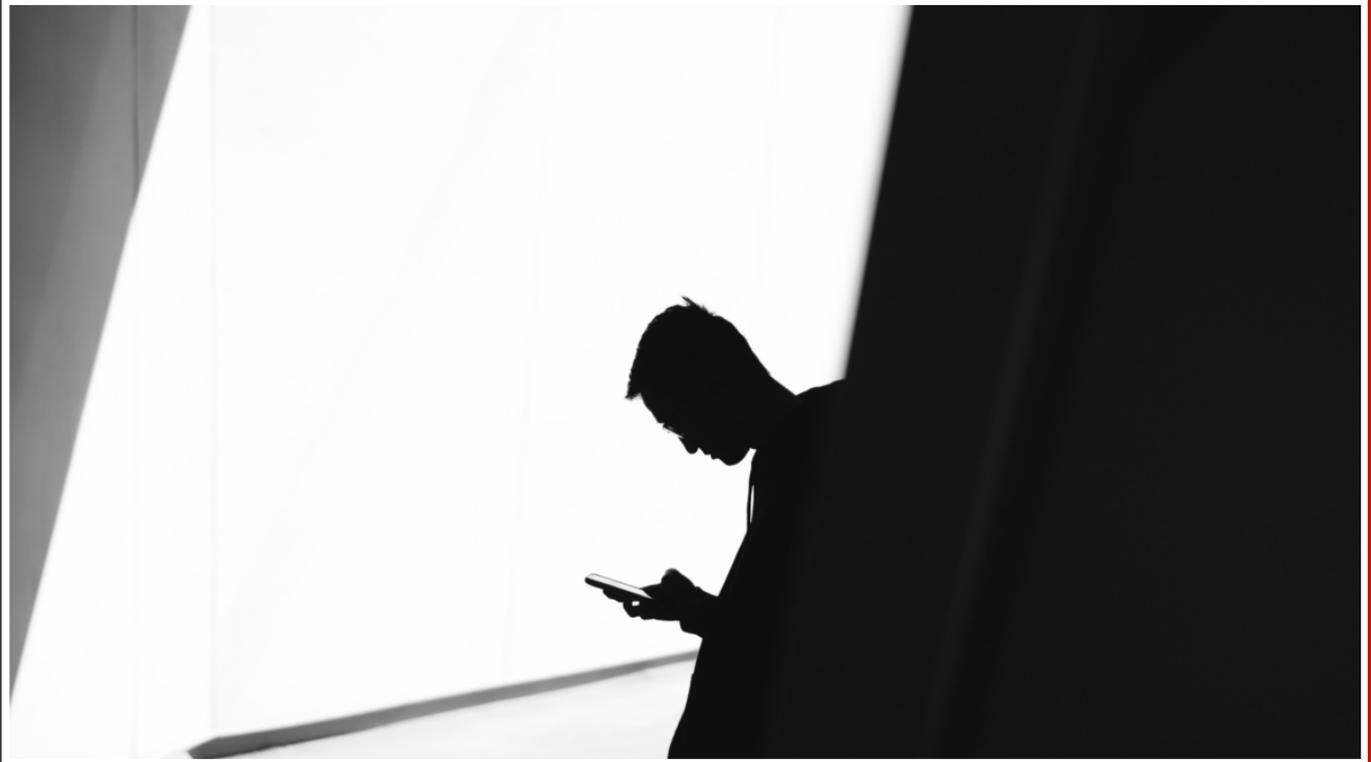




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Simone Heidbrink, Tobias Knoll (Eds.)

# Religion to Go!

Religion in Mobile Internet Environments, Mobile Apps, Augmented Realities and the In-Betweens

Special Issue

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# **Pope Francis in Cairo**

## **Authority and branding on Instagram**

Theo Zijderveld

### **Abstract**

Instagram has become one of the most popular social media with over 400 million users worldwide. Instagram is especially designed for mobile use: taking photos, editing and sharing. Many religious and spiritual leaders do use Instagram and attract millions of followers. Religious leaders in the western society cannot legitimize their authority in the public sphere by referring solely to tradition or religious sources. The crisis of authority has resulted in a longing for strong and charismatic leaders. In a spiritual marketplace, new requirements are emerging for leadership. Leaders become personal brands with their own mythology, central message and media channels, adapted to the styles and symbols of popular culture. The aesthetic dimension has become crucial, since audiovisual communication can be mediated by the media technology of today.

