

POPULIST IRRESISTIBLE

POPE

PROVES



In the wake of Pope Francis' trip to Brazil, Bill Donohue comments on his irresistible appeal:

Pope Francis is the perfect pontiff for our age, a truly populist pope. He is able to do something that few others have been able to do: he can espouse the traditional moral teachings of the Catholic Church—teachings that are profoundly countercultural—yet at the same time speak with a relevancy that is almost impossible to duplicate. Style does not change substance, but it can facilitate the transmission of substantive teachings.

It is not just his simplicity of manner—living in modest quarters, driving in compact sedans, carrying his own belongings, donning the hats of ordinary people—it is his simplicity of thought. Pope Francis is hardly anti-intellectual, but he is rightly wary of making 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” that distances 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 he also wants them to participate in the makings of Christianity. But he is not prepared to lower the bar: he instructs us to forgive *and* forget. 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 is indispensable.

God bless our populist pope.