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Lott is Wrong

Michael Sean Winters | Mar. 8, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

Jeremy Lott is the influential editor of RealClearReligion, and he has penned an essay [1]expressing his ardent desire that the next pope not be an American. His argument is hard to discern, but the essence of it is that the Church in the U.S. is in shambles, the American cardinals preside over the U.S. Church, ergo, a U.S.-born pope would be bad for the universal Church.

It is true that there is much in the U.S. Church that could be described as "in shambles." It is also true that the leaders of the U.S. Church are the most inclined to lean into the new century. You saw this, certainly, with this week's kerfuffle over the media availability the Americans had. On the critical issue of cleaning up the sex abuse mess, Cardinal O'Malley is a one-man calvary, cleaning up the mess left by the first serial clergy abuser in Fall River, the first diocese to lose its bishop because he, too, molested children in Palm Beach, the mess left in Boston by Cardinal Law and, finally, serving as the Apostolic Visitor to the Archdiocese of Dublin. If there is a more potent symbol of getting the sex abuse mess right than the image of Cardinal Sean and Archbishop Martin prostrate before the altar of St. Mary's Pro-Cathedral in Dublin, leading a service of repentence, I am not aware of one. Additionally, as I suggested yesterday, American cardinals are, at least by comparison, pros when it comes to management and the cardinals appear to want more effective means of running the Vatican shop. Most importantly, and in very different ways, Cardinals Dolan and O'Malley embody the New Evangelization, not so much in their writings as Benedict did, but in their personalities. The image of a gregarious pope whose love of the Lord spills over easily to his love of the People of God commends Cardinal Dolan. The image of a pope who is comfortable with the poor and identifies with their struggles commends Cardinal O'Malley.

There are other candidates who are more likely than either of the two Americans, but I would not fall out of my chair if one of the Americans walked out onto the loggia. Nor do I think it would be bad for the Church, either the Church in the U.S. or the universal Church. Mr. Lott should reconsider.

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Links:
[1] http://www.realclearreligion.org/articles/2013/03/08/please_god_not_an_american_pope_106661.html