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The Man For This Season – Part II

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Ashok Dhillon has over 40 years of front-line business experience in Canada and International markets. His extensive experience gives him in-depth knowledge and intuitive insights into macro and micro, national and international, geo-political and economic realities and trends.

Mr. Dhillon has been invited to speak on international business at various forums, including as an Expert Witness for the Standing Senate Committee, Government of Canada, on "The Rise of Russia, China and India".



On September 24, 2015 Pope Francis addressed the Joint Meeting of The American Congress, the first Pope to ever do so. In addressing the most powerful nation on Earth, the Pope did not shy away from bringing to the fore what ails America (*and the World*), partisanship, discriminatory economic policies, gross inequality, global conflicts, arms sales, the shutting off of dialogue with countries (*Cuba*), the closing of borders against economic refugees from the South, and the destruction of the environment for exclusive economic gain. His ability and willingness to clearly address these overwhelming American and global problems that are hurting the majority of the population(s) in the US and the World over, while benefitting the very few, and have the most powerful people in the World listen in rapt attention and respectfully to him, regardless of nationality, culture, religious and political ideologies, in the US Congress, and all over the World, makes this leader unique and most influential amongst all current leaders.

While the Pope was addressing the American Government (*possibly one of the most fractured in history*) and through it the American people, his message was applicable to all governments and all people, as the problems he addressed were prevalent then and are plaguing the World even now.

America is a house divided, not only on political lines but increasingly on socio-economic lines, and so on partisanship he said: *"Building a future of freedom requires love of the common good and cooperation in a spirit of subsidiarity and solidarity."*

(Subsidiarity is an organizing principle that matters ought to be handled by the smallest, lowest or least centralized competent authority. Political decisions should be taken at a local level if possible, rather than by a central authority.)

While his condemnation of the current socio-political and religious extremism is obvious, but he reminds that every religion is and has been guilty of

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ideological extremism. On geo-political and religious conflict and extremism: *"All of us are quite aware of, and deeply worried by, the disturbing social and political situation of the world today. Our world is increasingly a place of violent conflict, hatred and brutal atrocities, committed even in the name of God and of religion. We know that no religion is immune from forms of individual delusion or ideological extremism."*

America is the biggest arms exporter on the planet, by far. On the Arms Industry and its "drenched in blood" profits: *"Being at the service of dialogue and peace also means being truly determined to minimize and, in the long term, to end the many armed conflicts throughout our world. Here we have to ask ourselves: Why are deadly weapons being sold to those who plan to inflict untold suffering on individuals and society? Sadly, the answer, as we all know, is simply for money: money that is drenched in blood, often innocent blood. In the face of this shameful and culpable silence, it is our duty to confront the problem and to stop the arms trade."*

As has been discussed prominently in the current Republican and Democratic Nomination Race in America, money has thoroughly corrupted the politics of the Country. On corrupted politics: *"If politics must truly be at the service of the human person, it follows that it cannot be a slave to the economy and finance."*

On shutting out immigrants and foreigners: *"We, the people of this continent, are not fearful of foreigners, because most of us were once foreigners. I say this to you as the son of immigrants, knowing that so many of you are also descended from immigrants."*

On the mistreatment of indigenous people: *"Tragically, the rights of those who were here long before us were not always respected."*

On war refugees from the Middle East, North and Sub-Saharan Africa, and economic refugees from Mexico and Latin America: *"Our world is facing a refugee crisis of a magnitude not seen since the Second World War. This presents us with great challenges and many hard decisions. On this continent, too, thousands of persons are led to travel north in search of a better life for themselves and for their loved ones, in search of greater opportunities. Is this not what we want for our own children? We must not be taken aback by their numbers, but rather view them as persons, seeing their faces and listening to their stories, trying to respond as best we can to their situation."*

On need for combating poverty and protecting nature: *"Now is the time for courageous actions and strategies, aimed at implementing a "culture of care" (ibid., 231) and "an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature" (ibid., 139)."*

