

Review of: "Catholicity in thirteen words"

Reid Locklin¹

¹ University of Toronto

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

I really admire what Professor Blanco-Sarto has attempted in this article. I greatly appreciate the creative challenge of setting artificial limits – such as “13 words.” And I can see how a piece like this would be of great help to students.

I have two general comments and then some more local suggestions:

1. Some of your previous reviewers have asked about tone and context. I too wonder how these 13 words speak to a “post-Christian” context. They are full of “us” and “we” language, and they are (explicitly) doctrinal in focus--focused on the Catechism of the Catholic Church. This seems appropriate if one has a classroom of nominal Catholics who are uncatechized. So they ID as Catholic, but don't know anything about it. But if “post-Christian” means something more profound than this, then I should think a change in tone would be more inviting.
2. On a related point, I note that there is little in the 13 words that speak to the historical complexity and diversity of Christianity. It would be good to find some space for this. One strategy might be to “plant” references to intra-Christian disagreements into some of the existing descriptions. Another might be to add “catholicity” itself as one of your 13 words – either in place of “church,” or perhaps you could fold the discussion of freedom into the entry on “grace.” An entry on “catholicity” would give you a chance to identify your own context and ecclesial location more clearly, as well as providing a space to talk about intra-Catholic, intra-Christian and interreligious diversity.

And here are some comments on individual entries.

1 - “It is good, but the world also contains much evil, which was not made by God, but arises from the devil (real and personal being) and from the abuse of our personal freedom.”

It seems to me that the key point here, from Augustine, is that evil proceeds from the will and constitutes a privation of good rather than a cosmological principle with its own, independent existence. This involves the devil and human freedom, but the key issue is that evil is a moral category, rather than an ontological one.

4 - “If the world was good from creation, the flesh will be blessed by the person of the incarnate Word.”

It seems to me that it would be more proper to say, “As the world is good from creation, the flesh . . .” You are not actually calling into question the goodness of the world.

5 - “Of course, because otherwise we believe in one God just like the Jews or the Muslims.”

Christians do believe in one God, just like the Jews and Muslims. Where Christians disagree has to do with the nature of

that one God.

6 – typo: “This is the the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ.”

8 – typo: “That means that our salvation is not alone but we are saved with the others -in the Church- only by Jesuschrist.”