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Continuity of Conservative Dissent

Michael Sean Winters | Jan. 9, 2014 Distinctly Catholic

Same old, same old. Some conservative commentators keep harping on the continuity between Pope Francis and his predecessors, and they are undoubtedly right in one sense: The teachings of the Church are the teaching of the Church, and while those teachings develop over time as different circumstances require us to highlight an aspect previously obscured, the essence of the Church?s doctrines are rooted in the self-revelation of Jesus Christ who is, as the celebrant proclaims when lighting the Paschal Candle at the Easter Vigil, ?the same yesterday, today and forever.?

But, I should like to call attention to one aspect of continuity that my conservative friends tend not to highlight, namely, their own willingness to dissent from papal teaching with which they do not agree. A friend, the infamous ?fons,? sent me this comment by William Buckley, Jr., published in 1988 in National Review, in response to Pope John Paul II?s encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis:

This Tweedledum-Tweedledee view of the crystallized division between the visions of Marx, Lenin, Mao Tse-tung, and Pol Pot over against those of Locke, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Churchill makes Christian blood boil with the kind of indignation that fueled the spirit of the Christian martyrs who have died by the millions since 1917 imploring God to relieve mankind of the curse of what at the hands of the Pope in this encyclical becomes merely one of 'two systems' grown 'suspicious and fearful' of the other's domination. Obviously, in the 102 pages one can find the ritual Christian affirmations. But they are swamped by a theological version of the kind of historical revisionism generally associated with modern nihilists. One prays that the Holy Father will move quickly to correct an encyclical heart-tearingly misbegotten.

?Nuff said.

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