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The Man For This Season – Part III

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Pope Francis has global mass people power. It is the only power that really counts over the long-term, and a power that trumps every other kind of power - political, religious, financial or military, in this day. No other person can claim such universal approval, and therefore no other person or leader can match him for exerting potentially greater influence in World affairs.

On his first visit to Brazil, *over three (3) Million people* attended the Mass on Copacabana beach in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. While predominately Catholic, a lot of Brazilians had largely drifted away, especially where the youth were concerned, from a corrupt, indifferent, unresponsive, and perhaps where pedophilia was concerned, unrepentant Church of the past.

Pope Francis's immediate actions and proclamations, upon being elected, brought an equal immediate response from Brazilians, and in fact from Catholics around the globe, towards reconciliation, renewal of faith, but most importantly the irresistible tug toward a selfless and genuinely caring leadership demonstrated by Pope Francis. This response was mirrored by millions more in every other country he subsequently visited, even in the long jaded and predominately secular United States.

The average person's realization that with this Pope came a deep commitment to bringing real change in real time, and a sincere, non judgmental message of love and inclusion, and a call for a changed Church, a Church for the masses, the poor, the needy of all cultures, and even all religions, and certainly not only for the rich, the powerful and the corrupt, brought out the millions of ordinary Brazilians onto the beach that Sunday, and millions more everywhere else.

His immediate actions in 'house cleaning' the Church, reminiscent of Christ's cleaning out the money changers from the temple, and of the biblical exhortation, 'take the log out of your own eye before you try and take the

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speck out of someone else's eye', resonated with people and gave him demonstrable credibility in first practicing, what he would later be preaching.

And these actions gave him the moral authority based on personal actions rather than just his position, to lecture the world's political leaders about their own actions and the need to change them. He chided them on the pervasive corruption, selfishness, elitism, indifference to the rising suffering and inequality amongst the global populations. And the profit oriented wars that were profiting the 'arms sellers' alone, and causing unspeakable horror and mass displacement for millions upon millions of innocent people who were now refugees. He asked them to change economic policies and practices, and enact those that were more just and inclusive, and to take on a greater sense of responsibility towards the natural environment and climate change.

And, he has made it a mission to try and prevent the wholesale destruction of the environment by business, solely for profit, unmindful of the fact that the natural environment is critical for the survival of the human species, and of all living things, '*as they are all composed of the natural elements of this earth itself*'. The Pope made that point in his speech to the United Nations. What a thing for a Pope, arguably more a conduit to the next World than this, to have to be reminding the most intelligent species on earth of such a fundamental truth. But then this is the species that spends more money in trying to kill each other than in improving life, and has created and amassed enough nuclear weapons to obliterate all life on the planet many times over.

The Pope is trying to redress a deep and broad streak of utter stupidity built into the human DNA. And he is the man to do it, as he does not have a materialistic or political agenda except the wellbeing of humanity, and because of his exalted position, is not competing for material and or political gain with those that he is chastising. While conversely, the normal power plays of the government, religious and business leaders are constantly played out to their own benefit, and usually to the detriment of humanity.

Other leaders, both religious and political, strive mightily to keep their power and their institutions exclusive and elitist, and their people subjugated, poor, and ignorant and suspicious of 'others'. Thus it is that in the 21st Century there is greater division, hatred, and endless war.

Source: latimes.com



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Source: belleneews.com

Since his election, the Pope has not been hesitant, or shy, to plunge into the hot spots of long drawn out conflicts, such as the Israel and Palestinian one, bringing the leaders together to try and move forward, or the more recent Russia and Ukraine conflict, talking to the parties and urging them to come together to bring about a resolution. He has actively visited many of the troubled areas of the World and intervened directly to try and bring some form of peace where there has only been conflict and suffering.



Source: ncronline.org

Source: japantimes.co.jp



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Source: huffingtonpost.com

Initially a global leader's power comes from his or her backing by the people. Once in power, a lot of leaders consolidate and usurp the power after the people are disappointed with them, by using the institutions and instruments of power, the courts, government agencies, police and the army, and rigged elections, to retain power against the people's will and against their benefit. Then they disproportionately and illegally enjoy the resources of the country for their own personal benefit, at the same time exploiting, impoverishing and subjugating the people.

In the past, history is replete with exploitive and at times brutal leaders who have terrorized their populations, silenced and eliminated opposition, while stealing the countries blind. In fact, in a lot of countries that manner of leadership, to a lesser or greater degree, is still the norm. Most dictatorships and authoritarian governments today still fall in to this category, such as Putin of Russia, Assad of Syria, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, and Kim Jong-un of North Korea, Govt. of China, and many others.

In the more democratic countries the leaders may not be able to blatantly do what the dictators and authoritarian governments can do, but they can still abuse their privilege, and the people, by misusing their power within government to favour their own, cater to special interest groups and vested interests, and the powerful, at the cost of the general public. There, Jacob Zuma of South Africa, and Dilma Rousseff of Brazil come to mind, but in this category there are many, many, more. In fact, to a degree, almost all democratic governments are guilty of that behavior.

