

Spring 2013

## From the Editor: A time for every purpose

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### Recommended Citation

Fitzpatrick, P. (2013). From the Editor: A time for every purpose. *Spiritan Magazine*, 37 (2). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc/vol37/iss2/4>

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# A time for every purpose

Pat Fitzpatrick CSSp

**A** courageous retirement from a role long seen as lasting ‘until death do us part’ has opened up our church leadership like no other event in centuries. Pope Benedict’s resignation as Pope has handed future Popes the opportunity to give of their best and then know when to say, “enough is enough.”

We have seen a change in personality from Benedict to Francis. We have also seen a change in priorities. We await a change in leadership style. Not necessarily changing right to wrong, or wrong to right — but certainly seeing things differently and beginning to do things differently, in addition to doing different things.

From the thousands gathered in St Peter’s Square Pope Francis asked a favour: “Please bless me before I bless you — I need all the blessings I can get.” Then he bowed to receive their blessing. The next day, he stopped to pay his hotel bill on the way back to the Vatican from Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica. The next week he went to prison: “I wash and kiss your feet — male and female, Christian and Muslim, Italian and foreigner.” A truly “catholic” Pope.

Will he make all things new? That is unlikely and unwanted. But he has already begun to do some new things: eating with others rather than all by himself; as Bishop of Rome he speaks publicly only in Italian. He has moved out of his private Papal quarters and uses rooms closer to where other people work and reside.

And further down the road? Revitalizing existing procedures — perhaps revising some practices — and removing some people past their Best Before? Are we in for a time of renewal — under the influence of the Holy Spirit?

## ‘To Live is to change’

Words of Cardinal Newman come to mind: “In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.” A church needs to change so as to remain true to itself. Living beings are not the same as they were twenty or forty years ago — look at any photo album.

Go with the flow then? No. Go with a glow? Yes: “a brightness in complexion, a sense of happiness or wellbeing.”

A Pope from Argentina — a fresh face — an overdue acknowledgement that Europe no longer ‘rules the roost’. “At

the beginning of the last century, only a quarter of the world’s Catholics lived outside Europe; today only a quarter live in Europe,” wrote German Cardinal Walter Kasper.

We have adopted the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible in our liturgies; surely we can welcome a new revised way of being Pope too? Why not continue what Pope John

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— Cardinal Newman

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XXIII reportedly said when asked why the Second Vatican II Council was needed: “I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in.”

## Changing churchgoers

Over the centuries ours has been a changing Canadian church: our founding fathers and mothers came from France; they were joined by emigrants from Ireland and Ukraine. Then after World War II came boatloads from Italy. More recent arrivals are from the Philippines (about 80% of whom are Roman Catholics), Central and South America and various African countries. Due to the impact of Asian, African and Latin American immigrants we have become “a post-European Canadian Catholic Church” according to Fr Terrence Fay S.J.

Churches are closing, parishes are amalgamating, Catholic schools are few or many depending on provincial educational policies. But a visit to any Catholic school in southern Ontario is an opportunity to meet the world in miniature. In a way he didn’t foresee, James Joyce’s definition becomes visible: “Catholic means ‘Here comes everybody.’”

The future of the Catholic Church lies outside Europe. A Pope from Argentina may well be the right person, from the right place, at the right time. ■