

Fr. Perozich —

In an email yesterday, someone asked me where we are going now in our Catholic Church. Rather than inspire me, the Lord led me to the article below which prompted this reflection preceding said article.

On Labor Day 2018 I was at a little cove to swim on Maui. About 9 am a small band began to play, women dancing in native dress set the mood for a local protestant church for an ocean baptism ceremony of about 75 new adult Christians. I believe my local parish here baptized 1 last Easter vigil.

Billy Graham and preachers like him, drew hundreds of thousands when they spoke of Jesus, His death and resurrection, and His salvation from sin through repentance and conversion. Catholic bishops negotiated with these movements for them not to draw to their churches Catholics who attended to hear this profound message.

Why would these Catholics go to hear a protestant non Eucharistic preacher? In our own Catholic Church founded by Christ, we hear justification of adultery, homosexuality, supplanting repentance and conversion with accompaniment, talks on Islam, acceptance of all refugees and migrants, supposedly based on Jesus' teachings but with reference to Him only to justify socialism.

Politics is no longer a topic only in autumn pre elections bulletins and homilies for conscience formation, rather it is now a 24/7 replacement of evangelization as the apostles originally did at Jesus' command to go out baptize and teach all nations.

Missionary work often is about community organizing by first world religious in third world countries. Their 100% Catholic populations are shrinking to 50% in some places as people satisfy their hunger for Jesus outside the structure of the Catholic Church, abandoning the Eucharist which is not preached in favor of socialism. Non Christian countries are ignored.

Our leaders in Rome and in local churches spend their time defending those who betray the church with sinful acts, erroneous doctrine, and holding town hall meetings to try to calm the outrage of their people betrayed by leaders' failure to proclaim Christ and Him crucified, that for which people hunger to hear. These leaders silence priests who do speak out against the evils of the day, who preach Jesus, who hear daily confessions, who reverently celebrate the Mass in either form.

Those who leave mother church will not return, but at least they will hear Jesus preached, not just extrapolations of the gospel to justify socialism. For those who remain, I commend my brother priests who preach Jesus, His sacrifice, repentance and conversion in Penance, right moral living as Jesus taught.

I praise you lay faithful who have suffered abuse by errant clergy in our actions and our strange teachings, those of you who could never leave because you know the fullness of truth subsists in the Catholic Church where Christ dwells with God and the Holy Spirit, where you can receive Jesus in the Eucharist as food for your journey toward heaven

You faithful clergy and laity in your living through with and in Jesus, and your preaching His name are the hope for the rise of the Church from the ruins.

Reflections from the ruins

The reform will begin when the Church again unambiguously teaches the Gospel complete.

[September 2, 2018 James Patrick Features, Opinion 8](#)

Print



(Photo: sergio souza | Unsplash.com)

Our beloved Church is going through a crisis that is a masterwork of the devil. But, granting that the ultimate cause is Satan, the homosexual scandals, disastrous though they may be, are the **symptom—not the cause**. The overarching cause is the gradual slipping away of the shape and power of the Catholic faith under several firmly held illusions. The context is the unwillingness to believe that anything is really, really wrong. After all, things really, really wrong do not happen to the Holy Roman Church. In 1965, perhaps earlier, the moral theology of the Church was relaxed, not obviously, but just enough, tending towards a moral theology of self-fulfillment, and people

will fulfill themselves in various ways, many of which are damaging and indeed damning. Somehow, many in the Church forgot that, whether we can attain it or not, **the end of life is holiness and being pleasing to God.** Well, didn't forget, just moved being transformed by grace into the likeness of Christ to the back burner, and forgot that the world is always the enemy of God. They stopped bothering people with the last things, allowed "**deny yourself**" to be replaced with "**fulfill yourself**", and in general **moved the center of the apostolic mission from the salvation of souls—after all, what's to be saved from?—toward making the world a better place,** and all this without denying one sentence of the Catechism of the Council of Trent. The USCCB has sent numerous letters of advice to Congress about political matters that are marginal to their competency. Bishops may seek to excommunicate you for doubting open borders, but the Washington cardinal, as far as I know, has not even warned the six Catholic senators who cannot bring themselves to oppose sucking the brain out of a newborn.

