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Pope Francis: Church Must Not Be Insular

Michael Sean Winters | Nov. 19, 2013 Distinctly Catholic

This report from VIS News, [1] on Pope Francis' video message to the Ecclesia in America conference in Mexico City ties in well with my morning post about the National Catholic Bioethics Center. The money quote:

A second point: the aim of all pastoral activity is always guided by the missionary impulse to reach everyone, without excluding anyone, and keeping in consideration the special circumstances of each person. This does not mean going forth like one who imposes a new obligation, who limits himself to reproaching or complaining about that which he considers imperfect or insufficient. The evangelical task requires a lot of patience ? and involves presenting the Christian message in a serene and gradual manner, with the perfume of the Gospel, as the Lord did. It favours, first and foremost, the essential and most necessary fact of the beauty of God's love, which speaks to us through the dead and risen Christ.

Pope Francis' comments also recalled a passage from Cathleen Kaveny's book, Laws Virtues, in which she contrasted the "prophet" approach to witness in the world to the "pilgrim" approach. Francis pretty obviously exemplifies the pilgrim approach. Kaveny wrote:

Prophets emphasize the importance of clear, unambiguous witness to the transformative power of the inbreaking Kingdom of God. They believe that the purity of their witness to those values will be compromised if Catholics, and especially Catholic institutions, appear resigned to the great systemic evils of our time?.In contrast, pilgrims are acutely aware of just how far human society still remains from the kingdom of God and how difficult the journey continues to be. The consequences of sin and the sting of death are still all around us. The only way to ameliorate those consequences is by doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. It is not enough to avoid sin; we have to love and serve our neighbors. (p. 264)

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[1] http://visnews-en.blogspot.com/2013/11/popes-video-message-to-guadalupe.html