As lust and greed for power and privilege seem to the norm, seldom comes along a leader *who is given more but wants less*. Therefore such leaders in the recent past like Mohan Das Gandhi (*Mahatma Gandhi of India*), Nelson Mandela of South Africa, and now Pope Francis, are quite rare in that regard.

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They were, as he is, committed to selfless service and personal sacrifice, turning down what they could have had more of, power, influence and wealth, for the life of service and the betterment of the people instead. This type of selflessness is not a common human trait; certainly not amongst the ambitious and the powerful, which national leaders generally are.

Where Pope Francis is particularly unique, is - whereas Gandhi and Mandela could only impact and turn the tide, primarily for their countries and the people, in their day, the Pope can, and is trying to change the World for the better, because of his supra-national position, appeal and authority.

He is Pope to over 1.2 Billion Catholics of every nationality, race, colour and culture, and because of his selfless actions, since election, and his blunt and 'off the script' message, of all inclusive love without judgment, across all boundaries, great numbers of *non-Catholics* have embraced him as a special, genuinely concerned peace and commonality-promoting leader, in a World, where one is desperately needed, and where other current leaders, increasingly, only find their value, worth and position in promoting suspicion, hate and division amongst people of the World.

Because of his genuine concern and relentless effort for the betterment of humanity, especially the least privileged, there is no other political or religious leader in the World that can influence people in such numbers globally, and empowered and informed people can influence the policies of their leaders. Therefore this Pope may be the man, with his unmatched influence over all kinds of people, and through them their leaders, to be able to slow the mad march of humanity towards self destruction, through constantly inflamed division, hate, war, economic inequality and life threatening climate change, encouraged and actively pushed by the self centered worldly political, religious and business leaders, for whom self interest always dominates public interest, even though without the public they all have nothing (*that 'stupid gene', hyperactive as ever*).

In addition, this is the man that wants to bring humanity back into the Church, and into all the political, religious and financial and economic institutions. One is tempted to say, good luck with all that. But then, sometimes, individuals have in the past changed the World, for the better.

At the time of writing this commentary (*Part III*), the Pope was awarded the International Charlemagne Prize of Aachen, on May 9 (2016). The prize is given to those who have made the most valuable contribution to "west European understanding". The award Committee highlighted a portion of the Pope's speech to the European Parliament *in 2014*, which they said had '*helped orient millions of Europeans to the values at the core of the EU, including respect for human dignity and civil liberties*' (excerpt from *the Guardian*). That is exactly the kind of influence that we have been talking about here. In his previous 2014 speech Pope Francis had said:

"Promoting the dignity of the person means recognizing that he or she

possesses inalienable rights which no one may take away arbitrarily, much less for the sake of economic interests.”

“What dignity can there be without a clear juridical framework which limits the rule of force and enables the rule of law to prevail over the power of tyranny? What dignity can men and women ever enjoy if they are subjected to all types of discrimination? What dignity can a person ever hope to find when he or she lacks food and the bare essentials for survival and, worse yet, when they lack the work which confers dignity?”

“...the great ideas which once inspired Europe seem to have lost their attraction, only to be replaced by the bureaucratic technicalities of its institutions.”

May 2016: Introduction by Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament: “Today, Europe is going through turbulent times, and faces what may be a decisive test of its unity. More than ever, we need courageous citizens who are prepared to stand up for the idea of European unity, we need people to shake us out of our apathy and remind us what is really important: peace, solidarity and mutual respect - the need to emphasize what unites us, not what divides us. It is because he has done just that - reminded us what is important - that Pope Francis is being awarded the Charlemagne Prize today. Your Holiness, please accept my heartfelt congratulations.”

Upon acceptance Pope Francis gave an equally blunt speech that asked: “What has happened to you, the Europe of humanism, the champion of human rights, democracy and freedom?”

In praising the previous generation in laying the “foundations for a bastion of peace, an edifice made up of states united not by force but by free commitment to the common good”... “Their new and exciting desire to create unity seems to be fading. We, the heirs of their dream, are tempted to yield to our own selfish interests and to consider putting up fences here and there,”

“We have full-time Europeans when it comes to taking, and we have part-time Europeans when it comes to giving,”

“We need to move from a liquid economy prepared to use corruption as a means of obtaining profits, to a social economy that guarantees access to land and lodging through labour.”

Pope Francis was the first Pope to accept the prestigious award at the Vatican (normally the ceremony is held at Aachen, Germany), which was attended by the President, Vice Presidents, and Parliament Members of the European Parliament, and a number of EU's top leadership, including Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, and Mario Draught, Governor of the European Central Bank. And once again, when the Pope spoke, the European Leadership listened.

(Please Note: The writer is not Catholic, nor particularly religious, but is acutely aware, nevertheless, of the short comings of the conventional political and religious leadership, producing ever escalating socio-economic and environmental problems, unwarranted and unjust conflicts, and thereby creating the prospects for greater human misery than is presently, and starkly apparent on our daily news channels)