

Still Buffering 435: Conclave

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[theme music plays]

Sydnee: Hello, and welcome to Still Buffering: a cross-generational guide to the culture that made us. I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: Well, Tey, um... I feel like that what I was gonna talk about, what's going on, like, on social media and in TikTok, it overlaps a lot with our topic this week.

Taylor: Yeah. Yeah, that's true.

Sydnee: Because—and I don't know if this is, like, selected for me. But my TikTok has been a lot about Catholics, and the Pope, and the conclave. And then just, like, a lot of, like... I don't know. Like... uh, witty observations about being raised Catholic.

Taylor: You got that Catholic algorithm going on.

Sydnee: Apparently I do. I don't know how that happened. Maybe because I was trying to follow, like, all the Cardinals who were in the running for Pope? You know? Like, not actually follow. Like, I didn't actually follow them. You know what I mean.

Taylor: I would say... [laughs quietly] Do they have social media? I wouldn't imagine so. That feels very un... holy. [laughs] That feels... social media as a whole feels like a demonic activity, so I don't think they're allowed.

Sydnee: No. It's definitely—I mean, social media *has* to be the work of the devil. Like, it cannot be...

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: ... divinely inspired. [laughs quietly] Right?

Taylor: [laughs] No. No, absolutely not. It's the... what is it? The seven levels of Hades? There at the bottom is Reddit, and that's where his throne is.

Sydnee: Yes, yes. No, I do not believe [laughs quietly] social media is the work of any positive spiritual force in the universe. But I do think it was helpful to see, like, various breakdowns on, like, "Now, this Cardinal who's in the running for Pope comes from here, and believe in this, and has these sorts of ideas." I don't know. You know what I mean?

Taylor: This feels like it should have the sports zone music behind it. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: It did. I think people did make those, like, um... like the March Madness chart. Like, you know what I'm... the sports charts. You know. With the teams. [laughs]

Taylor: I mean...

Sydnee: The sports charts! [laughs]

Taylor: I feel like, considering who won—

Sydnee: [simultaneously] Brackets! Brackets!

Taylor: —who won the—

Sydnee: Sorry.

Taylor: —the one that came out on top of the Pope bracket, the new Pope.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm.

Taylor: Are we spoiling—can we spoil the Pope? Spoilers for those of you who don't know the Pope. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Arguably the most—I mean, probably the most famous person on Earth, right? 'Cause like, you could be President or whatever, you know, ruler of your country. But there's a lot of those. But there's just the one Pope.

Taylor: I guess so. um... I don't know. Pope fame versus Lady Gaga fame. That's the next bracket.

Sydnee: Hmm.

Taylor: I just wanna see 'em fight.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: You know she'd rock up a wild fit to fight the Pope.

Sydnee: That's an interesting—who's more famous? Like, the Pope, or Lady Gaga. The Pope or, like, I don't know, Mickey Mouse. You know what I mean?

Taylor: Oh, yeah. Yeah, Mickey Mouse wins.

Sydnee: But then, like, I don't know. Then we're getting into the realm of fictional characters, and the Pope is not fictional. The Pope is an actual human.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: The Pope does exist, that's true. Well, I was gonna say, the fact that a Chicago Pope won... feels like the people that love a good bracket, yeah, would also love a Chicago Pope. This feels like a big win for Chicago. [laughs]

Sydnee: It's a big—I know. It is. I think it is. I have to imagine it's a big win for Chicago. Chicago must really be enjoying this. The Midwest seems to be enjoying it in general. I've seen a lot of TikToks about a Midwest Pope.

Taylor: [sighs] Well, you know, I love that the way that I learned about it, um, was there's, like, a bartender meme group that I follow, and I saw—I woke up that morning and there was a meme that was like, "It is highly likely that the current Pope has tried Malort."

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: And I thought, "What does this mean? Oh, this means we have a new Pope! This means the new Pope's from Chicago!" [wheeze-laugh]

Sydnee: I saw—somebody had put together a meme of the new Pope holding instead of, like, the cup, like, the chalice for communion, holding a bottle of Malort. Like, "This'll be communion from now on." [laughs]

Taylor: I love that. I love that. That's great.

Sydnee: Yeah. That's pretty good. Um... yeah, no, they did. They did pick a—they picked an American Pope. He's from Chicago. Dual citizenship. He's from the Americas, I should say. So I don't think—

Taylor: His family is Peruvian?

Sydnee: Well, no, I think his family's from Chicago, right? But then he—like, he was born in Chicago, he's from Chicago. But then he got dual citizenship in Peru because he spent most of his adult life down there.

Taylor: Oh, okay, alright.

Sydnee: I think that's—I think that is the order.

Taylor: That's cool.

Sydnee: The only reason I say that is because I've seen interviews with his brothers. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: They're undeniably from Chicago?

Sydnee: Yeah! And, like, they're talking—it's really—it was kind of funny, because they were like, "Did you know he would, like—" or "Did you think he would grow up to be Pope?"

