

Time Magazine's Man of the Year is Pope Francis



There are two Popes. One is Francis as he actually is: spiritual shepherd of the Catholic faithful, the man chosen to defend and articulate the beliefs of the Church. The other is Francis as the liberal establishment would have him be: a crusading humanist on the verge of making the Catholic Church socially acceptable at Manhattan dinner parties. Guess which Pope Francis Time Magazine just made Man of the Year?

The Catholic writer Billy Newton has done a great run down of why Time's Pope is not the real Pope, with two killer observations. First, the magazine calls him The People's Pope – as if a pontiff could be anything else, or as if all those that came before him were distant aristos who ate the poor for breakfast. Second, Time is obsessed with sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sex, sexy sex. Will the Pope embrace homosexuality? Will he make it a little less wrong to have an abortion? Will he distribute prophylacticos to the masses of Rio, flinging them from his Pope-copter like confetti on a parade? Or, at the very least, will he stop talking about sex and leave Catholics to run their own sex lives in peace?

Of course, it's absolutely right to have an open discussion about paedophilia and the crimes of clergymen. We're all of us thrilled that the Pope is moving to clean the Church out. But the only people obsessed with the Catholic take on sex in general are the mainstream media. I can testify that since my conversion to the Church six years ago, I have never ONCE heard a priest talk about matters sexual (except abortion) from the pulpit. No, the only people who rate human freedom by how much consequence-less sex you can have are Left-wing journalists. As Billy noted when reading the Time profile:

I was ... struck by the fact that the secular media is absolutely obsessed with sex. This should perhaps come as no surprise, since one could hardly expect a leopard to change its spots. For all the oft-heard characterization of Catholics as being trapped in some sort of repressive timewarp, the Catholics in my circle seem to have a far better-integrated understanding of their own sexuality than those who have an insatiable need to talk not only about theirs, but everyone else's all the time.

Amen, brother.

The Time piece misunderstands Francis and his job description. It trawls through the details of his biography and mines every little ambiguous thing he's ever said because it presumes that the Church is an extension of the will of one man. It is not. It is, according to Catholic doctrine, the mystical body of

Christ. It is the Way, the Truth and the Life as discovered through revelation, scripture and tradition. It is not guided exclusively by a man but by the Holy Spirit. It cannot err, change its mind or bend according to fashion because it is a divine instrument and God doesn't change his mind. Sorry if all this language seems a bit religious-y, but we are talking about a Church here – not a political party or a corporation. As such, it can't be reduced to biography.

That, though, is what liberals want to do. An unholy alliance of Left-wing philosophy and the media's appetite for spectacle risks transforming this humble servant of God into a 21st century celebrity: the Barack Obama of the Catholic Church.

I was pleased when I saw Time had put Francis on its cover because anything that gets people thinking about faith is healthy. But I was also disappointed to see him being processed and re-imagined through the media's lens. What's exciting about this Pope is that he quietly stirs the soul by reminding us of the essential teachings of the Church. Unexciting and uninteresting is the obsession with where he'll be photographed next or when he's going to ordain Jane Fonda as a cardinal. Let's please focus on what really counts.

Tim Stanley - The Telegraph