Through secret meetings at the Vatican between the US and Cuban officials,

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the Pope was instrumental in breaking the 50 year stalemate between the US and Cuba. On building bridges and restoring relationships: *"It is my duty to build bridges and to help all men and women, in any way possible, to do the same. When countries which have been at odds resume the path of dialogue – a dialogue which may have been interrupted for the most legitimate of reasons – new opportunities open up for all."*

For the non-Catholics, approximately 6 Billion or so in the World, to understand the power of the Roman Catholic Church and the institution that is 'the Pope', a little historical context is required, as the Church is a singularly unique institution, unparalleled in the history of human civilization for its sheer longevity, its accumulation and concentration of power, wealth and global influence. And therefore an engaged Pope can be a formidable advocate for real change in the World, if he so chooses.

The Roman Catholic Church's origins are in the beginning of Christianity, in the 1st Century (*as claimed by the Church*), as the teachings of Christ were taken by the Apostles from Judea into Rome and Europe, and then other parts of the World.

In Europe, and particularly in Rome, which at that time was pretty much the centre of the World in the West (*the Western Empire*), the new religion took hold even though it and its proponents suffered ignoble and murderous prosecutions over centuries. It was the acceptance and the legalization of the religion by the Roman Emperor Constantine 1, in 313, and the instatement of Christianity as the 'State Religion' by Emperor Theodosius 1 that made possible the subsequent spread and entrenchment of it in the far flung corners of the Roman Empire, and later the World.

The official acceptance and promotion of Christianity also allowed the 'Bishop of Rome' to eventually and not without prolonged internal struggles, ultimately prevail as the preeminent spiritual authority in all of the then Christian World (*as the Pope*). And, after the shift of the Roman Empire's power base to Constantinople (*the Eastern Empire*), the Popes increasingly took on secular duties, from the incompetent Roman Emperors of that time, *ultimately* and essentially becoming emperors themselves, of Papal States.

After the unification of the disparate Italian States into the unified Italy, the secular Italian Government annexed all the Papal States except for approximately 100 acres of the Vatican land, making the Popes virtually 'prisoners of the Vatican', until, with the help of the fascist Benito Mussolini as head of the Italian Government, in 1929, the Lateran Treaty was signed by Mussolini, on behalf of King Victor Emmanuel III, making the Vatican a fully independent and autonomous State within Italy, with the then Pope (*Pius IX*) as its absolute Sovereign Emperor.

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Pope Pius IX



Source: reddit.com

Pope Francis



Source: southernorgerpage.blogspot.com

Today, Christianity is the largest religion in the World with its adherents estimated at 2.2 Billion, and within it, 'Catholics' are the largest denomination at approximately 1.2 Billion, with almost half of them (*483 million*) in Latin and South America.

Catholics represent almost 15% of the World's current population, spread across the World, but concentrated in some of the fastest growing populations and economies of Latin and South America, Africa and Asia. And if one is to look at the Church as the longest surviving Corporation in the World, and that Corporation's 'customers' are now in other parts of the World than its original area of origin, it makes sense to appoint a new CEO that is from those parts that understands and relates to the 'market' better.

In Europe and North America the numbers of Catholics, and Christians, have generally been declining. In Latin and South America, North Africa and Asia, the Catholic populations are growing in numbers. The increase in numbers has less to do with faith or belief but more to do with demographics as these are the regions with faster growing populations.

Generally speaking, religions of most persuasions, are growing fastest where populations are growing the fastest, and declining where population growth is stagnant or declining (*as in the West*).

And perhaps that is one of the reasons why a South American and not a European Pope has been selected after approximately 1200 years.

Over time, almost all successful religious institutions become more nimble and adaptable to political and economic change, rather than the spiritual, and the Roman Catholic Church, over its very long and at times very tortured history, is a prime example of that fact.