At the back of it all is a profound disinterest in God, his truth, and his justice, and an accompanying awelessness in the presence of the death of the Son of God for our sins—should we have any.

One senses that Paul VI, John Paul II and Benedict XVI saw this was happening, and did what they could, but what has happened is something that good and true words from the top alone will not stop or amend. Paul VI was right about the smoke of Satan, but he seemed to engage

this phenomenon as an observer, powerless to put out the fire. At every turn the best intentions of the popes were opposed by the Catholic Theological Society and the great American Catholic Universities, notably Notre Dame and Georgetown (though not so much CUA), and by many of the clergy. Meanwhile, the laity were given a thousand clues, all tending to establish the fact that God doesn't matter so much. The changes in the liturgy—not absolutely altering its intent but permitting the imaginal reconstruction that complicated and obscured its character as sacrifice for our sins—transforming the Mass into a festival of being-together-with God, were casually devastating. There were a thousand clues: mass *versus populum*, women at the altar, fewer holy days of obligation, almost risible rules for fasting, Indications that hierarchy and form are not really Christian were everywhere. This was the kind of gently accommodationist doctrine that was implied but not said by Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*, which purported to tell society and individuals, indeed humanity, what Christ could do for them. The tone was: the world is doing just fine; we're here to help. Yet the apostles went into the world with a proclamation of the truth, not an offer of cooperation.

The downward path was marked by two unfortunate unbeliefs. It is very difficult for lay persons, rightly educated to believe that “Father knows best”, to believe that a mistake has been made. Even if in the heart something seemed wrong, the bishops and priests behaved as though all was well. It is part of the illusion that in

America (especially in the South, but to a degree everywhere) that church life tends to go on at a certain level. The faithful pious will find a way to love Jesus amidst the ruins, lending verisimilitude to the proposition that all will be well. More importantly, the bishops could not, and would not, believe that something had gone wrong. The official line was and remains: the results of what came after Vatican II have been unambiguously good, and in any event one can't go back.

Hidden in this is a detestation of the past, or which is more to be feared, contempt for the past because clerics now know so little about it. Benedict may write *Summorum Pontificum*, but in the United States the Latin Mass will in a practical way and in most places be more successfully suppressed than sin. Undoing this will require the heart-changing recognition that something, not everything, was wrong with the Council and/or its implementation, which was supposed to make the Church relevant to the modern world. Perhaps it succeeded. But the bishops need to stop insisting that Second Vatican Council was a great, almost unqualified, success, and admit the loss of half their customers, a fact that has never been taken to heart, and which was a sure sign something is wrong. Observance in France, which has been reduced from fifty percent to 1.8 percent since 1965, is emblematic.

The reform will begin when the Church again unambiguously teaches the Gospel complete. *The central necessity is that the bishops move the center of their apostolic ministry away from what sociologists Christian Smith and Malinda Lundquist Denton identified*

as Moral Therapeutic Deism (now called “MTD” for short by the scholarly community), *back to the Catholic Faith*. MTD teaches that God wants us to be nice, to make the world a better place, to be good to others, that God wants us to feel good about ourselves, and that we all go to heaven. In 1879, John Henry Newman, in his *Biglietto Speech*, delivered on the occasion of his elevation to the Cardinalate, saw clearly what the danger was: the Gospel would not be denied but subtly transformed by the imposition of principles, often good in themselves, that in fact inculcate atheism. **Catholics are now frequently, directly or by implication, taught half the Gospel; not that the first half isn't there, one just never hears of it.** Moral Therapeutic Deism begins its story not with creation by a just and omnipotent God, but with a weak version of the second commandment. Of the just, omnipotent, omniscient God, of the narrow way, the separation of the sheep from the goats, of the glory of the resurrection and the new creation—not so much. Of love for Christ which issues in self-denial there is little or nothing. The defalcating priests, not to mention many lay persons, got the message.

