advantage wherever it can be found.

"The teachings of the Catholic Church don't fit neatly into either the Democratic or the Republican Party," said U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski, D-Ill. "And I think that leads oftentimes to a fight on both sides over — now that we have a very popular pope — who is going to turn that to their political advantage. I hope that we won't see that."

## 9-1-WHAT?

THE BEST OF THE WORST CALLS TO ASTORIA 911 DISPATCH

# Animal planet

A rooster on a deck. A cat in the bushes. A deer stuck at John Warren Field. This week's entries have an animal theme.

There was that naked dude on a Yamaha, though. Follow reporter Kyle Spurr on his 9-1-What? Twitter watch, where a few of the sometimes head-scratching calls to area dispatch take center stage. The full feed is at [www.twitter.com/9\\_1\\_WHAT](http://www.twitter.com/9_1_WHAT).

9-1-WHAT? @9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{8/9 @ 10:10 a.m.} Deer reported in a fenced area at John Warren Field frantically trying to find a way out. #Astoria

7:14 AM - 10 Aug 2015

9-1-WHAT? @9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{8/9 @ 9:16 p.m.} Man parked, got out, ran south and returned with something in his hand. He was only taking pictures of a field. #Warrenton

9-1-WHAT? @9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{8/4 @ 8:39 p.m.} Caller requested assistance for a rooster on his back deck. The bird is friendly and wants to come inside. #Warrenton

9-1-WHAT? @9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{8/4 @ 10:37 p.m.} Animal complaint: Caller reported a cat in the bushes. #Astoria

7:46 AM - 5 Aug 2015

9-1-WHAT? @9\_1\_WHAT

Following

{8/8 @ 3:28 p.m.} Report of a naked man in his 40s with a gray Yamaha street bike. #ClatsopStateForest

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