And he was like, "Well, I mean, he used to make us play church when we were little. He would pretend to be the priest, and he'd make us sit there and play church."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs] Which I think is pretty good. Another one's—the other brother was like, "Also, I don't know why people keep saying he's a Cubs fan. He's a White Sox fan. I don't know where that rumor got started, but he is *not* a Cubs fan." [laughs]

Taylor: I love that the fact that the Pope just has brothers walking around feels—like, I understand that the Pope is always just some guy. But like, in my—maybe just from my Catholic youth, like, the idea of the Pope is like, some like—he's not a god, but he's like, the step down.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: So in my head he's just some old, wizened dude that's alive forever, that sits on a throne. Not, like, a... a guy from Chicago, with brothers.

Sydnee: Yeah. His name's Bob.

Taylor: It's good, though. Bob?! Bob the Pope?!

Sydnee: Or Robert.

Taylor: Bob.

Sydnee: But in my head it's Bob.

Taylor: Pope Bob! I think—now he's Leo, right?

Sydnee: Yeah, now he's—yeah. He did not—his Pope name is not Bob.
[through laughter] I don't think there's ever been a Pope Bob!

Taylor: [laughs] [crosstalk] Bob! "Pope Bob, what do we do about this? The answer can't always be Malort and hot dogs, Pope Bob!"

Sydnee: [laughs] Uh... I don't know. I don't really—I do not know the, um... the politics and stuff enough of all the Cardinals and the Inside Baseball of the Catholic Church and, like—I really don't know enough about this Cardinal, other than the articles I've read since he got elevated to Pope to make any, like, commentary on any of that. I just want to make that clear. I am not an expert on any of this.

I think it's fascinating that there's an American Pope. I think it's very interesting that, uh—there have to be political underpinnings, with as crappy as America is as a partner in the world right now. It's interesting. It has to mean something.

Taylor: Well, and I do think—I mean, I... it does. And I think obviously our previous Pope had a lot of very progressive ideas. And even if you're not—you know, you might say, like, "Well, that's just how he directs the Catholic Church. Like, it doesn't have any real-world effect."

But it does. It does affect all of us, whether we like it or not. It's a powerful position. And the ideas and the beliefs of the Pope will have some effect on the world.

So I was kinda worried. Like, is this new Pope gonna be as progressive as the previous one? And in some ways he's not. Um, in some ways he is. So, you know, it's not as bad as it could be, I guess? I guess that's where we're at, where it's not a big step backwards, you know?

Sydnee: Isn't it wild that when we are talking about—when we're talking about the Catholic Church, we're talking about, like, a Christian faith, so derived from Jesus Christ. And the idea that a Pope who would think it is important for us to help the poor, the idea that that's progressive... [laughs quietly] and not, oh, I don't know, the whole frickin' thing? [laughs quietly]

Taylor: That is true. That is—how'd that—how—who did that? How'd that happen?

Sydnee: Right? Like, that's not progressive. That was the whole idea! At least that's what I remember being told.

Taylor: Yeah, that feels like if...

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: If you knew one thing about, like, what, I don't know, good religiosity should be, I think that's, you know... if you did not study for the exam, that's the one answer you could pull out of your butt. "Uh, probably wanna help the... the homeless and the poor, right? Probably?"

Sydnee: "Should we should help the poor."

Taylor: Yeah. That seems like it... pretty sure Jesus did that.

Sydnee: Yeah. Love—

Taylor: A couple times.

[sirens in background]

Sydnee: Love people? Help them? Right? [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah. No, no. That's...

Sydnee: That's woke. Woke Pope.

Taylor: What—what are they getting up to if not helping the poor? What is something—I don't—what is there that we agree with? Hating gays, I guess. That's...

Sydnee: Well, and I think—

Taylor: That's what the Church was made for. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I think there are also a lot of people who are just like, "Well, you should just, like, go to church, and tithe, and go to church more."

And, like, that those acts are enough. Like, that those—that that's enough. I don't know. It's been interesting watching—there's a lot of discourse on TikTok about cradle Catholics versus, like, later-in-life converts to Catholicism, and the differences. Which, like, that's an interesting one for me, because I don't... I mean, our grandpa—well, I am a cradle Catholic. Our grandpa converted to Catholicism, but obviously long before I came around. I don't know anyone personally in my life who has converted to Catholicism, and so I don't really have strong opinions. You know what I mean? On the idea of converting to Catholicism.

I guess we are sort of cultural Catholics, now? In the sense that, like—

Taylor: [quietly] Cultural Catholics.

Sydnee: —we get it all, but certainly I don't practice. I don't go to church. I don't go to any church. Um, but like, I—it's in me.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I can't escape it. [laughs]

Taylor: It's interesting how that... 'cause I don't feel like every religious denomination is like that, but that is true with Catholicism. Like, I... I don't—I am not at all—surprise, everybody! I'm not a practicing religious person. I don't know. You might—that might come as a real shocker, but you know. Uh, but if you have that conversation with other Catholics, they're like, "But you were born Catholic."

I'm like, "Yeah."

"Oh, so you're Catholic." Well, no, no. It's, uh—is it forever? [wheeze-laughs]
Is it a blood curse?

Sydnee: Well, it's weird, because I have said I'm Catholic long after I stopped practicing Catholicism. But it feels weird to say I'm not Catholic.

'Cause I... I don't know. I mean, that's a weird—it's, like, a weird—I don't know—and there's been a lot of discourse about that. About that idea that, like, you can't ever escape it. It's just in you.