Pope Francis is one of the most prominent religious figures of today. In this paper, we will investigate how he uses Instagram to build a personal brand and how this relates to his authority, using the posts during his visit to Cairo as a case study.

Mobile devices and apps play like Instagram pave the way for new audiences and new interactions between the religious leaders and their audiences. The importance of images for media personalities shows the importance of the aesthetic dimension of charismatic authority. This paper will offer new insights in studying the relationship between religious leaders and authority in a media age.

### **Keywords**

Religious Authority, Personal Branding, Capital, Instagram

## **1 Introduction**

On 28 and 29 April 2017, Pope Francis visited Cairo. He was welcomed by president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and met the grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayeb, of Al Azhar, the most important representative in

Sunni Islam. Moreover, the Pope visited the Coptic St. Peter and St. Paul's Church, where, in December 2016, 23 people were killed after an explosion, an action that has been claimed by IS. According to many news commentators, the Pope wanted to improve the relations between Christians and Muslims with his visit, and show solidarity with the Egyptian Christians, around 10% of Egypt's population, who are suffering under attacks and discrimination.

The visit was extensively reported by news media such as CNN and Al Jazeera (Sirgany and Sterling 2017; AFP 2017b). The Instagram account of the Pope, @franciscus, reported about the visit. It showed two photos: one of the embrace between the Pope and the Grand Imam al-Tayeb, and the other one during the visit to St. Peter and St. Paul's Church. What do the posts on Instagram of this 'local' event reveal about the global 'brand' of Pope Francis, and how does this relate to his authority? How is the plausibility of his religious authority being claimed and made credible?

## 2 Pope Francis

The Pope is not the only religious leader who uses social media like Instagram. Today, many religious leaders employ all kinds of social media, some counting hundreds of thousands or even millions of followers. Pope Francis is one of the religious leaders with a huge number of followers: his Instagram account counts 4,2 Million Followers.

We can argue that Pope Francis has become a celebrity, and an iconic and recognizable figure, each of his steps are being reported. Pope Francis has, since his election as Pope, enjoyed enormous popularity. He has even been named *Time Person of the Year* in December 2013 (Chua-Eoan and Dias 2013). Pope Francis has become a personal brand. The imagery around his person is carefully orchestrated by the Vatican's communications team (Magielse 2017). The authority of Pope Francis can be attributed to his popularity and his ascribed charisma, which is also caused by the media attention he receives and the approval of his actions in western news media. Furthermore, he is the legitimate leader of the Roman Catholic Church, a church with more than one billion members worldwide.

The use of social media by the Pope and the Vatican is not new. His predecessor Benedict started using Twitter on 12 December 2012 (Johnston 2012), and Francis has, since his inauguration on 13 March 2013, continued that practice. The Twitter accounts have amassed more than 10 million followers. Moreover, @franciscus is not the first Instagram account of the Vatican. Three years earlier, the news portal news.va started the Instagram account @newsva. Interestingly, the name of the Instagram account is not connected to the office of the Pope (like @pontifex on

Twitter) but to the name of the person (@franciscus), which makes the Instagram more personalized than the Twitter accounts.

### 3 The changing context of the local and the global in a media age

Modern technology, facilitated by the internet, has allowed news and events to be visible instantaneously across the globe, a phenomenon that Manuel Castells has called the space of flows (Castells 1989). This raises questions about the connection between the capture of live moments, in this case during the visit of the Pope in Cairo, and its importance for his followers on Instagram and finally the global importance of this visit. Can the Pope as a religious leader and a media celebrity use his authority to change the relationship between Muslims and Christians on a local and a global level? In my theoretical framework, I will elaborate on the influence of media on religious authority.

### 4 Theoretical framework

In this theoretical framework, I will discuss the relationship between personal branding and authority within the context of social media. Many religious and spiritual leaders use social media like Instagram in order to position and promote themselves and their causes. Positioning and differentiating are part of a branding process. Religious organizations use the techniques of branding, and their leaders have often become personifications of their religious communities. These leaders have to compete in a *spiritual marketplace*, online as well as offline.<sup>1</sup> Religious leaders need not only to convince their audience of their views, but they have to attract their senses using self-styling, performance, and the use of audiovisual electronic media. (Witte, Koning, and Sunier 2015).

