

Blast from the Past: Pope Celestine V

Michael Sean Winters | Jul. 7, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Celestine was a visionary, the founder of a brotherhood of hermits with strong links to the radical Franciscans. He therefore represented precisely that dimension of the thirteenth-century Church which most detested the wealth, worldliness and legal and political entanglements of the papacy. His election fed apocalyptic hopes of a Papa Angelicus, a holy and unworldly pope who would cleanse the Church and prepare the world for the advent of Christ. The notion of an unworldly pope, however, was by now almost a contradiction in terms.?

Eamon Duffy, commenting on Pope Celestine V, at whose shrine in Sulmona, Pope Benedict XVI prayed on Sunday. The papacy of the early twenty-first century lacks many of the explicit political entanglements of the papacy of the thirteenth century, but it remains a conundrum for all leaders in the Church, and indeed for us in the laity too: How to be in the world but not of it?

Be sure to check out my colleague [John Allen's excellent commentary](#) [1] on the visit.

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[1] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/pope-who-quit-patron-saint-benedicts-interior-reform>