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MSW Takes the Bait

Michael Sean Winters | Apr. 8, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

Father Zuhlsdorf, when he is not lamenting the new pope's choice of attire and liturgical style, likes to throw down a challenge to us here at NCR, as he did in this article [1]reporting on Pope Francis' homily the other day. Pope Francis asked the congregation if their faith was strong and, quite rightly, said that we should not negotiate the faith away. "But when we start to cut down the Faith, to negotiate Faith, a little like selling it to the highest bidder?, Francis said, **?**we take the path of apostasy, of disloyalty to the Lord**.?**

Zulhsdorf then opines, "Let?s see how the editors of the *National Schismatic Reporter* (aka *Fishwrap*) and *The Bitter Pill* (aka *The Bitter Pill? er um? The Tablet*) report on this one? if they mention anything about it all." Well, I am not an editor, but I do write for both NCR and for the Tablet, so I will take the bait.

I agree one hundred percent with Pope Francis. I see this in my own life as I have gradually shed those attitudes and beliefs that were in contradiction with the Church's faith. I have come to understand that when my initial perspectives are at odds with the Church, I should give the benefit of the doubt to the Church. That said, I think all of us are continually called to deepen our faith and a part of that entails forthrightly questioning what we do not understand. We are not fundamentalists. We expect the faith to be reasonable, and that expectation is a sound and a loyal one. I also think, and I know many of my friends disagree with me on this, but when I find myself not in agreement with the Church on a matter of faith or morals, I do think I should not try and enlist others to my point of view, but wrestle with the issue myself and quietly. Others have their own burdens in growing in faith and it is unkind to burden them with mine. But, what Francis was talking about here is the faith, not the advisability of a particular political strategy. I do not think a catholic can, in good conscience, support abortion, but I think we can have many and varied positions on how to confront the evil of abortion, always alert to the fact that in the political realm, sometimes politicians pay lip service to a goal. "Put not your trust in princes," says the Good Book.

It is my great hope that Pope Francis will inspire all Catholics, on both the left and the right, to re-examine their attitudes in the light of the Gospel. It is my great hope that his invitation to be a poor Church at the service of the poor will lead the entire Catholic community to meet Christ in the poor and, just so, permit them to grace to wrestle with those Church teachings they find burdensome. The teachings of the Church, the faith of the Church, is not a burden. It liberates, it does not enslave. But, if someone experiences a given teaching as a burden, we must show some patience, as the pope also said.

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[1] http://wdtprs.com/blog/2013/04/hey-dissenters-pope-francis-says-negotiating-away-parts-of-the-faith-is-the-

path-of-apostasy-of-disloyalty-to-the-lord/