The characteristics of social media, such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook consist of the opportunity for everyone to start an account and participate on the social network. Users can compose post themselves or like and comment posts of other users. They can follow accounts and view posts of these accounts in more or less chronological order (though Twitter, Facebook and Instagram use algorithms to place certain posts on top) or search for places or hashtags to see what

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1 This marketplace is not a marketplace, solely based on rational choice of supply and demand, but “field of competition for followers who can be captured on the basis of strong public presence and seducing and convincing rhetoric, performance and imagery.” (Witte, Koning, and Sunier 2015, 120)

people using these hashtags have posted. In case of celebrities or public figures, these people can request a verified account, in order for others to see that this account really belongs to this person (there are many fan- and fake accounts circulating on social media).

#### 4.1 Instagram

Instagram is a social media network based on photo-sharing that works mainly through the application on mobile devices that was launched in 2010. Registered users can upload videos and photos, apply digital filters, use hashtags to their posts in order to link them to certain subjects, and add locations through geotags. Instagram rapidly gained popularity and was acquired by Facebook in 2012. Instagram has become an important social media channel, used by 400 million users monthly (“Global Social Media Ranking 2017 | Statistic” 2017), especially for young people; 90% of Instagram users are under 35 (Smith 2017).

#### 4.2 Branding of religious institutions and leaders

As Peter Horsfield points out, religious institutions have always adapted to the context of media and culture in order to survive, and to gain influence and power (Horsfield 2016). Media scholars such as Einstein and Hoover show how religious organizations employ practices of marketing and branding in order to position themselves (Einstein 2008; Hoover 2016). Marketing expert David Ogilvy defines branding as “the intangible sum of product’s attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it is advertised”(Einstein 2008, 70). Branding is related to marketing. Marketing is the idea of understanding the desires of customers and being able to reach them using the right channels. Marketers search for consumer needs and desires in order to create stories that resonate with what people want to identify with. Rakow states: “Brands do more than simply market and sell a product or service; they create a sense of affiliation and community and therefore can be conceptualized as a form of cultural production and as providers of contexts for interaction” (Rakow 2015, 218).

The position of religious leaders has become more significant as the personification of religious organizations, traditions, or movements on media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. In the case of Pope Francis, it is clear that his personal Instagram account (4,9 million followers) is much more popular than the official Vatican new account @newsva (1.24 K followers). Recent research on the way these leaders position themselves on social media have focused largely on the discourse, mainly on the medium Twitter (Codone 2014; Guzek 2015; Hope Cheong 2016). However, also due to technological advancement such as the availability of fast wireless internet, the role of photos and videos has become increasingly important.

I use the term *personal* branding for the way religious leaders position themselves on social media (see also Hope Cheong 2016). Catherine Kaputa defines a personal brand as “a special promise of value that sets you apart” (Kaputa 2012, 7). She argues that a brand is distinctive, different from others, and so should a personal brand be as well. The ‘packaging’ includes everything: the visual image, the story, the words, hairstyle and clothes. Personal branding is a mediated performance of a person based on symbols and mythologies that resonate with the values, desires, and interests of the audience. Leaders can gain media influence through practices online that function as authority markers. Authoring content on platforms such as Twitter and Instagram has become an important source of authority. If successful, it contributes to the spiritual capital of religious organizations and its leaders. The production and consumption of myths and symbols are important ways in which a religious leader can build a personal brand. Personal branding adds to the social and cultural capital of the religious leaders, and can contribute to the construction of authority.

### 4.3 Authority

Authority is the right to lead, influence, coordinate, or guide the thoughts and behaviors of a particular group or institutions based on legitimacy (Carroll 2011, 1–2). This legitimacy is a common ground that both the leader and the followers share. Religious leaders base their legitimacy on the plausibility and acceptance of different kinds of authority. The sources of legitimacy have been elaborated by Max Weber, who is the primary reference point in discussions about the concept of authority (Weber 1946). Weber distinguishes traditional, legal and charismatic authority.

The claims of traditional authority depend on their authenticity or consistency with tradition. Weber argues that patriarchy is the far most important type of domination. It means the father, the senior, the elder; the lord, etc. hold the authority. The system of norms is considered sacred. Violation would result in magical or religious evils. The patriarch has a realm of ‘free arbitrariness’ in his conduct and judgment.

