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Contact:

Don Levy (518) 783-2901 or dlevy@siena.edu

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Special Newsday / News 12 Long Island / Siena College Pope Francis Study: *As Visit Nears, Pope Francis Enjoys Tremendous Favorability Buoyed by Simple Lifestyle*

Most, Not all, Agree with Pope on Sanctity of Life, Climate Change & Evolution; Mixed on Capitalism; Expect Francis to Bring Major Change to Church and to Have Positive Effect on People of the World

Majority of Catholics Give Pope High Grades on Spreading Faith, Addressing Needs of Poor, Reforming Bureaucracy but Still Say Church Doctrine Being Out of Step is Largest Obstacle

Loudonville, NY. One week prior to Pope Francis' visit to the U.S., the pontiff is viewed favorably by 79 percent of Long Island residents and 75 percent of New York City citizens while Catholics have a near 90 percent positive favorability rating according to a new Newsday/News 12/Siena College (SRI) Study that includes polls of both New York City and Long Island. While fewer than 20 percent agree with all the positions the Pope has taken on religious, social and politically interpreted issues, about three quarters agree with the Pope on at least some of his stances. Over half of downstaters say that the Pope's simple lifestyle, modest quarters and retention of an old car, make them have a more favorable opinion of Pope Francis.

"Large majorities of both New Yorkers and Long Islanders agree with the Pope that every human life is sacred from conception to natural death, that climate change is man-made and that evolution in nature is consistent with creation. A majority of New Yorkers agree with Francis' view that unbridled capitalism is a tyranny that must be addressed but in Long Island only a plurality agrees. Perhaps given his stance on these issues, or the favorable impression he's made on New Yorkers, right now at least three quarters of all city and island residents, and between eighty and ninety percent of Catholics, expect Pope Francis to have some or a significant positive effect on the people of the world," said Don Levy, SRI's Director.

Sixty percent of all Long Islanders and 62 percent of New Yorkers think the Pope will bring major change to the Catholic Church and virtually all (92 to 93 percent) expect that change to be for the better. Among Catholics, even greater percentages look for Pope Francis to change the Church for the better.

Asked to rate the job Pope Francis is doing on a series of eight challenges he faces, at least 80 percent of Catholics say he is doing an excellent or good job spreading the Catholic faith, and at least 70 percent in both the City and on the Island say he is doing an excellent or good job addressing the needs and concerns of the poor, promoting world peace, and standing up for traditional moral values. Smaller majorities give the Pope good grades on reforming the Vatican bureaucracy and reaching out to the LGBT community. Francis' lowest grades are for addressing the sex abuse scandal in the Catholic Church (LI – 47 percent excellent/good, NYC – 56 percent) and addressing the priest shortage (LI – 39 percent excellent/good, NYC – 49 percent).

“Despite the tremendous good will Pope Francis has engendered among New Yorkers and the high grades he’s receiving two years into his papacy, a great deal is expected of this man. In both New York City and on Long Island, Catholics support changes and cite Church doctrine being out of step with a majority of Catholics as the Church’s largest obstacle,” said Levy.

“Over eighty percent of Island and City Catholics believe the Church should allow Catholics to use birth control and majorities expect to see that change by 2050. Similarly, and apparently given the events of this month, Catholics believe and the Pope agrees, that the Church should make it easier for divorced Catholics to get an annulment,” said Levy.

Three quarters of New York area Catholics also think the Church should allow priests to marry and a similar percentage support allowing women to be priests. More than half of downstate Catholics also believe the Church should recognize the marriages of same-sex couples. Nearly half anticipate the Church making the changes for priests marrying and women joining the priesthood but fewer expect the Church to recognize same-sex marriage.

“America, and the New York area is ready to welcome a popular Pope Francis next week. Our study shows that he is well liked by not only Catholics but by all. While some may not agree with his views, most, whether because of his humble bearing or spiritual presentation, tend to agree with him. Still, a great deal is asked of this Pope. New Yorkers hope he will not only help the poor of the world but the world itself while he also succeeds in bringing the Catholic Church into what they believe is the American real world. A tall order, even for a Pope,” Levy said.

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This Newsday/News 12 Long Island/Siena College study was conducted August 30 – September 8, 2015 by telephone calls in English to 505 Long Island residents and 496 New York City residents and released in both Newsday and seen on AM NewYork. It has a margins of error of ± 5.0 percentage points for both the NYC and Long Island samples including the design effects resulting from weighting. Sampling was conducted via a stratified dual frame probability sample provided by Survey Sampling International of landline and cell phone telephone numbers from within New York City and Long Island weighted to reflect known population patterns. Data was statistically adjusted by age, party, region and gender to ensure representativeness. The Siena College Research Institute, directed by Donald Levy, Ph.D., conducts political, economic, social and cultural research primarily in NYS. SRI, an independent, non-partisan research institute, subscribes to the American Association of Public Opinion Research Code of Professional Ethics and Practices. For more information, please call Don Levy at 518-783-2901. Survey cross-tabulations and frequencies can be found at: www.Siena.edu/SRI/