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## Editorial

### Pope Francis and the Great Awakening

**I**s the next spiritual awakening happening among us? Are we really ready for it? James A. Harnish, Protestant pastor, writer and United Methodist preacher, asked this question as he watched and listened to Pope Francis when he made recent visits to Cuba and the United States.

As Harnish watched and listened, he began to wonder if God has called this particular Pope to this particular moment in time to bear witness to religion in a particular way that will awaken us to a way of witness that transcends “the often mean-spirited, contentious, politically-polluted ways of some of the supposedly religious figures who have dominated the news in our time.”

Writing in his personal blog Harnish says that both in his words and his life, Pope Francis demonstrates a way of witness that is:

- Rooted deeply in the past, speaks courageously to the present and points prophetically to the future. Everything about Francis grows out of the long traditions of the Church while connecting with the needs of the present and calling us toward God’s vision of the future.
- Nurtured in and by the Church. Francis is not making this stuff up on his own the way political candidates frame their message to impress the constituency they are trying to win. Everything he says and does is grounded in the faith and social convictions of the Catholic Church.

- Lives into the vision of God’s Kingdom revealed in Jesus Christ, coming on earth as it is in heaven. He shows us what it looks like to take the gospels seriously, particularly the Sermon on the Mount and the parables of Jesus—words that are noticeably absent from some of the politicians who supposedly are the representatives of Christianity in America today.
- Draws people in rather than driving people out. The massive crowds that were drawn to him, make it certain that religion can and should bring people together, rather than drive them out.
- Consistently directed toward the “least of these.” Consistent with his chosen name, Francis consistently challenges those of us who “have” to be personally engaged with the “have-nots.” Some of the most moving moments were the times he took children into his arms the way his Master did.
- Works relentlessly for reconciliation and peace. His message to the United Nations was a prophetic witness of Jesus’ call for his followers to be peace-makers.
- Respects national loyalty without surrendering to it. Pope Francis is the same person in every nation he visits, never allowing any nation’s flag to take priority over the cross.
- Challenges every political party without becoming the possession of any of them. Politicians who attempt to co-opt Francis for their agenda are consistently frustrated by the consistency of his message.
- Maintains the integrity of his own faith tradition while providing space for others. The Interfaith Service at the 911 Memorial was a powerful witness to the common values that are shared by every major religious body in our nation.

The author reaffirms that as a convinced Protestant, there are points at which I would disagree with the Pope. But if God can use him as the harbinger of the next "Great Awakening," we can all join him! At least it's worth praying for, he holds.

Confronted with problems of great magnitude, religions and their leaders can come together to face and solve these problems collectively.

Confronted with problems of great magnitude, religions and their leaders can come together to face and solve these problems collectively. For that we need a great spiritual awakening, which will enable us to visualise the whole humanity as the great family (*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*) and work for our collective betterment. If individual religions and leaders fail, it will be a loss for the whole of humanity. Today we need religion that brings people, including non-religious, together. We need leaders who can consistently befriend even their enemies.

Kuruvilla Pandikattu SJ  
Editor

This editorial is adapted from an article written for  
*The Financial Chronicle*.