Um, and like, people asserting things like... I saw this whole conversation about, "You can always tell a convert Catholic, 'cause they talk about, like, studying the Bible."

And it's like, as a cradle Catholic, did you ever study the Bible? No, we didn't read the Bible. [laughs quietly] We didn't... we just had that one big one that had, like, the family tree in it.

Taylor: Yeah. Well, you know, you learned about the Bible in Catholic school. That really...

Sydnee: But like, we never—like, we didn't have a... okay. In other Christian faiths, the kids get Bibles that they're supposed to, like, read and talk about in, like, youth group and stuff. Like, little Bibles. I just don't—I don't ever remember having to, like, actually read any of it.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: That's fair.

Sydnee: Even in CCD! Like, I don't remember us doing that in C—that was, um... that's like a religious class for Catholics, in case that sounds weird. Yeah, if you don't—if you go to a Catholic school, you get religion in the school. Like, it's part of—that's a class. And if you don't, you're supposed to go to Sunday school. It was called CCD. Which I'm sure stands for, what, Catholic catechism... something?

Taylor: The only part of the Bible that I ever read with gusto was Revelations.

Sydnee: Sure.

Taylor: And that was just because it's cool. Revelations is cool.

Sydnee: We all did. And I will say, I guess that is true, I have read the Bible. I've read Revelations. We all go through that phase, right? Where we're like, "That's where the weird stuff is, right?" [laughs]

Taylor: Yeah, that's the end of the world! It's just good fan-fiction. You don't have to—you don't have to... you know, endorse it.

Sydnee: Uh, but it's been interesting following that discourse. There's been a lot of talk about that on TikTok. And it's been really interesting, too, to see people who voice something that I've never been able to really articulate well, which is that I don't practice Catholicism, or any faith, and I have no intention of taking my kids to any sort of church or religious institution, right? Like, we're not... we don't do that. And I don't feel—like, I have no feeling on that. Like, I don't feel like I should. I feel no guilt about it.

But there is a—there's some stuff, some good stuff I got that sometimes I worry, like, "Oh, I don't know if I'd be who I was if I hadn't gotten some of this good stuff, and like, I'm not passing it on to my kids."

And I've heard other Catholics voice that. Like, I don't practice any sort of religion, but like, I feel very strongly that I show my love for other people by doing good things for them, and by serving my fellow humans, and by doing good things and good acts, and I feel bad if I'm not living a life where I also serve others. Is that all just in me? Or is that some residual... Catholicism?

Taylor: I think that's a fair thing to be concerned about, but I feel like... whether it comes from Catholicism or anywhere else, I think it's just [unintelligible] the lesson that you think deserves preservation, and make sure that gets passed on. Because I don't think you need a... a... big dude on a throne up in the sky to believe that we should be good to one another. In fact, I think it's a much easier belief to endorse, that, you know, we have a responsibility to each other as humans, to take care of each other.

Sydnee: It's—I agree with you. Sometimes I worry that the creation of religion was to make people scared that if they didn't do those things

[laughs quietly] they would burn eternally. And so we needed that sort of motivation. [laughs]

Taylor: And this is where I wonder if sometimes I just—am I made wrong? Because I don't need the threat of hellfire to keep me from not, like, being horrible to other people. Because there's just... inside of me, when I do something mean to somebody, I feel—like, on a biological level, I have an adverse reaction to being a... a butthead. I'm not saying that that stops me every time, but I feel like on a really beautiful, like, physiological level, we're designed to be good.

Sydnee: I mean, I think so. I hope so.

Taylor: Like, and you could—and probably just from a biological, like, imperative. Like, the need to protect and propagate our own species, it's not unique to humans. It's every species does that.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: Every species has an understanding that it needs to stick around and have babies and keep going. And so we're all kind of programmed to do things to make sure that happens. And so... you know. I mean, maybe that feels like a soulless explanation for why you should be good, but it's not. It's that it's literally what we're here to do.

Sydnee: No. I do, I do—I will say that I really appreciate that JD Vance converted to Catholicism.

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: And then has so far... been openly disliked by two Popes. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Yeah. Well, how's he gonna get away with getting this one out of the picture? That—last one, he was an old guy. You know, culpable deniability. But, uh...

Sydnee: I just can't imagine! Like, I was born Catholic, and I've never had a Pope hate me.

Taylor: [laughs quietly] Let alone two!

Sydnee: Right. I've had my whole life. I've had 42 years to, you know, incur the ire of a Pope, and I haven't. And JD Vance, like, converted to Catholicism and ticked off two Popes.

Taylor: Is there not a way that a Pope... especially for a convert. Like, maybe it's different if you're a blood curse Catholic. But if you're not, is there a way for the Pope to go, "No. Sorry. You may not join our guild."

It feels like there should be. It feels like the Pope should be able to go, "Sorry—"

Sydnee: Excommun—

Taylor: "Not one of us."

Sydnee: Yeah. Excommunication.

Taylor: Oh, that's what that is.

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: Yeah, yeah. He could excommunicate JD Vance. [laughs] I don't think that's gonna happen, but whew!

Taylor: Come on, Chicago Pope! You're from Chicago!

