NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (http://ncronline.org)

The Wall as symptom, not cause

Michael Sean Winters | May. 16, 2009 NCR Today

As Pope Benedict XVI concluded his visit to the Holy Land, he spoke these words that require careful attention: ?One of the saddest sights for me during my visit to these lands was the wall. As I passed alongside it, I prayed for a future in which the peoples of the Holy Land can live together in peace and harmony without the need for such instruments of security and separation, but rather respecting and trusting one another, and renouncing all forms of violence and aggression.?

Some commentators have rushed to conclude that the Pope was condemning the security barrier erected by the Israeli government but it seems to me that he was condemning the circumstances that make ?such instruments of security and separation? necessary.

Benedict knows that there are even sadder sights than the Wall. For example, there are the graves of those innocent civilians killed by suicide bombers while they ate pizza or danced at a club or waited for a bus to bring them home to their families. There are the graves of the suicide bombers themselves, men and women whose sense of reason was so estranged from their sense of faith that they gave way to fanaticism and violence. The Wall is a sad sight, but there are sadder sights.

At the end of World War II, there were vast, forced migrations of both Polish and German populations. Poland was shifted to the West, gobbling up parts of what had been Germany while Russia claimed similar regions in Poland?s eastern regions. I am sure that the families who tilled that land, often for centuries, had no desire to uproot themselves. But, it was better than seeing more bloodshed, better than burying another cousin, so they moved.

The Wall is a symptom, not a cause, of violence. For some on the West Bank, including some who have no sympathy for the suicide bombers, the Wall is more separation and nuisance than anything else. From the Israeli side, the Wall represents the security of which the Pope spoke. Raymond Arroyo called it ?an eyesore? on EWTN as if the aesthetics of the barrier were the heart of the matter. It is a tragedy, to be sure, that the Wall had to be built. There are worse tragedies.

Source URL (retrieved on *12/01/2015 - 22:16*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/wall-symptom-not-cause