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## The Man For This Season

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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".



The World is slowly but steadily spinning towards global chaos; with escalating wars of opportunistic political power plays; self-serving religious ideologies; deepening divisions of race, cultures and nationalism; and existential threats of nuclear stand-offs. The unmitigated and conscienceless greed-fueled shortsighted financial policies, along with shrinking economies and growing inequalities, and worsening climate change, speaks to a long standing global leadership that in-off-itself has been the problem.

Through most of these past decades, the US in particular, as the sole and unchallenged "Super-Power", indulged in dangerous financial/business practices and excessive unjustified military use, along with others, and created and contributed to the global financial/economic, political and climate change disasters that are faced by the World today (*till recently the US refused to be bound by any global environmental agreements*). And those disasters made the World fracture further with greater conflicts, and made other global powers like Russia, China, India, and others in the Middle East, harden their own stances, and to take up the active arms race once again in response to an increasingly dangerous World. Russia, feeling pushed by NATO, in its weakened state after the USSR collapse, has picked up the gauntlet and is now pushing back.

Today's political and economic leadership is singularly nationalistic; and transnational only in so far as it strictly serves its own interests. Thus it is woefully deficient in being able to affect sufficient necessary changes on the scale required, to reverse course and avert even greater geo-political, economic, environmental disasters that are presently stalking the World.

In such a time of escalating threats, no current political or socio-religious leader, or political or military alliance, or any other organization or agency, has the power and authority, and most importantly enough *neutrality*, with all, to be influential enough (*with all*), to help direct and change the current

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course and direction of the growing global crisis and chaos, except perhaps the man from Argentina, Jorge Mario Bergoglio - now Pope Francis. Perhaps by a strange coincidence, a man made for this season.

The reason he may be effective is because he is not acting like a Pope but more Christ-like, and though he rules the Vatican State as an absolute Sovereign, and has very significant worldly influence and power and at 1.2 Billion has the greatest number of *devoted* followers of any leader in the World, yet, he may be the most globally politically *neutral*, and best suited *outsider* to nudge global leaders and their citizens in the right direction.

The choosing of his Papal name, by him, may have given an indication of his awareness of the role he was required to play by fate (*in his view by God*) in the larger global affairs. He chose as his Papal name: Francis (*the first Francis as a Pope*) in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi, and said of him, "*He brought to Christianity an idea of poverty against the luxury, pride, vanity of the civil and ecclesiastical powers of the time. He changed history.*" The words of the quote describe the current civil and ecclesiastical times and through his words and actions this Pope wants to change history. Saint Francis of Assisi was also known as a lover and protector of nature - and the Pope has come out actively as a crusading environmentalist.

Since his election as the 266<sup>th</sup> Pope of the Roman Catholic Church, in March 2013, Pope Francis has immediately brought to the Church and civil society at large, "*an idea of poverty against luxury, pride, vanity...*". His first actions as the Pope were to shun overt grandeur for himself, and harshly rebuke the Church, and the greater World, for the pervasive culture of love of money, corruption, greed, selfishness, and callous insensitivity to human deprivation and suffering. He chastised the Church's top Cardinals, blasting them for being: "*lustful for power, living hypocritical lives and suffering from spiritual Alzheimer's instead of being men of God*" (*reminiscent of Christ's chastisement of the Pharisees "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men ..."*). The Pope did not win many friends that day amongst the Church's most powerful leaders.

Pope Francis's first personal choice was to not live in the Papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace, but in a residence in Domus Sanctae Marthae, essentially a Vatican guest-house, and to appear for the first time on the balcony at St. Peter's Basilica in a simple white vestment, which he has favoured on a regular basis over the more elaborate and grand Papal regalia.

He then immediately took forthright action on resolving long festering, and escalating problems within the Church, from the very first day of his appointment. He broke sharply from longstanding traditions and protocols that Popes and the Church have abided by, and quickly and forcefully intervened in the deep long-buried problems and taboos of the Church, and immediately after, waded into the geo-political, economic and environmental affairs of the World. In doing so, Pope Francis has shocked the Catholic and

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non-Catholic World with his comparatively undiplomatic words, and consistently bold and unusually direct actions.

On Church corruption, he harshly condemned the culture of corruption, kickbacks, intrigue, love of money and privileges, and child abuse within the Vatican and the greater Church. He fired those found guilty, transferred others, cut all bonuses and donated the money to charity, and appointed inquires and independent audits. He exhorted all in the Vatican to root out corruption and embrace the true Christian values of poverty, sacrifice and humility. He condemned the Church's stubborn adherence to dogma, over compassion, love and mercy for the suffering, the sinners, and the disenfranchised humanity. He said: *"The times talk to us of so much poverty in the world and this is a scandal. Poverty in the world is a scandal. In a world where there is so much wealth, so many resources to feed everyone, it is unfathomable that there are so many hungry children, that there are so many children without an education, so many poor persons. Poverty today is a cry."*

He bluntly rejected all donations to the Church that may have been earned unethically or through exploitation of the poor. He said: *"Some donors come to the Church offering profits from the blood of people who have been exploited, mistreated, enslaved with badly paid work. 'I will say to them: 'Please take your money away...Burn it.' The people of God... do not need dirty money; they need hearts that are open to God's mercy."*