Sydnee: Come on! That'd be so funny! [laughs]

Taylor: If you do one thing. [laughs] With your Popely power. Excommunicate JD Vance!

Sydnee: Oh, that would be awesome. Yeah, yeah. The Pope could do that. I don't think he will, but man. Whew!

Taylor: But he could.

Sydnee: It'd be pretty cool! He could. Yeah, no. The Pope gets to say "You're not in our club."

Taylor: I love that.

Sydnee: I don't know that anybody else does. We're moving into the Conclave here, I think. I don't know that anybody—any of those other powerful guys in red get to say that, though.

Taylor: Your local priest can't just say, "Nah. You out."

Sydnee: Mm-mm. No, I think now—I imagine that the priest can kick you out of that parish, right? Like, I bet the priest—

Taylor: Yeah, yeah.

Sydnee: —could be like, "You can't come to church here anymore." Probably, I assume.

Taylor: I'm sure that's fine.

Sydnee: I wonder if it's like if a patient gets discharged from a practice, we have to, like, give them a letter, like an official letter, that says "You're being discharged," and give them 30 days of emergency care until they can find a new provider, and it's all very official. I wonder if the priest has to do that. Like, "You have 30 days of emergency religious care."

Taylor: [simultaneously] "You have 30 days." [laughs]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] "You have 30 days' worth of communion wafers, and then you're done here."

Taylor: On the same level, does that happen when you excommunicate somebody? Like, "You must find a different lord and savior within the next 30 days."

Sydnee: Hmm.

Taylor: [clicks tongue] "Not ours."

Sydnee: You gotta give 'em a list. Like, we would have to give people a list of, like, all the other doctors' offices in the area. You gotta give 'em a list that says, like, "Baptist. Presbyterian. Methodist."

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: "Episcopal."

Taylor: Just, like... one of those, like, Franzia, like, bladder bags of red wine. [laughs] Blood of Christ.

Sydnee: Have you seen the—you can buy—somebody was telling me about—you can buy these pre-packaged little single-serve wine and wafer combos.

Taylor: For—for what? Like, rations, for prepping?

Sydnee: Well, I guess, like, they hand those out—

Taylor: [simultaneously] For a long hike?

Sydnee: —at some churches. Like, our church always did the old school, like, "Here's a plate of wafers, here's a cup we're all gonna drink out of. Good luck."

But these are like little single-serve shots of wine. And then on the top of it is just one little communion wafer that's also sealed in its own little plastic thing. And you would just pass those out in the church. I assume you would, like, bless the box first. Like, it comes in a big, like, cardboard box, and so,

like, the priest has to bless the box, and then you pass it around. And everybody gets their own little... single shot of wine, and wafer. I know!

Taylor: Now, that makes sense from, like, a COVID standpoint. Is that a COVID creation?

Sydnee: I don't know when they—listen. I forget who—somebody was telling me about 'em, and I was like, "I gotta look these things up."

Um, I am telling you, they are on Amazon.

Taylor: [wheeze-laughs] But Amazon can't sell... alcohol. hard—well, I guess—can they?

Sydnee: "Essential communion. Pre-filled communion cups and wafer set for holy Eucharist celebrations."

Taylor: Is it de-alcoholized wine?

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: I mean, that makes sense.

Sydnee: [crosstalk] Yeah, it must not be.

Taylor: I guess if you're providing, like, mission—

Sydnee: Maybe it's juice.

Taylor: —mission services in, like, another country?

Sydnee: I just thought it was a—I've never considered that this exists, but I mean... there you go.

Taylor: Well, alright.

Sydnee: Yeah. I know. Anyway.

Taylor: I'm just gonna order some for fun.

Sydnee: Well, that's what I was sitting there looking at them, thinking, like, "That'd be kind of fun. I don't know what I would—I don't know why. [laughs quietly] I don't know why."

But, I mean, it's not blessed. I'm assuming, like, it is not—so... in the Catholic Church, when the priest says the things in Mass over the Eucharist, it is no longer, you know, unleavened bread and wine. It is flesh and blood. What they're shipping you... [laughs quietly] from Amazon... is just unleavened bread and grape juice. It's okay. Like, they're not shipping you Jesus. That's not until the priest says the stuff. Yeah.

Taylor: That's how the Church got around, um, the Prohibition, is by arguing that "Well, we're not serving alcohol. We're serving the blood of Christ."

And that led to—yeah. That led to some really fun loopholes, because the Church at the time, and I'm sure still, owned a lot of wineries. And so they continued to operate their wineries under this sort of, like, "It's the blood— it's the blood of Christ. We have Riesling blood of Christ. We have Chardonnay blood of Christ. We've got Cabernet blood of Christ. What kind of blood of Christ would you like to buy? It's not wine."

Sydnee: It's the blood of Christ. This sounds like the kind of shenanigans that a Chicago Pope would totally be on board with.

Taylor: [through laughter] Absolutely.

Sydnee: Right? [laughs]

Taylor: Oh, for sure. Chicago Pope loves a good strong glass of the blood of Christ.

Sydnee: Uh... so the movie Conclave. [laughs quietly] We've talked all about—I mean, we're talking around it.

