

Review of: "Catholicity in thirteen words"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Pablo Blanco does a marvelous job of distilling the central hallmarks of Catholicism into thirteen bite-sized chunks, making them manageable for what he calls a "post-Christian" audience. Its brevity is both a strong asset as well as a minor liability.

Beginning with the liability--which I want to note, is not a glaring "weakness" of this paper--there are two ways that brevity could be a liability. First is that it delivers something that is underdeveloped and somewhat diluted from the full force of its origins. Given Blanco's intents, this is not the sort of liability that this work falls into; "Catholicity in Thirteen Words" is more of a concentrated espresso shot (kudos for that) than a watered down iteration of its origins. Its brevity falls into the second variety of liability: saying so much in so few words I'm assuming means having its roots in a variety of sources. Yet only a small number are cited. It is hard for me to know if this is because Blanco did much work on his own (which I'd caution against if one is setting out to summarize Catholicism in 500 or so words or in 500,000 words). Really, I'd expect a work this compact to have nearly every sentence connect to multiple sources that span the geographic breadth of a global religion. Again, this is a relatively minor concern for a work with the author's intent.

The brevity in the sense of being an espresso shot is a strong asset. It tells the story of Catholicism in thirteen, appropriate, thoughtfully-chosen words. The brevity could allow, with the brief introductory paragraph, for this to be released as fourteen "chapters" to tell this story to both a church and unchurched audience. It is an easily-consumable "Church on the Go," with each of the thirteen words easily coupled with a thoughtful image or set of questions that could provoke devotion or introspection; it is very social media friendly in this way. I'd recommend this article to people who work in Church ministry, especially youth and young adults, to see how they might use this for their own pastoral contexts.