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## Blast from the Past: Pope Celestine V

by Michael Sean Winters

Distinctly Catholic

Celestine was a visionary, the founder of a brotherhood of hermits with strong links to the radical Franciscans. He therefore represented precisely that dimension of the thirteenth-century Church which most detested the wealth, worldliness and legal and political entanglements of the papacy. His election fed apocalyptic hopes of a Papa Angelicus, a holy and unworldly pope who would cleanse the Church and prepare the world for the advent of Christ. The notion of an unworldly pope, however, was by now almost a contradiction in terms.

Eamon Duffy, commenting on Pope Celestine V, at whose shrine in Sulmona, Pope Benedict XVI prayed on Sunday. The papacy of the early twenty-first century lacks many of the explicit political entanglements of the papacy of the thirteenth century, but it remains a conundrum for all leaders in the Church, and indeed for us in the laity too: How to be in the world but not of it?

Be sure to check out my colleague John Allen's excellent commentary on the visit.

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