Legal authority is legitimated by commands that rest upon rules that are rationally established. Legal authority is impersonal and institutional, and has been organized as a bureaucracy. The official never exercises power in his own right; the institution gives the power. Legal authority is hierarchical. In church, the pastor or priest has limited ‘jurisdiction’ which is fixed by rules. Legal authority is, in combination with traditional authority prevalent in the Roman Catholic Church, which is highly hierarchical and highly structured.

Charismatic authority focuses on individuals or groups of individuals. Charisma means ‘divinely inspired gift’. Weber used the term to describe a form based on follower perceptions that

the leader is endowed with exceptional qualities. In the nineteenth, and especially the twentieth century, the strong charismatic leader was being perceived as the one that could lead with natural authority. This concerned leaders in different spheres, both political and religious. Charismatic authority is unstable and fluid, contrary to legal and traditional authority. The success of the mission of the charismatic leader depends on whether people will follow him or her. Charismatic leaders thus have to prove themselves in order to retain their authority.

#### 4.4 Power

The concept of authority in the context of social media is closely related to the concept of social and symbolic power. Power, is the production of casual effects (Scott 2001, 1). Social power has effects in and through social relations. In its strongest sense, the intentional use of social power can affect the conduct of other participants in the social relations that connect them together. Power relations are formed through communicative actions in communities that use shared cultural symbols. These shared cultural symbols are part of the ‘common ground’ that can legitimize authority.

In the context of media institutions, another important subcategory of power that is closely related to social power is symbolic power. Symbolic power is the power to construct reality, which is an important notion in the context of the media. As Couldry argues, “a strong concept of symbolic power insists that some concentrations of symbolic power (for example, the concentration from which contemporary media institutions benefit) are so great that they dominate the whole social landscape and amount to a power of ‘constructing reality’ (Couldry 2012, 87).” The context of the rise of media institutions in the twentieth and twenty-first century, of which Facebook (the owner of Instagram) is one of the more recent ones, is one of the reasons why the concept of authority needs to be re- conceptualized.

#### 4.5 Rethinking authority

Traditional religious institutions in general have seen their reputation diminished due to several reasons such as declining membership, the overtaking of functions of those institutions by, for example, the state, and several cultural factors. These cultural factors, as generally described by various sociologists and philosophers are the mistrust of any form of authority, reflexivity and consumerism (Roof 1999; Giddens 1991; Taylor 2007). In the West, a spiritual marketplace has emerged in which people can choose from a wide variety of religious and spiritual narratives, symbols, practices and products. In this context, the effective use of electronic media has become important to attract and retain audiences and connect to religious communities.

Horsfield (2016) argues that the notion of religion as a stable network of institutions and communities is changing towards a religious marketplace where candidates outside institutional candidates claim for audience attention. Religious authority is more individually constructed, depended on media audiences, more consumerist and more global. He that religious authority is "... more individually constructed, defined significantly by media audiences rather than institutions, more consumerist in its approach and more global in the figures and resources on which it draws." (Horsfield 2016, 38).

Hoover(2016) states that the role of consent of the followers is essential for the authority of the leaders, and that authority in the context of contemporary media culture is always negotiated. Authority nowadays is more about charismatic and traditional authority than about legal authority. Charismatic authority is framed by Hoover as the way in which aesthetic mediated forms appeal to audiences. It is based on its attractiveness to audiences. Traditional authority can appeal to audiences when it refers to shared history and received tradition (Hoover 2016, 7).

So, what kind of authority can Pope Francis construct on Instagram? Of course, Pope Francis has already build social and cultural capital throughout his career since his election. He has become a celebrity figure that meets with ordinary people, kings, presidents, and leaders of other religions. The imagery that is being presented on Instagram to his millions of followers adds most likely to his personal brand. But in order to analyze how these photos might contribute to the construction of his personal brand and his authority, we need to pay attention to what is presented, and to what it might represent.

## 5 Methodology

Because branding is the way in which celebrities like Pope Francis construct authority, we need a certain methodology to deconstruct the practice of branding, and reveal how symbolic power is exercised. More precisely, it reveals which categories and representations are used for the construction of social reality. This practice can be described as the construction of mythology or ideology (Barthes 1972). The semiotic analysis of branding has been elaborated by Gillian Dyer (1982) and Judith Williamson (1978). The semiotic analysis of social practices has been defined by Hodge & Kress as social semiotics. Contrary to 'traditional' semiotics, social semiotics does not try to unravel semiotic systems, but rather focus on social practices in terms of power and solidarity (Hodge and Kress 1988, 122).

