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Three Random Corrections

Michael Sean Winters | Oct. 22, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

A couple of articles on today's "Morning Briefing" and Maureen Fielder's article about the anachronism of the College of Cardinals warrant a comment.

First, in the story "Vatican Pitbulls Make Cardinal [1]" Mary Hunt writes about then-Bishop Donald Wuerl unfortunate experience in Seattle where he was given special authority over certain areas of church life at the expense of Archbishop Raymond Hunthausen. She wrotes that the uproar in Seattle cause the Vatican to pull back and to transfer Wuerl. In fact, it was not just local opposition in Seattle that caused the Vatican to reconsider its attack on Hunthausen. Cardinal John O'Connor was nobody's liberal but he recognized the restrictions against Hunthausen as a threat to the entire episcopacy and vocally supported a protest by the entire bishops' conference. He gets at least some of the credit for ending that scandal.

Second, the article about Cardinal Ouellet [2]earning 40/1 odds on becoming the next pope says that the most likely candidate to succeed Pope Benedict XVI is Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria. His odds, accroding to the article, are 2/1. Arinze was just pushed out of his post at the Congregation for Divine Worship and if the conclave is looking for an African, they would be more likely to consider Cardinal Turkson who now heads the Council for Justice and Peace.

Finally, while I do not share Maureen Fiedler's concern [3]about anachornism (I rather like some anachronisms) and I share her desire for greater involvement of lay people in the Church's decision making, I would be greatly afraid of any kind of popular election of a pope. I think it is just as likely that such democratization would open the doors for conservative lay folk as much or more than it would for progressive lay folk. I will take my chances with the College of Cardinals before I would risk giving a Bill Donohue or a George Weigel any say in the selection of a pope. I wish to tell my friend and colleague Maureen: Be careful what you wish for!

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[1] http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/politics/3602/vatican_pitbulls_make_cardinal
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[3] http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/college-cardinals-anachronism