Today, due to the approximately 2000 years of almost unbroken rule of the longest, richest and most authoritarian regimes in the history of the World (*invoking authority directly from God can't be beat*), the 'Pope' is one of the most powerful men in the World. The long history, the almost unquestionable

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authority, and god-like worship of his followers, makes the Pope in most ways more powerful than most monarchs past and present, and more influential than most democratic or authoritarian political leaders. And therefore World leaders upon gaining power have felt impelled to come and pay homage to the Pope though time, regardless of political or religious ideology. If one is to doubt that statement, one only has to remember that no other religious leader, past or present, has commanded such consistent respect and deference over such an extraordinarily long period of time by the most powerful, be they Kings and rulers of old, or the modern day leaders.

Source: cnn.com;



Source: nbcnews.com;



Source: theguardian.com;



Source: cruxnow.com



The power of a powerful and actively engaged Pope cannot be underestimated, and Pope Francis got actively engaged from the day of his appointment. He has *direct and deep influence* over 1.2 Billion followers (*people*) around the World. That is more than the influence of any political leader in the World, including individually, China's and India's (*with over 1.3 and 1.2 Billion each respectively; and not all of their population venerate them*), and their influence over their constituents is not even fractional in totality or in moral authority, or in longevity, as the Pope's.

The Pope is the single most dominant leader in the World, and through his 1.2 Billion direct followers (*constituents*), and his own personal and official influence outside the Catholic faith, he can indirectly impact Billions more, to bring about desperately required and long overdue structural change to the

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Church, and through it and its followers and his own personage, to the World, 'to change history'.

Pope Francis has the institutional power and respect that comes with the office, but in the 3 years plus a month since he has been the 'Pope', he has almost immediately made his mark as the most unconventional, boldest and perhaps one of the most controversial Popes of recent times. And the most loved by Catholics and non-Catholics, and therein lies his real power; as the most beloved and respected leader in the World, across national, religious, cultural and racial divides. And as the people of the World get to know the sincerity of his purpose; to minimize and ultimately try and end conflict; to protect the environment; to urge more equitable economic and financial policies; to care for and uplift the poor (*the vast majority of the World's population*), more and more of the millions that already venerate him will rally behind him, his message and his actions, and influence future global policies.

A lot of his 'difference' may be the man, but a lot of that is probably his acceptance and embracement of the Jesuit order. Jesuits are more formally known as the 'Society of Jesus', an all-male Order that are more informally known as 'God's soldiers', 'God's marines' and the 'shock troops of God', for their willingness to go anywhere and do whatever is required, regardless of personal hardship, in the service of God. They take vows of poverty, simplicity, chastity, and total obedience, pursuit of study and service, loyalty to the Church and the Pope, and above all else, total commitment to God.

They prefer an almost Spartan lifestyle, are dedicated, disciplined, stoic and studious, in general. Jesuits have been hated, reviled, feared and treated with suspicion often times by the Church and the Popes, even though they commit to undying loyalty to the Church and the Pope. But because of their above average preference for austerity, devotion, discipline and shunning of worldly indulgences, attributes that the Church and its hierarchy have often been lacking in, and conversely, on the indulgence side, indulged in too enthusiastically, Jesuits have been generally viewed with suspicion by the more 'worldly' in the Church. Even now, this Pope has ruffled many feathers in the Vatican and the greater Church, feathers that have been too used to being preened rather than being plucked, and their owners are not amused with this poverty, compassion, mercy loving, nonjudgmental Pope that wants inclusion of gays, women and the poor in the Church. And doesn't want "dirty, blood soaked money" and wants to root out ageless corruption, nepotism, privilege and pomp and grandeur in the Church.

And yet, they chose and elected him, a South American Jesuit, a soldier of God. And this soldier is of the 'shock troop variety', and he is on a mission from God to change the World and change history.

To be Continued...

(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)



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