On his visit to Mexico, he addressed Mexican officials, but he could have been addressing the problems of the World: *"Experience teaches us that each time we seek the path of privilege or benefits for a few to the detriment of the good of all, sooner or later the life of society becomes a fertile soil for corruption, the drug trade, the exclusion of different cultures, violence and also human-trafficking, kidnapping and death."*

On September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the Pope addressed the United Nations Generally Assembly, as had been done in the past by some of his predecessors. What was different this time was this Pope's sweeping and direct condemnation of environmental and human damage caused by singularly profit focused economic activity that forgets that the human species is spirit and physical elements, and that physical part needs a benign and supportive environment to survive. He also addressed the great social cost of economic exclusion and of those that suffer the most from such policies:

Excerpts from the UN address: *"The contemporary world, so apparently connected, is experiencing a growing and steady social fragmentation, which places at risk "the foundations of social life" and consequently leads to "battles over conflicting interests."*

*"Economic and social exclusion is a complete denial of human fraternity and a grave offense against human rights and the environment. The poorest are those who suffer most from such offenses, for three serious reasons: they are*

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*cast off by society, forced to live off what is discarded and suffer unjustly from the abuse of the environment. They are part of today's widespread and quietly growing "culture of waste".*

*"Our world demands of all government leaders a will which is effective, practical and constant, concrete steps and immediate measures for preserving and improving the natural environment and thus putting an end as quickly as possible to the phenomenon of social and economic exclusion, with its baneful consequences: human-trafficking, the marketing of human organs and tissues, the sexual exploitation of boys and girls, slave labour, including prostitution, the drug and weapons trade, terrorism and international organized crime. Such is the magnitude of these situations and their toll in innocent lives, that we must avoid every temptation to fall into a declarationist nominalism which would assuage our consciences."*

While most global leaders, at one time or another, come and give speeches at the UN, most of them are constrained in their ability or desire to follow up the grand statements made. This Pope has been following through. He has been almost constantly on the move, visiting countries and unfailingly and equally bluntly addressing their leaders and officials about some of the most intractable problems of spreading international conflicts, with it's the human toll and loss of innocent lives; the misery and displacement of people (*the refugee crisis*); nuclear gamesmanship and possible proliferation; unmitigated greed and selfishness in business and the resulting economic exclusion and environmental damage; the damaging effects of the pursuit of power for power sake; drug and human-trafficking; continuing exploitation of women and the sexual exploitation of children and the destitute, the World over.

This Pope has equally energetically addressed the inter-religion and inter-faith conflicts, and the excuses for excesses that cause widespread human misery. And in an effort to promote greater understanding and acceptance between religions, and to try and end the constant inter-religious hatred and conflict that costs hundreds of thousands of lives, he has personally sponsored, met with, and participated in every kind of interfaith dialogue. For doing so he is thoroughly criticized, reviled, and called the 'Anti Christ', the 'idol', the 'Devil', and other less polite names, by his own and the others.

He is opposed by those within the Church by his insistence on the rejection of traditions, privileges, dogmas, and instead the embrace of poverty, humility and mercy. He is opposed by those outside the Church with vested interests in maintaining the global status quo of division, hatred, conflict and exploitation. In trying to end endless religious conflict, inequality and hatred, he alienates most.

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At a Multi-faith Conference  
Source: smh.com.au



At a Mosque in Istanbul  
Source: dawn.com



With 2 of Israel's top Rabbis  
Source: timesofisrael.com



Another Multi-Faith Conference  
Source: ctpost.com

Most with a closed mind would rather keep, and are happier with the continuous hatred and division amongst religions and within religions. The politicians and arms dealers of the World are happy to exploit these perennial conflicts and divisions for their own political power, and blood stained profits.

The Pope addresses and admonishes all, and constantly acts to underscore his intent. He is a Pope who is going to take his election (*to his own surprise*) and is going to use it as a gift from God, to try and change the World for the better. As history has shown, such people are not well received by this World.

He was quite a radical choice to start with, an outsider in a number of respects. He is the first Pope from the Southern Hemisphere, the first non-European Pope, 1,272 years after Gregory III (*the Syrian, 731 – 741*), and is a Jesuit. The choice by the Church Cardinals was a bit of a desperation move as the Church was experiencing decades of problems that seemed to be magnified rather than mitigated by most of the past more conventional choices. Corruption within the Church, the unresolved problem of pedophilia amongst the priests, inadaptability to changing times, stubborn adherence to dogma, unresponsiveness to the true needs of the people, declining membership globally, and rejection by the young of the Church and its seemingly outdated and irrelevant teachings, were some of the entrenched problems that the Church could not seem to address and reverse. All these problems came to a head with the past Pope, Pope Benedict XVI, who resigned as the problems spun out of control. The Church hierarchy in charge of such matters must have felt they needed an 'outsider' a 'non-conformer' so-to-speak, to effectively address and resolve the ongoing problems and reverse the decline. They certainly seemed to have got the man for the job.

Perhaps more than they bargained for.

Continued...for the balance of this Commentary please contact [info@GETAnalysis.ca](mailto:info@GETAnalysis.ca)

*(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)*