

# POPULIST POPE PROVES IRRESISTIBLE

Pope Francis is the perfect pontiff for our age, a truly populist pope. He can do something few others can: espouse the Church's traditional moral teachings—which are profoundly countercultural—while speaking with a relevancy almost impossible to duplicate. Style doesn't change substance, but it can facilitate the transmission of substantive teachings.

It's not just his simplicity of manner—living in modest quarters, driving in compact sedans, carrying his own belongings— it's his simplicity of thought. Pope Francis is hardly anti-intellectual, but he's rightly wary of intellectual appeals that never reach the people. He knows there is a place for administrative oversight and data collection, but he warns against a “functionalism” distancing the hierarchy from the faithful. Surely he celebrates the role of bishops as apostles of Christ, but he is careful to warn of the dangers of clericalism.

This is what a populist pope is all about. Pope Francis wants to touch the people and wants them to participate in the makings of Christianity. But he isn't prepared to lower the bar. He welcomes everyone, yet counsels that inclusivity cannot be achieved at the price of compromising basic moral truths. He may not appeal to die-hard secularists, or to cynics, but to those who are prepared to allow the Church, and themselves, a chance to reboot, he's indispensable.