

Francis, Far From Infallible

At the beginning of every year, the Pope delivers an address in Rome to welcome the foreign diplomatic corps accredited to the Vatican. Pope Francis, a nice guy, has just delivered such a speech. It deserves attention.

The main theme of Francis's speech is immigration, the mass movement of peoples, now this way and now that, for "mobility is part of our human nature" and "human history is made up of countless migrations." True enough. But Pope Francis neglects to discuss what is for some of us so disturbing about the current migration into Europe: the numbers and nature of these migrants, coming from exactly where, trying to get exactly where, and carrying exactly what in their mental baggage.

The Pope does allude vaguely to "the grave crisis of migration" – but he is sure that those migrants who are true to their faith, whatever that faith may be (the word "Islam" does not occur anywhere in his long speech; the word "Muslim" occurs exactly once), are not the problem. For "every authentic practice of religion cannot fail to promote peace."

This is an assertion for which no evidence is adduced, and no one, not even a Pope, is exempt from the need to offer such evidence. After all, a large part of European history has involved wars of religion. I suppose that weasel word "authentic" provides an out for the Pope: simply label as "inauthentic" any "practice of religion" that fails to "promote peace."

Does that *ipse dixit* satisfy you? Would you not find more to your liking a pope who, before making such a remark, would have read, studied, and thoroughly assimilated the texts of Islam – Qur'an, Hadith, and Sira – which guide the "practice of Islam"? And if Pope Francis had done that, of course, he could not possibly have made such a preposterous remark in the

first place.

Pope Francis continues in this dismal vein: "Only a distorted ideological form of religion [?] can think that justice is done in the name of the Almighty by deliberately slaughtering defenceless persons, as in the brutal terrorist attacks which occurred in recent months in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East." All of those attacks, of course, were carried out by Muslims, in the name of Islam, relying on and often citing supporting passages in the Qur'an, against non-Muslims. All followed the example of Muhammad, that Perfect Man whose words and deeds are set out in the Hadith and Sira. There is nothing "distorted" about this form of Islam, even if it is not to our liking. It might have helped clear up confusion had he dared to mention, suggest, hint, that what we call the "deliberate slaughter of defenceless [non-Muslim] persons" is something quite different to the Muslims who murdered, or who approved of the murder, of those Infidels.

For the Pope, the current mass migrations into Europe evoke other migrations or movements, all the way back to Adam and Eve – "From the banishment from Eden to Abraham's journey..." And those past migrations were characterized by the same "struggles and sufferings, the desires and hopes, which are shared by the hundreds of thousands of persons on the move today, possessed of the same determination which Moses had to reach a land flowing with 'milk and honey' (cf. Ex. 3:17), a land of freedom and peace." For "milk and honey," read "free or subsidized housing, and medical care, and education, and other generous welfare benefits" offered these migrants, especially in northern Europe, which is why Muslims by the hundreds of thousands try to end up there, ideally in Germany or Scandinavia. For "freedom and peace," read Sharia and Jihad.

According to the Pope, "many migrants from Asia and Africa see in Europe a beacon for principles such as equality before the law and for values inherent in human nature, including the

inviolable dignity and equality of every person, love of neighbor regardless of origin or affiliation, freedom of conscience and solidarity towards our fellow men and women.” Yes, how true. Those are exactly the principles – equality before the law and the “values, including the inviolable dignity and equality of every person” – that have made Europe a beacon for Muslims. And by now we are all deeply familiar, too, with the Muslim migrants’ deep “love of neighbor regardless of origin or affiliation” and desire for “freedom of conscience, and solidarity” in Paris and Madrid, in Amsterdam and London, in Cologne and Toulouse, indeed all over Europe.

But if the Muslim migrants to Europe want nothing, according to the Pope, save to come and practice “love thy neighbor,” he cannot be as sanguine about Europeans themselves. The Pope is worried – worried about the attitudes and behavior of these same Europeans: “There should be no loss of the values and principles of humanity, respect for the dignity of every person, mutual subsidiarity and solidarity, however much they may prove a burden difficult to bear.” For the Europeans bear “a moral responsibility to...ensure assistance and acceptance” of migrants.

No. There is no responsibility either to “ensure assistance to” or to accept migrants, from anywhere, in any number. And it is grotesque to demand of Europeans that they accept migrants who are opposed to everything Western civilization favors, including freedom of thought and conscience, equality of the sexes, especially none when the migrants in question are raised up in the firm, even fanatical faith, that those principles are the enemy.

Pope Francis laments the “vacuum of ideals and the loss of identity” which he says “dramatically marks the so-called West.” And in that “so-called West,” that “vacuum gives rise to the fear which leads to seeing the other as a threat and an enemy, to closed-mindedness and intransigence in defending

preconceived notions.” It’s the Europeans who are needlessly fearful, a fear that is bred of their own failings, because there really is no enemy, no “other” of which to be fearful.

It bears repeating: Pope Francis is a very nice guy. But he’s also a sentimentalist, appallingly soft-headed. He offers comforting pieties, pie-in-the-sky hopefulness, mush, when what is needed at this time is something adamantine or, more exactly, benedictine. The imperilment of Europe – that “so-called West” – alas, requires more than this nice guy can possibly deliver.