Taylor: Yeah, yeah. Uh, what a timely film! What did they know?

Sydnee: I don't know. I mean, it was very timely. Now, I know that, like, downloads of it went through the roof after Pope Francis passed away and we knew there was going to be a Conclave. I had done some reading. Did you know there was once a conclave that lasted three years, Tey?

[pause]

Taylor: No!

Sydnee: Yeah. There was a conclave that lasted three years, because the Cardinals were all—like, they just couldn't get it together. And after that, for a while they had rules around the—he was the emperor of... or the king of Sicily, whatever. Anyway, made some rules around it that the Cardinals would be locked in with, like, windows and doors shut, too. And so it's, like, hot. And there's no air conditioning, 'cause this was, like, the 1200's. And they would be locked in for the entire time, and that also they would only get bread and wine in a set amount. So, like, the longer you took, the less food and booze you had.

Taylor: To just force your hand.

Sydnee: Yeah. So that it wouldn't last three years.

Taylor: Hm. That's probably—that seems like a good call, after a three year conclave.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. They took that away later, 'cause they almost killed some Cardinals. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Oh. Well...

Sydnee: 'Cause they—well, 'cause they're also, like, old dudes that they're locking away in there. And they're like, "Good luck."

Taylor: So it's not...

Sydnee: [crosstalk] suffocating.

Taylor: ... not a survivor situation that could emerge from that.

Sydnee: [laughs]

Taylor: Like, "We're missing a... "

Sydnee: The last Cardinal standing.

Taylor: "We're missing a couple Cardinals at the end of that conclave, and it seems like you ran out of bread a while ago. Uh... what happened?" I don't know.

Sydnee: Ooh. [laughs quietly] Uh-oh. So I don't know, have you read—if the political intrigue—I mean, it certainly seems like from watching this actual, real-life conclave happen at the same time, that some of that is probably true. Some of the maneuvering is probably accurate.

Taylor: Sure!

Sydnee: But I don't know. I mean, I didn't read—I think there were some articles about, like, "How real is Conclave?" And just, like, watching this one play out and then watching the movie Conclave, it felt like it had some good insight.

Taylor: Well, I mean, it is... it has—I mean, it's a massive political power position. So it makes sense that people would be—I mean, like, people pay... lots of people put money behind—I know that sounds wrong, but it's true. Like, people pay these churches money and then, you know, you want your agenda to get endorsed by the next Pope.

Sydnee: Mm-hmm. And it does—I mean, I think it does elevate the... or well, maybe not elevate. But it does something to the part of the world that the Pope is from. I mean, it seems like this struggle that they represent in the movie Conclave where they want to pull the seat of power back to Italy, like, that it should be an Italian Pope, that that is real. There is a pull, sort of like a traditionalist kind of pull for that. That picking Popes from parts of the world where there isn't—where, like, Catholicism isn't as, you know,

widespread, also sends, like, a positive message in a different way. You know, elevates a Pope from a less-likely region. But it's—you know. And I don't think—in the movie Conclave—well, I guess—is Stanley Tucci—he's from—yeah, right? Yeah.

Taylor: [crosstalk] I mean—

Sydney: He sounds—I mean...

Taylor: He sounds—yeah.

Sydney: He doesn't have an accent.

Taylor: Well, he has an accent. It's an American accent. [wheeze-laughs]

Sydney: Well, yeah. Well, okay. You know what I mean. [laughs quietly] He has an American ac—he's not—he's just Stanley Tucci. [laughs]

Taylor: He's playing himself, as a... as a Cardinal.

Sydney: Right. I thought, uh... I thought it was all way more interesting than I would've thought Conclave would be. Um... Justin and I were both equally interested in it, which is—you know. 'Cause then I felt like, "Am I only digging this because I was raised Catholic and this is sort of like..."

You know all the, like, weird, secret mystery that they kind of allude to when you're raised Catholic, but then you never get to know anything else about? It's like peering behind that curtain. Um, but obviously Justin was not raised that way, and he still found it very interesting.

Taylor: Yeah. I liked how a friend of mine sold me on it when it first came out, 'cause I'll be honest, I did not—despite being a cradle Catholic, I was like, "I don't know if I wanna watch that."

Uh, and then a friend of mine who is also a fellow enjoyer of drag and Drag Race was like, "No, it's literally just like Untucked on Drag Race. It's a bunch of queens in skirts being catty and secretive and, you know, trying to make—trying to have little quippy fights with each other. You'll love it."

And honestly, yes. [laughs]

Sydnee: It really... it really is. It's all very catty, and you don't... you can't quite tell who all is—like, they're all trying to maneuver. But also you're not supposed to do that. Like, that's very clear. You're not supposed to be seeking power, and you're not supposed to be manipulating others, and you're not supposed to be engaging in these very... I mean, they're very... I don't want to say "unholy" because I don't mean they're evil, but you know what I mean.

Taylor: Well...

Sydnee: Like, that is not a holy pursuit, the manipulation of others to gain power.

Taylor: I mean, it seems very... if that's the way it truly works—and, you know, I guess none of us will really know. But isn't it supposed to be, like, a divine... ordinance of God? Like, God is supposed to say "This is my next Pope."

Sydnee: Yes.

