

Welcome to Distinctly Catholic

Michael Sean Winters | Jul. 1, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Welcome to Distinctly Catholic, a new blog that will examine politics, religion and the estuary where the two meet, all from a distinctly Catholic point of view. The blog will be small 'c' catholic as well as big 'C' Catholic, examining a wide range of issues but always from the perspective of Catholic history and theology.

We will feature daily op-eds, short takes on the news of the day, interviews with prominent voices inside and outside the Beltway, and recollections of historical moments that enlighten contemporary issues. And, of course, I am looking forward to comments and corrections and even some sharp elbows from the readers!

There are two guiding insights that I bring to my writing. On politics, I have never found a better description of, and challenge to, those of us who champion progressive politics than these words of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.: "American democracy has come to accept the struggle among competing groups for the control of the state as a positive virtue" indeed, as the only foundation for liberty. The business community has been ordinarily the most powerful of these groups, and liberalism in America has been ordinarily the movement on the part of the other sections of society to restrain the power of the business community. Even more than when Schlesinger wrote those words in 1944, the principal cancer in American politics and culture today is the way the pursuit of material wealth often leaves the other aspirations of the human heart in the dust. Mammon and its adherents walk through American life like Tom and Daisy Buchanan, leaving many maimed victims on the side of the road, always too busy to notice let alone make amends.

On Catholicism, the challenge posed by *Gaudium et Spes* 22 is my guiding star: "The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come, namely Christ the Lord. Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear. It is not surprising, then, that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown." There is no issue, no concern, no problem that affects humankind about which the Church can be indifferent, and no issue, concern or problem that cannot benefit from the unique light shed by the Catholic theological tradition.

Today, July 1, is the Feast of Blessed Junipero Serra who brought the Gospel to what is now California, building missions that still enchant with their beauty and still bring the sacraments to the people of God. The date is propitious. In some ways, America is a less hospitable culture for the proclaiming of the Gospel than it was in Serra's day. Yet, the Church in America has a vibrancy that Serra could never have predicted. Our task here may not be to build missions, but it is to help build a humane Catholic culture.