

## Urban Theology?

Michael Sean Winters | Jun. 15, 2012 Distinctly Catholic

[Michael Peppard has an intriguing essay up at Commonweal](#) [1], in which he reflects on how his surroundings now, teaching at Fordham in the Bronx, alter or at least shape his worldview from when he was teaching in Colorado.

Context is not everything, and Peppard does not suggest it is. The truth is the truth whether it is in the Bronx or in the foothills of the Rockies, but Peppard is on to something no doubt. His essay reminded me of the old saying that some people's preferences (as opposed to their circumstances) reveal them to be "palace people" and other people are "cottage people," that is some like grand spaces and ornate surroundings and others prefer simplicity. I think most people have palace moments and cottage moments, and suspect that Peppard is one of them seeing as he does not describe himself as theologically infertile in either Colorado or NYC.

The other thing that comes to mind about Peppard's essay is Maritain's observation about people being born with a liberal or a conservative heart and that it is vital to try and learn about the wisdom that belongs to those with a heart different from one's own. *Mutatis mutandi*, that could apply here - perhaps everyone needs to spend time in both urban and rural settings, or that those in the urban setting should be sure to be on the lookout for the insights that come from those in more rural locales. Of course, "pastoral" is a word with two meanings, and I do think there is something about smallness and the relationships it creates, quite different from the anonymity that is possible in urban life, that would be a key focus of such an exploration. But, then, as I write this morning, I am sitting in my family's home in rural Connecticut, not in DC.

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### Links:

[1] <http://www.commonwealmagazine.org/blog/?p=19413>