Taylor: So if you are openly and, like, acknowledging that you're gonna maneuver. to get your—who you want to win for political reasons, like, that's pretty much accepting that God's not in the room, right?

Sydnee: It is weird, because they talk about it, but at the same time, yes. That is why there are no speeches. That's why they don't have people stand up and, like, make their case. Because it's not... it's supposed to have nothing to do with the Cardinals in the room. It's, like, God speaking through them, right? And so, if you have somebody stand up and, like, "Let me make my case for class president," then obviously that has nothing to do with God anymore.

But I mean, I don't know. They're also, like, mortal men. [laughs quietly]
Who, you know... I mean, all the things around them do exist, which I guess Conclave acknowledges. Like, they are from different countries, and they do

have different views on the direction the Church should go next. And also probably, like, if you get to that level where you're one of those Cardinals, don't all of them want to be Pope, right?

Taylor: Do you think so? It seems like a big—it seems like a lot to shoulder.

Sydnee: How could you not want to? If you make it that far, like, rise to that level of the hierarchy...

Taylor: [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: You know what I mean? How do you—I mean, surely all of them on some level want to be Pope.

Taylor: Maybe? I don't know! I think... I mean, I guess quite functionally when I'm thinking of, like, you know, the—heavy is the head that wears the crown. That is the biggest hat... physically, one could wear.

Sydnee: It's a...

Taylor: Big hat. I don't—

Sydnee: It's a large hat.

Taylor: Just that alone would keep me out of interest. I don't wanna wear that big head. Give me a sweaty head.

Sydnee: I mean, I don't know. They don't really—and I mean I guess they kind of cover it with Lawrence's character. Like, the idea of, like... if you're Pope you're not out there, like, with the people anymore. You know? You can't, like—you can't do direct service. [laughs quietly] You know? You can't do mission work. You can't go to some small church and hold a Mass, I guess. You have to be an administrator.

And so, maybe on some level, it's like that. Like, I've never wanted to rise through the ranks of... medical academia, 'cause I don't want to be an administrator. I want to be the person who's, like, in the room with a patient

taking care of them. So maybe there's that. Maybe some of the Cardinals feel like that? But then why did they—I don't know.

Taylor: Well...

Sydnee: You don't really get a lot of choice.

Taylor: 'Cause that's the thing. If we're supposed to take it the way—it's the belief... uh... informs it. None of these people should have such, you know, desires. You shouldn't desire to be Pope. It should just be, like, a burden that you take on at God's will. Much as, I'm sure, being a Cardinal should be the same thing, right? That God is directing you. So your earthly desires and your political desires should have no impact, because you should not... it's not about what you want. It's about what God wants.

Sydnee: That is not what is represented in this movie.

Taylor: No. Well, and I could believe that I think mortal men have ways of justifying it within the realm of God by saying, "Well, I represent God's desire, so what I want, what I think should happen is God speaking through me." Right? It's "The reason that I feel so strongly that we need a conservative Pope is because God's telling me that." Right?

Sydnee: Oh man. That's like a... that's a scary little, like, default you can fall to.

Taylor: Sure.

Sydnee: It is—and it's tough, too, because what they're also acknowledging as they talk about, like, "We don't want this more conservative traditionalist to seize control of the Church again," what they're acknowledging is that there are real life consequences for people. Um... based on, like, how you're interpreting God's word. And that's... it's weird because the Pope is supposed to be infallible. Like, when the Pope speaks—and that—I don't know. If you're not—if you weren't raised Catholic, just to clarify, that doesn't mean, like, if the Pope says, like, "Deep dish is better..." [laughs quietly]

Taylor: And he's gonna! [laughs]

Sydnee: And he's gonna. That is not—the Pope isn't—[laughs] when talking about pizza—

Taylor: [crosstalk] Pope decree. Deep dish pizza is the best pizza. Suddenly there are no more Catholics in New York.

Sydnee: I was gonna say, New York will—they will not have that. But I—so that is not, like—

Taylor: New York is excommunicating. All of it.

Sydnee: [laughs] The Pope is not infallible when he says things like that. Like, the Pope is infallible when speaking—like, if he's saying "I have received this message from God," or "I'm speaking about church doctrine."

Like, the Pope's infallibility has to do with his interpretation of Catholicism, not... pizza. So...

[both laugh quietly]

Sydnee: But, um—well, I think that's an important thing to know! 'Cause otherwise it's like—I mean, that kind of—there would be a lot of stuff that would change Pope-to-Pope, and it would be very confusing.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: You know? Like, "What's the best movie ever made?" I don't know. You know? [laughs] But the—but it definitely... it highlights that that's impossible, I feel like, in Conclave. Because they're all going to interpret the same sort of—these same religious texts, all that we have, all that was written, in different ways, and they're acknowledging that. And they're acknowledging that they're disagree with some of the ways, like, "A more traditional Pope would roll back the advances we've made in these areas, and I would disagree with that," and you can't. You're not allowed to. But they're saying, you know, intrinsically they would. It's interesting.

Taylor: Well, yeah. Well, 'cause there's even another level, there. I mean, it's funny. It makes me think of a different movie, it makes me think of Dogma. You know, the appeal of the buddy Christ, like, trying to make Catholicism more of a current religion. Where it's always—I think it's one that kind of... you know, you've got all the cool, like, I don't know, Baptist and Methodist, like, god-rockers and stuff.

