

US gay magazine names Pope Francis 'person of the year'

WASHINGTON, US: Pope Francis, already Time Magazine's "person of the year," has been given the same honour by another publication, this one dedicated to the gay and lesbian community.



Pope Francis. (Image attribution: presidencia.gov.ar)

The Advocate magazine chose the head of the Catholic Church as the "single most influential person of 2013 on the lives of LGBT people."

It is perhaps a surprising choice, given that the church has often been in conflict with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community over its opposition to same-sex marriage and to homosexuality more generally.

"While 2013 will be remembered for the work of hundreds in advancing marriage equality, it will also be remembered for the example of one man," wrote the online magazine in announcing its choice.

In July, the pontiff famously said he would not "judge" homosexuals. Those remarks, the Advocate said, "became a signal to Catholics and the world that the new pope is not like the old pope."

Francis "has not yet said the Catholic Church supports civil unions" between same-sex couples, but the comments he has made have "already caused reflection and consternation within his church."

As the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics, the editorial noted, "like it or not, what he says makes a difference."

None of the gay community's disagreements with Catholic clergy, such as over the role of women and contraception, "should lead us to underestimate any pope's capacity for persuading hearts and minds in opening to LGBT people, and not only in the US, but globally," the magazine said.

The US gay rights community was particularly successful this year in fighting to legalise same-sex marriage.

In June, the Supreme Court struck down the "Defense of Marriage Act," which restricted federal marriage benefits to heterosexual couples.

Source: AFP, via I-Net Bridge

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