

## Remembering Paul VI

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 6, 2013 | Distinctly Catholic

It was thirty-five years ago today when Pope Paul VI went to his heavenly reward. Papa Montini is now sandwiched between two popes who are portrayed as larger than life and who will be canonized together later this year, Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II. (Let us not forget Pope John Paul I whose brief shining pontificate reminded us, as we are being reminded again, of how a pope can govern with humility.) I do not know if Paul VI was a saint but I do think he will go down as one of the great pope's of his time. He understood that the pope is charged not only with getting things right, but even more importantly, with keeping everyone together. The Petrine ministry is fundamentally a ministry of unity and, consequently, it is a ministry of decision-making authority. After a sometimes contentious Council, Pope Paul VI largely kept the Church free from schism. Only the Lefebvrists left. That was no small accomplishment. And, apart from a few theologians, very few people recognized that *Evangelii Nuntiandi* would, in fact, set the major theme for the next three pontificates. Paul VI was the pope of my youth, so I have always felt a special attraction to him. But, history will be kinder to him than were his contemporaries.

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