Solidarity can be defined in Durkheimian terms as cohesion and dis-cohesion, alliances and antagonisms, bonds and barriers. When leaders, who are in a position of power, appeal to common ground to legitimize their authority, they do appeal to solidarity of the community.

The questions of power that I do address in my analysis are the questions of symbolic power. In relation to the object of my research, this will focus on the way the Instagram account @franciscus is able to construct at least one perspective on reality, and which ideology or counter-ideology is presented through the images.

Social semiotics takes into consideration many sociological factors, and the analysis provides resources for understanding social practices. Though a great deal of literature about social semiotics is based on neo-Marxist and economic dimensions of society, in this paper, I also take into account the political and religious dimensions of power and solidarity. The complex religious and political situation in Egypt in relation to the visit of Pope Francis justifies this approach.

I approach the meaning behind the meaning and myth, where I use Roland Barthes' analysis described in *Myth Today* (1972). A myth is, according to Barthes a second-order semiological system. Myths do have an ideological connotation: this means that the things presented are shown as inevitable and natural, they might misrepresent hide, or change the meaning of certain key concepts.

On the first level, I analyze the 'language' of the image. On the second level, I will deconstruct the myth that is being produced. Central to the analysis of the Instagram posts is the photo. Although manipulation and framing are perfectly possible, photos are, contrary to words, perceived as something natural and as a direct representation of reality. As Barthes states, "pictures (...) are more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke, without analyzing or diluting it (Barthes 1972, 95).

## 6 Analysis

### 6.1 The context of the visit to Cairo

Before the analysis of the two Instagram posts, I will shortly sketch the context of the visit of Pope Francis to Cairo. The context of this visit is very complex. Egypt itself has known several political struggles and revolutions. The Coptic Church in Egypt is a significant, but threatened, minority. The Roman Catholic Church in Egypt is even more marginal, and exists mainly of migrants from the region and from Europe. Sunni Islam is the main religion in Egypt. Al Azhar University has a great

reputation in the religious, but also in the political domain. Thus, in Egypt, the Pope cannot claim much religious authority. However, on a global scale, the Pope is seen as someone who has a huge influence, and has a considerable amount of political influence as well. Moreover, the Pope is not just head of the Roman Catholic Church, but also head of State of the Vatican.

The items that have been posted on Instagram during the visit of the Pope use geo-tags that refer to Al Azhar and one that refers to Cairo where the Pope has visited the church. In the latter, in the post itself, the location St. Peter and St. Paul's Church has been mentioned in the post. The short video that has been posted after the visit uses the geo-tag *Egypt*. At least from the case of the first two posts, followers of Pope Francis on Instagram could have deduced the idea that they were following the Pope live.

## 6.2 The Pope at Al Azhar



Photo 1: Screenshot from Instagram: Pope Francis at Al Azhar<sup>2</sup>.

2 @franciscus (28 April 2017), *Instagram*, Accessed 30 September 2017, <<https://www.instagram.com/p/BTeVv4Ej9Cb/?taken-by=franciscus>>

This is a post from 28 April 2017. It received 172.000 likes. The accompanying text on Instagram (first in Arabic, second in English) is: Together let us affirm the incompatibility of violence and faith, belief and hatred.

The picture shows Pope Francis and the grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayeb, embracing each other in the Al Azhar Conference Hall (AFP 2017b). They shake hands, and embrace each other. It is hard to see the facial expressions of the grand Imam, and because of the perspective of the photo, the face of the Pope is covered by the face of the grand Imam. In the background, we see two decorated chairs, and geometrical patterns on the wall. In the foreground (less sharply), we see people sitting in chairs, most of them male and grey or bald. On the right, someone in the audience is taking a picture with his smartphone. The white clothes of the Pope contrast sharply with the clothes of the grand Imam.

Though it is most probably a very orchestrated embrace, the context of Instagram gives the impression that I, as part of the audience, have just witnessed a snapshot from an event that is happening live, even though I may assume that this photo has been carefully selected afterwards. Moreover, the viewer / follower can like this post, to give their approval or apprehension for the photo or the message, or they might comment and show their opinion.

