

Nice Guy Shoots Himself In The Foot: Pope Francis On The Mocking Of Faith

[Here..](#)

The Pope, with his ready smile, his obvious modesty, his refusal of every sort of pomp and his dislike of exalted solitude (he has chosen to live not in the grand Papal apartments, but in a room right next to other members of the clergy), his famous denunciation of vanity, greed, and corruption among the Vatican bigshots, made to their astonished selves – all this endears him, and should. He's now been fixed in the world's mind as a Certifiable Nice Guy. But that set-in-stone verdict does not exempt him from criticism, when he makes an insufficiently-thought-out remark. And he just made a dumb remark, in likening the refusal of some freethinking free-spirited light-hearted Frenchmen to stop drawing, under threat of death, cartoons of Muhammad, and talking of their subsequent murders in a jejune way, as being akin to someone making a remark about someone else's mother and receiving a punch in return. An ideology, or "faith," can be criticized, and its main figures mocked, whatever this or that Pope says, even the nicest-guy Pope. That has been one of the most important accomplishments of the last few centuries, of the Enlightenment, and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and the American Bill of Rights, as interpreted for almost 200 years. In the advanced West, we don't accept the notion that religious faith has some special exemption from criticism or having fun made of it, mockery made of it. Good or bad taste is another matter. But the worst taste of all is shown when one likens mass-murder, just committed, to "a punch in the mouth."

But the result of the Pope's remarks – can you imagine what

Oriana Fallaci would have replied? – will, at least in France and the rest of Europe, not be of any help to Muslims now depicting themselves as innocent victims of cruel mockery but, rather, to give a certain part of the population, leftwing, anticlerical (as if in France there was still any reason to be anticlerical) or rather heirs to the anticlerical tradition, a good reason to take what may be seen as the nothing-is-sacred-and-Muslims-had-better-get-used-to-it side, because now they are also standing up to the Vatican, which they have never been reluctant to do and, in so doing, they can also, without any *etats d'ame*, support Charlie-Hebdo's martyrs to free speech, and attack the Muslims who have, all over France, shown that how little they care about the killings, which is to say how much they silently find excuses for or support them, the massacres both at Charlie-Hebdo and at the kosher market..