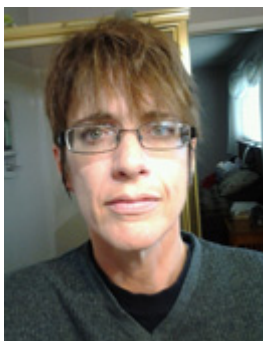


# Faith Digest: Pope says he's not a 'right-winger'

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**Interview with pope grabs headlines.** Pope Francis' wide-ranging interview with journalists from his own Jesuit order captured international attention, and analysts deemed it likely to cement his reputation as a leader more concerned with a pastoral approach than a doctrinal hard line. Among other things, the pope said while he has been reprimanded for not speaking much about abortion, contraception and homosexuality, he does not think it necessary to "talk about these issues all the time" and warned the church can become "obsessed" with a few doctrines. He mentioned the need to treat gays and lesbians with respect and without condemnation. "I have never been a right-winger," he said. Sixteen Jesuit publications around the world published the interview simultaneously.

**Transgender professor asked to leave Azusa Pacific.** A California Christian university has asked a professor who was once its chair of theology and philosophy to leave after he came out as transgender.



Heather Clements / H. Adam Ackley Heather Clements taught theology at [Azusa Pacific University](#) 15 years, but this past year began self-identifying as H. Adam Ackley. Ackley said he and APU have agreed to part ways, and the university said it will continue to pay him through the academic year, but the university wants other professors to take over his current classes. Ackley also said his insurance was denied

when he sought hormone treatment and “top surgery” for his chest area. “They’re giving me privacy to transition but denying medical treatment to do that,” said Ackley, who is 47, has two children and is in the process of getting a divorce. APU is an interdenominational evangelical university of about 10,000 students and 1,200 faculty located northeast of Los Angeles. It is one the largest member schools in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

Moody drops beer ban. The Chicago-based evangelical [Moody Bible Institute](#) dropped its ban on alcohol and tobacco consumption by its 600-some faculty and staff, including those who work in its radio and publishing arms. The change reflected a desire to create a “high trust environment that emphasizes values, not rules,” said spokeswoman Christine Gorz. Employees must adhere to all “biblical absolutes,” Gorz said, but on issues where the Bible is not clear, Moody leaves it to employees’ conscience. Employees may not drink on the job or with Moody students, who are not allowed to drink while in school. However, the conservative school still requires students to abstain from tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs and “sexual promiscuity” for at least one year before they enroll and during their time at Moody. “In addition, students are to refrain from gambling, viewing obscene or pornographic literature, and patronizing pubs, bars, nightclubs, comedy clubs and similar establishments,” the catalog says. “There will be no on- or off-campus dances sponsored or organized by Moody Bible Institute students or personnel.”

Number of Catholic seminarians increases. After decades of glum trends—fewer priests, fewer parishes—the Catholic Church in the United States has a new statistic to cheer: More men now are enrolled in graduate-level seminaries, the main pipeline to the priesthood, than in nearly two decades. This year’s tally of 3,694 graduate theology students represents a 16 percent increase since 1995 and a 10 percent jump since 2005, according to [Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate](#). The center also noted annual ordinations have inched back up to the 1995 level of 511 new priests, still far below the peak of 994 in 1965.

**Abercrombie & Fitch to allow headscarves.** Abercrombie & Fitch will change its “look policy” and allow employees to wear hijabs after a three-year legal battle with two Muslim women was settled out of court. The settlement requires Abercrombie to report religious accommodation

requests and discrimination complaints to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for three years and includes \$71,000 in compensation for the two women. The settlement also averts a Sept. 30 trial. Abercrombie fired Umme-Hani Khan, a stockroom worker in its San Mateo, Calif., store, in 2010 for refusing to work without her religious headscarf. Khan, who had worked at the store for four months without incident, filed a religious discrimination complaint with the EEOC, which sued the retailer in 2011. In its defense, Abercrombie countered the headscarves violated its “look policy,” which was an important part of its marketing strategy. Abercrombie also defended the policy as “commercial free speech.”