The embrace is very symbolic, because it shows the representative of the Roman Catholic Church, that counts more than 1 billion members, and one of the key authorities of Sunni Islam. Though they both do not represent the entire Islam or Christianity, nonetheless they do represent a large part of it. The Pope and the grand Imam had met before in the Vatican, which was also accompanied by embraces and kisses. The visit of the Pope was part of the Al-Azhar International Conference on Peace. The larger context is also the attempt of Pope Francis to ease the tensions between Muslims and Christians. His policy stands in stark contrast with his predecessor Benedict and his statements about Islam. In his speech, Pope Francis stated the importance of peace, and said: "May Saint Francis of Assisi, who eight centuries ago came to Egypt and met Sultan Malik al Kamil, intercede for this intention" (Lubov 2017). Pope Francis identifies himself with Saint Francis of Assisi, and placed himself in his footsteps.

In terms of solidarity, we can argue that the Pope puts great emphasis on the solidarity of religions and their mutual claims on the incompatibility of 'violence and faith, belief and hatred', according to the Pope. The embrace is a powerful symbol of this solidarity. Of course, this image of solidarity is highly contested. The Pope does not address a common ideological conception of reality, but seems to build a counter-narrative. Solidarity supposes mutual interests and mutual convictions. The two men that embrace represent a part of Christianity and a part of Islam. The connection with power is complex. If we understand symbolic power as the power to construct reality, we can argue that the image of the embrace is a powerful image of solidarity, because it is

rare that authoritative figures of both religions do publicly embrace in front of the whole world. The fact that this image has received so much media attention is because of the popularity, the social and cultural capital, of Pope Francis. However, to enforce the message of solidarity in the context of Cairo, the Pope needed a representative of Islam. And this is the difficult part of the story. While the grand Imam might be a key figure in Sunni Islam, the question of religious authority in Islam is very different from the one in Roman Catholic Christianity. Especially in the case of highly reported IS-related suicide attacks, the question in the media remains who has the authority to speak and act in name of Islam.

Pope Francis, on the other hand, has built a powerful personal brand and can deeply rely on the institutional structures and charismatic authority that have been constructed since his election. This act has probably received so much media attention because the act of the embrace is symbolic and because it speaks up against a discourse that is less favorable to Islam.

### 6.3 The Pope at St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Cairo



*Photo 2: Screenshot from Instagram: Pope Francis in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church.<sup>3</sup>*

This post from 29 April received 146.000 likes. The text that accompanies this image is: “Just as the heavenly Jerusalem is one, so too is our martyrology; your sufferings are also our sufferings.” Interestingly, contrary to the former post, this post starts with the English text, and has no Arab translation.

<sup>3</sup> @franciscus (29 April 2017), *Instagram*, Accessed 30 September 2017, <<https://www.instagram.com/p/BTep9fjj176/?taken-by=franciscus>>

This picture shows Pope Francis who lights a candle in St. Peter and St. Paul's Church in Cairo, the Coptic church that was being bombed in December 2016. We see a broad colonnade, the ceiling covered with chandeliers. We see Pope Francis from the side with a candle in his hand that he lights with another candle that stands on a standard. In front of this standard, photos of 30 people are shown, most probably the victims of the suicide bombing. Behind Pope Francis, we see an old man dressed in black, wearing a Coptic cross, which is most probably the Coptic Pope Tawadros II (AFP 2017a). In the background, we see a man in a suit, and behind him a huge wooden cross, wrapped in white blankets. In the back of the room, we can see many photographers, one of them flashing with his camera to photograph this event.

This image, just like the last one, is highly symbolical. It shows Pope Francis in a Church that has been separated from the Roman Catholic Church since the schism that followed the Council of Chalcedon in 451 AD. The Coptic Church and the Roman Catholic Church have different opinions on some crucial theological issues. However, the Pope seems to underline that the victims are Christian martyrs that share the so-called 'ecumenism of blood', that transcends doctrinal differences. Interestingly, on this picture Pope Tawadros is barely visible. Everybody is looking at Pope Francis, and the photographers have come for him. Though this posts shows many things, it is also a reinforcement of the Pope as a media celebrity that attracts the attention. It is Pope Francis who pays attention to the sufferings of the Coptic Church. It is the Pope who has the social and cultural capital] to draw this attention in a way that the Coptic Church is probably unable to do, not the least because of its fragile and complicated minority position in Egyptian society.

