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CNN Snags First Papal Primary Debate



By Marty Kaplan

With Pope Benedict XVI stepping down after two terms, the race to broadcast the first head-to-head debates among potential Vatican successors has been won by CNN. Sowing his oats, new worldwide network president Jeff Zucker announced that *papabili* will first square off on March 1 in a debate moderated by CNN anchor Candy Crowley.

“The tough thing was deciding who’s eligible,” said Zucker, explaining why former CNN contributor Pat Buchanan did not make the cut. “We thought a ten percent threshold in the College of Cardinals was the right place to draw the line.”

Said CNN chief political analyst Gloria Borger, “Scola, Ouellet and Sandri are the clear frontrunners,” naming cardinals from Milan, Canada and Argentina. “It’s really theirs to lose.”

It is not known whether the lame duck pontiff will live-Tweet the debate, but Vaticanisti note that Twitter handle @justratzinger was recently claimed.

The Sistine Chapel beat out St. Anselm’s College in Manchester, New Hampshire as the site of the event. Co-sponsoring with CNN will be *L’Osservatore Romano*’s YouTube channel, which will livestream the event.

Ground rules include a CNN pledge that Crowley will toe the line on infallibility and not ask follow-ups quoting encyclicals, fiats or bulls.

Fox News chief Roger Ailes could not be reached for comment, but a Fox spokesperson denied that a fracas between Sean Hannity and Bill O’Reilly to anchor is the reason CNN got the first nod from the Holy See.

NOTE: *This piece is satirical. All quotations are fabrications for the purpose of satire.*