Like, Catholicism has always been a little bit, like, spooky and left in the past. And so I think a lot of the... as much as I want to believe that the more progressive endorsements that we've had from the recent Pope are fully because, "Hey, God's will is that, you know, we can bless unions of gay people and, you know... like, we should help the poor." Again, super, super controversial belief there.

Sydnee: Right.

Taylor: I think it's also a way to modernize the Church. I think It's—that's also—again, it's political. It's "We want more people to be in our church, so we need to make our church align with modern viewpoints to get more people to come in."

Sydnee: Right. Well, and I mean, that sort of, like, push and pull has been central to the Catholic Church for as long as I can remember. Which is, if your whole idea is like, "We don't change. This is what we've always said. This is who we are. This is what we are. These are the things we do. And you can either be part of us, and we welcome you, or don't. We don't care."

Like, that doesn't... that... has—the Church has just steadily lost members as a result. And so the question is, do we make the Church more appealing? Or does that fly in the face of everything we believe? Do we reevaluate things like, you know, women priests, and being able to get married, you know? I mean... should we go back and reevaluate those things? Or is that— I don't know.

But I think that that is played out in The Conclave. And probably was being played out behind closed doors in the actual conclave.

Taylor: Well, and then I... [laughs quietly] I mean, to spoil not the—not spoiling the actual conclave, because that's... we spoiled that already. But also that's just called news. You should be aware of that.

Uh, but to spoil the movie Conclave, I mean, the ending is nothing but a political statement, right? Because—can I say it? Can I say it?

Sydnee: I thought...

Taylor: Trans Pope!

Sydnee: Yeah, go ahead. [crosstalk]

Taylor: Trans Pope!

Sydnee: Yeah.

Taylor: [laughs]

Sydnee: I thought that was a very... I'm surprised, um, this movie hasn't created any uproar. Like, have you heard of Catholic backlash against this film? 'Cause I haven't.

Taylor: No! And I feel like, I will say truly, 'cause I didn't read anything about it before I watched it, I was not spoiled in any way. I didn't see it coming at all, and that did surprise me. Like, I feel like I would've heard about this! [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: Yeah. And I mean, I think that... I think that—yeah, I hadn't heard about it. I had no idea. I was so scared right at the end. Like, Lawrence figures out something. Like, the character knows something about the Pope before the audience gets to know. And as he's running to the... what is the room? The Room of Sorrow? The room of... there's a name for it.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: The room where the Pope changes I think is called the—

Taylor: I didn't know there was a name for it.

Sydney: It's called, like, the Room of Sorrow or something. Yeah, well, it's because they are so—

Taylor: The Interior Illusions lounge. That's from Drag Race.

Sydney: [laughs] They usually go—they're usually crying because they've just been made Pope, and so they call the room, like, the Room of Tears or the Room of Sorrow or something like that. It's the room where they change. Anyway, that is... in that room, as we're seeing him run there, I'm thinking, like, "Oh, no! This is gonna be bad! Like, we're about to find out something so terrible! What did they do? What did they do?"

And then it was like, "Oh! Oh! What a cool—" like, I did not see that coming at all! Like, I was pleasantly surprised.

Taylor: And it's, you know, to extrapolate what is the movie trying to say, 'cause obviously it's fiction, but the idea that if we are believing in the will of God, that all of this fell into place the way it did so that this was the outcome... 'cause I mean, you know, there's even, like, the side storyline of, like, the unrest, the bombings. You know, and that beautiful moment right before the final vote where there's the hole in the ceiling and the light spilling in and you can hear the outside and the birds. Sort of as if to say, like, it's the... the real world that you all live in is entering into the conversation.

Sydney: That's a nice inter—I hadn't thought of—

Taylor: And this is the outcome.

Sydney: Yeah, I hadn't thought about it that way, but that's a really beautiful interpretation. That it was—

Taylor: Yeah, 'cause it's, you know, a bunch of... yeah.

Sydney: Well, and it reminding them that they do have real world implications for a lot of people. um... I think that's a really neat

interpretation, that moment. I also thought from a historical point—I learned this recently. So, Lawrence says if he had been Pope, he would have chosen the name John. John XXI, who was Pope back in the 1200's, was—he was also a doctor. That's why I know about him. He was the only doctor Pope. um... Doctor Pope!

Taylor: [simultaneously] Doctor Pope!

Sydnee: He, uh—he died after he was studying some church documents in his private study. He was not Pope for very long, and the roof collapsed. And he was injured and died.

Taylor: Oh.

Sydnee: And I thought it was a very weird historical reference that... I don't know. I don't know if that was intentional, but it made me think about it.

Taylor: That's interesting. Is that before or after the—that's before the roof caves in, right?

Sydnee: Yes. Yeah.

Taylor: Huh.

Sydnee: 'Cause that's when—I mean, I think what we're supposed to believe is that if that vote had completed, that maybe he would be Pope, right?

Taylor: That's interesting.

Sydnee: But it was not. I mean, I think you can interpret that however you want, but it was not the will of the world, or of God, or of... you know. The mad people outside. I don't know.