Making this reform will not be easy because there are strands in MTD that look very much like Christianity. **Sentimentality and inclusiveness look to the inattentive like the divine charity. Ambiguity is the seedbed of moral devastation.** The shift of the center has been subtle; the shift back will be difficult. MTD is a specialty of many Jesuits; Christianity is about service and being men for others, all of which may in a certain sense

be true but which as a system complete is atheism. Pope Francis is a Jesuit and his actions, I think, can best be explained by his commitment to something very like moral therapeutic deism, Jesuit style. Francis, as much as unrepentant, sinful priests, is a symptom. He dislikes Christian truth with its sharp edges and Christian moral practice if these seem unkind. He uses his detestation of what he calls rigorism to create a field of confusion in which anything grows. His philosophy is anti-philosophy that implies contempt for the great philosophic tradition that originated with Augustine.

Of course these things are not supposed to happen, but when they do they are to be lived through in faith that the gates of Satan's kingdom will not be able to stand against the Gospel that has been committed to the Church. And it is also good to remember that the majestic teaching of the great apostolic tradition towers above the popes, who, if they wish to add a footnote that exceeds their personal authority must do so deliberately, and in accordance with the great tradition. Again, the reform will begin when the Church again unambiguously teaches the Gospel. Meanwhile remember that God never promised us that we would live through untroubled times in Church or state. You know a dozen holy priests. There is nothing—not papal ambiguity and not evil bishops—that is keeping any one of us from the single-hearted pursuit of love for God and obedience to his will but our own selfishness, desire for comfort, vanity, and concupiscence. The best one can do is to stay repentant, rejoice in God's mercy, and pray. we are told that the history of the world will be a tale

of troubles, mitigated by flashes of divine glory, but ending in a last battle. Pray for those priests who have sinned with what seems deliberation, doing deep damage to themselves, their victims and accomplices. In the midst of ruin they are beloved of God. Satan, who really does exist, gently recruited them, and they fell, not the first or last. Their sins, repugnant as they are, are not unique in the history of humanity or of the Church, but their condemnation threatens; it is difficult to repent a way of life and to repent the deliberate cultivation of inclinations upon which it rests that are rooted in hell. And it is difficult to undo damage done.

For the present, you could discover every priest and prelate who has committed or tolerated acts of sexual depredation, punish and laicize them, load them into barges and send them into the deep as in P.D. James's *Children of Men*, and it wouldn't fix the particular difficulties that beset the Church at present. It is deeper. **The healing will begin when the Church resumes its holy mission to proclaim the Gospel complete.** That Gospel ends in the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the hope of the resurrection, but it begins and is founded in the righteousness, the glory and judgment of God, and firm recollection of the consequences of forgetting Him. Grace and goodness being the fruit of our loving God, depravity is the ultimate consequence of forgetting God. It's all right there in the first two chapters of the Apostle Paul's epistle to the Romans. When cultures and persons forget that even the world around them testifies to the divinity and power of God, God lets them go: "Since they

did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a base mind and to improper conduct” (Rom 1:28). The cellar of spiritual loss is the corruption of natural desires that leads to the contemporary mess. One caution on the downward path is the fear of the holy and just God. Another is the fact that original sin makes us vulnerable to Satan; we must be careful. Did anybody tell them?

As far as human eyes can see, the night bodes to be long. The evidence is that, except by divine accident, every cardinal appointed will at some level, to some degree, will be tempted to make peace with the world. But, to quote Newman again, the means through which God saves his elect inheritance is often surprising:

Sometimes our enemy is turned into a friend; sometimes he is despoiled of that special virulence of evil which was so threatening; sometimes he falls to pieces of himself; sometimes he does just so much as is beneficial, and then is removed. Commonly the Church has nothing more to do than to go on in her own proper duties, in confidence and peace; to stand still and to see the salvation of God.