The interplay between power and solidarity again is very complex. The solidarity of the Pope is based on the ideal of Christian solidarity in sufferings and persecutions, and the theology of the Church as one body of Christ. The reference to the heavenly Jerusalem is peculiar. In theological sense, it is a reference to heaven as the place where God dwells. However, the earthly Jerusalem is a very contested place, holy for Jews, Christians and Muslims, and in the context of the visit to Egypt it raises questions whether there is also a political connotation to this statement. Contrary to the previous posts, this has not been translated in Arabic. Therefore, this post might be addressed to the global Instagram audience, and not directly to the Egyptian or more specific, Coptic audience.

Contrary to the proposed solidarity between Christians and Muslims, this form of solidarity excludes non-Christians because of the supposed common theological background. The precarious situation of Christians in the Middle East seems to diminish the value of cultural and theological differences. The solidarity that is proposed on this picture seems to be less problematic, because of a widely shared concern of Christians, Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants about the persecution of Christians in Muslim countries. For Pope Francis, it seems a difficult balance to emphasize solidarity with peaceful Muslims on the one hand, and with Christians that suffer in a context of Muslim majority on the other.

A function of ideology is to cover paradoxes and contradictions. It is very well possible that many Instagram followers of the Pope consider these representations of solidarity unproblematic, given the number of likes that these posts have received. Pope Francis is much more influential than Pope Tawadros II in terms of global political power. The Coptic Church is not in a position to create the same amount of media attention through a powerful global celebrity figure, and is clearly the receiving part of solidarity.

However, the global brand of Pope Francis that is so familiar to Western audiences, might have a significant other meaning in the context of Egypt. Pope Francis could represent the Western world as well. Because the images of Pope Francis, on Instagram and elsewhere, where he shows solidarity with marginalized or disadvantaged groups have become so natural and familiar, it almost seems natural to suppose that there should be solidarity between the Copts and the Roman Catholic Church, and that theological differences do not play a role in case of martyrdom and persecution. Because the images of Pope Francis are so dominant, and possess such a symbolic power, the perspective of Coptic Christians and of ordinary citizens in Egypt on what is going on in Egypt is underrepresented.

In this perspective, both images re-emphasize a mythology about Pope Francis that imposes itself as natural and unproblematic. Even though the viewpoints of Pope Francis concerning, for example, the relationship between Muslims and Christians might be questioned, the role of the Pope as a religious authority has been firmly established.

## 7 Conclusion

A few weeks after the visit of Pope Francis, at least 28 Coptic Christians who were on their way to a monastery were killed by Islamic gunmen (Farouk Mahfouz 2017). A day later, the Instagram account of Pope Francis posted a photo where the Pope is showed praying, his face down. The post was accompanied by the text: “Let us pray for our Coptic brethren in Egypt who were killed because they did not want to renounce the faith”<sup>4</sup>. Clearly, his visit did not end the troubles of the Coptic Christians in Egypt, and it is hard to indicate if relations between Muslims and Christians have improved. The question whether the Pope can use his authority to change this relationship on a local or global level is difficult to answer. The media attention his visit received, including his own coverage on Instagram, has allowed him to share his point of view, in images and in words. Media

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4 @franciscus (28 May 2017), *Instagram*, Accessed 30 September 2017, <<https://www.instagram.com/p/BUm5Edtjp6u/?taken-by=franciscus>>

pressure and visibility may change points of view, actions and politics on both a local and a global level. Besides, Instagram does not display silent diplomacy that the Vatican could employ in influencing the relationship with world leaders, the Egyptian government, the religious establishment in Egypt and the Coptic Church.

But what do the two posts reveal about Pope Francis? They show a public performance of a world leader that embraces a powerful Muslim leader in one of the most important Islamic universities, surrounded by an audience. In the Coptic Church, it is the Pope in the center of attention again. He lights a candle, while photographers capture every movement. The publication of these performances on Instagram contribute to his positioning in a public debate about the relationship between Christianity and Islam, and between religion and violence. The fact that he received thousands of likes, and because his account is followed by millions of people contributes to his visibility.

How does this relate to his authority? In the posts, we can see the Pope as the legitimate leader of the Roman Catholic Church, which is clearly emphasized by his clothes. In a broader sense, we can see him as a powerful and influential Christian leader who transcends theological and cultural divisions between Christian denominations. Moreover, the Pope derives authority from the fact that, as a public figure, people are interested in his actions, performances, his opinions and his statements. At least on Instagram, his authority is legitimized by the attention he receives which is far more than most religious receive on social media. Whether these images and implicated narratives can reinforce or change the worldview of his followers should be subject of future research.

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