NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

# Cardinal: Pope who can't be pigeonholed bound to disappoint some

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Vatican City

Many Catholics who identify themselves as either conservatives or progressives will be disappointed in Pope Francis, whose program of spiritual renewal, doctrinal continuity and emphasis on the poor fits none of the traditional molds, a top German cardinal said.

Cardinal Walter Kasper, a theologian and retired president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, said Pope Francis will also face resistance within the Curia, which needs both organizational revamping and a change of mentality.

Attempts at reform will bring resistance and difficulties "just like with every big institution," he said in an interview Tuesday with the Italian newspaper *Il Foglio*.

"However, this pope is very determined: He knows what he wants," he said.

The 80-year-old cardinal, who was eligible by just five days to be part of the conclave that elected the new pope, is highly esteemed by Pope Francis, who called the cardinal a "superb theologian." During his first public Angelus address, the pope referred to one of the cardinal's recently published works as a book that "has done me so much good."

Kasper told the Italian daily that "it's not possible to pigeonhole (the pope) in the classic European conservative-progressive debate," which is already a "worn out" framework that has run its course.

"Many people are enthusiastic about him: He is a true pastor, he has great charm, a direct approach with people" and speaks in a manner that is upfront and understandable, Kasper said. There are those "who accuse him of putting on a show, but I think he is giving an authentic witness: he lives what he says."

The fact that the pope tries to live simply "gives him credibility; he doesn't live like a prince. Benedict was a simple person, too, but he adapted a bit to certain formalities that Francis rejects," the German cardinal said.

"Many will be disappointed in Francis," he said, surmising that the so-called conservative branch already feels let down "because he doesn't have the intellectual heft of Benedict and then because he abolished the pontifical court -- something I am grateful for; it was an anachronistic extravagance."

The cardinal predicted the so-called progressive wing would not be happy either because even though the pope has ushered in a change in style, "he will not change the content."

"There is continuity in the doctrine between him and Benedict," he said. Pope Francis "will not change anything with priestly celibacy, will not open ordinations to women" or promote other "progressive" issues that are not part of church teaching.

Pope Francis "is not a conservative or a progressive. He wants a poor church and (a church) of the poor," and he

is keenly aware that a large part of the world lives in extreme poverty, the cardinal said.

Given the level of misery in the world, "I believe he will change the church's agenda" so that it "has to take seriously the problems" of the developing world.

"The western model of civilization doesn't work anymore," and "liberalism doesn't give an answer to the problems of extreme poverty in the world," he said.

"Christianity is the only spiritual and intellectual power in today's world that has an alternative for the future," the cardinal said. Its success doesn't depend on strength in numbers but on Catholics' resolve to be, as Pope Benedict called it, a "creative minority," influencing a secularized, troubled world.

Pope Benedict's call to tackle secularism is being put into practice with his successor, he said. "A season of spiritual renewal is opening today with Francis."

The renewal involves the church itself, Kasper said, starting with the Curia. Pope Francis already has begun working on how curial officials think of themselves and insisting that the curia "mustn't be about power and bureaucracy, but about service."

The reform of the Curia was a "nearly universal desire by the cardinals" attending the conclave that elected Pope Francis in March.

The biggest problem in the Curia, he said, is a lack of communication among the heads of all the Vatican offices. "The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing."

"Heads of dicasteries must see each other frequently, at least once a month," and they should be able to have "direct access to the pope without having to go through the secretary of state, who has become of late like a government middleman," the cardinal said.

Kasper also said he thought more women should be appointed to top positions in Vatican offices.

Some Vatican offices -- including the Pontifical Councils for the Laity, for the Family, for Migrants and Travelers, and for Health Care Ministry -- don't have direct jurisdiction over anyone and so don't have to be headed by an ordained priest or bishop, he said.

Aside from there being many "prepared and capable" female candidates, he said, having more women would also "be useful for overcoming clericalism, which, in the end, is a sterile zeal."

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