

Legalization of same-sex marriage voted No. 1 religion story of the year

Pope Francis named Religion Newsmaker of the Year for third year in a row

COLUMBIA, MO, USA, December 15, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- COLUMBIA, MO. — The U.S. Supreme Court's 5-4 decision to legalize same-sex marriage this June was voted by a narrow margin as the No. 1 religion story of 2015 by members of the Religion Newswriters Association in its annual [Top 10 Religion Stories of the Year](#) poll. In second place were the thousands of migrants who have fled to Europe, stirring right-wing resistance in some countries and compassion fatigue in others.

Pope Francis was selected as Religion Newsmaker of the Year for the third year in a row, receiving nearly half of the first-

place votes. This year he earned the top spot by entrancing masses and infuriating others with his appeals to the poor and marginalized, his denunciations of greed and environmental destruction, and his charismatic presence while visiting the U.S., Africa and Latin America.



2015 Top 10 Religion Stories of the Year

- 1) The U.S. Supreme Court legalizes same-sex marriage in a historic 5-4 decision in June.
- 2) Thousands of migrants, many from wartorn Syria, pour into Europe by sea and land, stirring right-wing resistance in some countries and compassion fatigue even from countries that welcomed them.
- 3) ISIS expands its reign of horror in Syria and Iraq. It claims responsibility for beheadings of 21 Coptic Christians, the burning alive of a Jordanian pilot, the deaths of hundreds on a Russian airliner, and deadly bombings in Beirut and Paris.
- 4) Anti-Muslim rhetoric flares in the U.S. and Europe as some politicians call for surveillance of Muslims and a ban on Muslim refugees, citing terrorism fears.
- 5) Pope Francis makes a historic visit to the United States where he greets crowds in Washington,

New York and Philadelphia, and speaks before Congress and the United Nations.

- 6) Paris reels from its second major terrorist assault in 2015 on Nov. 13 as attackers linked to the so-called Islamic State kill at least 130 and wound many others at a concert hall, restaurants and other sites.
- 7) Pope Francis issues encyclical *Laudato Si* on the environment, a call for replacing fossil fuels linked to global warming and lamenting a throwaway culture. Meanwhile, religious leaders call for similar goals at the November Paris climate summit.
- 8) A white-supremacist gunman is charged in the shooting deaths of nine black worshipers in Charleston, S.C. In the wake of the tragedy, many Southern institutions remove displays of Confederate symbols.
- 9) The #BlackLivesMatter movement draws support from faith-based groups, including Christians, Jews, Muslims and Unitarian Universalists, amid increased scrutiny of police killings of black suspects and racial issues in public universities.
- 10) Pope Francis continues his reformist agenda — ending a three-year supervision of U.S. nuns, speaking out for the needy, streamlining the annulment process and recommending a more pastoral tone while upholding church laws on divorce and remarriage.

Stories ranked 11–26 can be viewed at www.RNA.org.

Religion Newsmaker of the Year

In his third Newsmaker of the Year selection in as many years, Pope Francis beat out five other candidates, among them members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, S.C., (19 percent of first-place votes), Rowan County, Ky. Clerk Kim Davis (4 percent of first-place votes), and the Islamic State/ISIS (21 percent of first-place votes).

Results are based on an online survey of RNA's nearly 480 members, of whom at least 300 are journalists. The response rate was 19 percent. The Religion Newswriters Association is the only worldwide association dedicated to helping journalists write about religion with balance, accuracy and insight. Founded in 1949, the association is headquartered at the Missouri School of Journalism. The association has conducted its Top 10 Religion News Stories of the Year since the early 1970s.

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