Taylor: [laughs] The will of God. The will of... is a good third act turn in a movie.

Sydnee: Yeah. But I do think... I think that it is—I think the idea of exactly what you said, the outside world, them remembering what they were doing, and then choosing someone who—they didn't know they were choosing, you know, someone who was intersex. They didn't know that. But they... by allowing the outside world to inform them, they were led in that direction, you know?

Taylor: Well, and it's...

Sydnee: And then that will have very positive, you know, outcomes for everybody on the outside.

Taylor: And also, somebody that comes from, you know, outside of—you know, we're talking about, like, American Pope or, you know, an Italian Pope. Like, somebody that was truly an outsider. And I think that's also, like, here's this room full of very... people from very affluent countries, people from very affluent backgrounds. And that's this sort of... this sort of enclosed upper class of the world that makes all the decisions and holds all the power, while the rest of us just suffer at the whims. Having somebody that's truly an outside in every way, whether you look it from the social angle of being an intersex person or from the environmental angle of where they come from. Like, those people penetrating those worlds are really important to actually moving forward.

Sydnee: Yeah. I thought it was overall it was a really well done movie. I really enjoyed it. Um... I know—I did read that they get a lot of the details right of like, just how the, like—functionally how things work in a conclave, you know?

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Um... and it was very timely. I don't know.

Taylor: Spookily timely. [laughs]

Sydnee: Yeah!

Taylor: Like, "You know what would be great marketing for this movie? What if the Pope was dead?" [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: I mean, it's a Chicago Pope now, which is interesting. We'll see. And then the last Pope Leo was known for, like, helping usher the Church into an age of, like, social... like, modernity. Social modernity. So, I don't know. We'll see what that means.

Taylor: Do your best, Chicago Pope.

Sydnee: Yep. I will never, but I mean, if he does declare deep dish the best, I will—then he's wrong. I will always—

Taylor: You gotta excommunicate yourself.

Sydnee: [crosstalk] Papal decree. I will. I like a thin, crispy crust on my pizza, always.

Taylor: I'm—I like New York style. I wanna be able to fold it in half. I want all of the ooey gooey messy bits to be closed inside of itself, like a secret.

Sydnee: Mmm. See, I just want, like, a good, like, traditional margarita pizza. Like... lots of sauce, crunchy bread. I don't know. Some basil leaves. A little bit of mozzarella. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Alright. Well... maybe that's heresy. Who knows? Yeah.

Sydnee: [crosstalk] I don't know. Well, Tey, what should we do next week?

Taylor: Uh, you know, we haven't done music in a minute, and we were trying to think of some musicians that we haven't covered from our day. We've never talked about Avril Lavigne.

Sydnee: Oh. That'll be excellent!

Taylor: Controversial at her time, at least if you were, like, a 15-year-old who had strong opinions about what punk rock meant. [laughs quietly]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] I'm excited. I will be an Avril Lavigne defender.

Taylor: Well, I mean, honestly I will too. So I don't know how we're gonna go forward with it. But in any case, listen to some Avril Lavigne. I mean, I feel that—what, Complicated was the album? Was it subtitled, or was it called Complicated? That was the big one, but we could talk about her whole career.

Sydnee: Her whole oeuvre.

Taylor: Oeuvre. Is that how you say that word? I thought it, I pictured it in my head and I was like, "I can't say that word out loud!"

Sydnee: I know. It's on that list, right? The words that you know what they mean when you read them, but you never learned how to pronounce them. [laughs quietly]

Taylor: Mm-hmm. There's even a term for the kind of knowledge that is like you... you learned language more from reading than from speaking, and so there's a whole list of words like that. There's a term for that sort of orientation.

Sydnee: Is it nerd?

Taylor: [snorts] Prob—yeah. Yeah, that's it. [laughs sarcastically]

Sydnee: [laughs quietly] That was [crosstalk]—

Taylor: Loser!

Sydnee: That was a self-own.

Taylor: Yeah.

Sydnee: Yeah. That was not—[laughs] that was not aimed at you. That was as much at me—as me. [laughs]

Taylor: That's fine.

Sydnee: Alright. Well, yeah. We will listen to some Avril Lavigne for next week, and in the meantime, if you haven't watched Conclave, it really was— even if you don't have any interest in Catholicism, it was a very—like you said, it was... political intrigue, and catty drama, and... fascinating. With some, like, church doctrine sprinkled in there, just for good measure. But anyway, thank you, Tey. Thank you, listeners. You can go to Maximumfun.org and listen to lots of great shows on our network that you would enjoy. And thank you to The Nouvellas for our theme song, Baby You Change Your Mind.

Taylor: This has been Still Buffering: your cross-generational guide to the culture that made us.

Sydnee: I'm Sydnee McElroy.

Taylor: And I'm Taylor Smirl.

Sydnee: I'm still buffering...

Taylor: And I am too.

[theme music plays]

Sydnee: Was that right? How off?

Taylor: That's what we say. I think there's a little lag. [unintelligible] It's the Holy Spirit. They're in the room with us. They're messing up the, uh... the audio equipment. It happens.

Sydnee: It was all the pizza heresy.

[chord]

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