

LAY CLERICS & CLERICAL LAITY

Fr. Perozich comments –

America and the entire West are becoming secularized. Church attendance is falling. I say that this is a result of the muting of her message, which should be knowing Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sins and the salvation of the soul for eternal life, a message that is not being preached clearly and unambiguously, rather that is now muddled with political, social, and worldly agendas.

*The church might be seen by the young as just one more agency of “rights, justice, equality, and fairness”, the **mantra** of political change agents.*

If that be the case, she is failing the Savior who gave His life for her and for all people. She is rendering herself irrelevant since there are already political, nongovernmental organizations (NGO), educational institutions, and social agencies doing that work.

Thus the young may not see the need of the church to accomplish the works that other agencies are already doing.

To fail to preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified for our sins is to do injury to His bride, the Church

*Certainly principles of charity need to be presented from the gospel by clerics. It seems to me that often an a priori **result** is being promoted by church leaders using the gospel and their personal interpretations to impose an **outcome** rather than to inform consciences so that we Christians can meet God in our consciences for His guidance, rather than the dictates of church leaders who seem to speak every day on their personal moral views, rather than just in the weeks leading up to our voting for government leaders:*

MORAL CONSCIENCE

1776 "Deep within his conscience man discovers a law which he has not laid upon himself but which he must obey. Its voice, ever calling him to love and to do what is good and to avoid evil, sounds in his heart at the right moment. . . . For man has in his heart a law inscribed by God. . . . His conscience is man's most secret core and his sanctuary. There he is alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths."

Catechism of the Catholic Church

If the issues were given the hierarchical values of previous years without equivocation of every idea that occupies a pope's, a cardinal's, a bishop's, a priest's, a deacon's mind, the lay faithful could be guided then by the church in her life.

The sanctifying mission of serving God in reverence, giving Him His due in reverent sacrifice has the first priority. The teaching mission, built on the 2,000 years of moral teaching rather than the novelties of this era then would have a better ear from the faithful. The guidance from canon law, the council documents over the centuries all have to be free from the novelties of the lay acting clerics who seem to wish to be heard and reflect the politics of the day on every issue rather than principles laid down over the whole history of the Church, from Jesus Himself through the church fathers, scholastics, and others who promote life in Christ.

I became a priest to promote Jesus and salvation from sin for eternal life. Influenced by regular prayer, I am working out my own salvation for freedom from sin. In this life of prayer, I support charity.

In 2003-2006 I went to Honduras to promote Jesus and the Catholic faith. I found a largely unchurched people there, more Protestants than Catholics, only 18% bothering to marry even civilly, violence, drug trafficking, a people not rooted in faith despite the Catholic foundation laid centuries before.

They were looking for a hand up in the material world first. People asked me for a technical school. Since many only go to school for 6 years, I built them a Catholic school to give them the basics of education, but more so the basics of the faith with daily religion classes, bible reading, prayer, weekly Mass. I did not scream from the pulpit in the U.S. with an overfed belly hanging over my belt, with my fine dining and liquor cabinet and comfortable life. I went to the margins, to the poor to bring them Jesus Christ.

In the the first of our two chapels there we had only 40 worshipers, and in the second only 10 while the protestant churches were overflowing, bringing in people by the busloads.

With a door to door mission of inviting, and preaching the full gospel with reverent liturgy, the chapels were overflowing by 2006 and a third one was built after I returned to America.

We gave provisions of rice, lard, soap, toilet paper, beans to those who came to us. I personally drove people to hospital, to town, because when they went to the overflowing protestant churches, they were denied. We gave what we had, not demanding governments give what was not ours to give.

Christ was alive in those churches, and our young were coming for catechesis and for youth involvement. This is what works. This is what our church is about.

Never do I advocate bringing everyone to the first world spending someone else's money, running to MY comfortable side of the border, saying that border patrol agents should be denied communion.

The fat clerics who do this have a great opportunity right now with the unchurched masses in such close physical proximity to these clerics:

*to stop criticizing the government's actions,
to spend their own money rather than insisting on more taxes from other people's money,
to CROSS THE BORDER RIGHT NOW yourselves,
to put aside clerical comforts,
to bring bibles and catechisms,
to teach in person the love of Jesus to the unchurched grouped there as they wait for resolution to their fates of either returning home or entering the U.S.*

We clerics need to form the consciences of lay leaders in these moral non negotiables to end abortion, even if sanctions are necessary, all sexual licentiousness, embryonic stem cell research, cloning, and euthanasia.

The negotiable prudential issues of wages, economy, immigration, weapons rights, and so forth are not our expertise.

Unfortunately those who do these are silenced by higher clerics who have been selected precisely because they will conform to the world by others who are in charge of our church at the moment.

First and foremost we clerics need to show the splendor and glory of God in the divine liturgy, surrounding the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass with all reverence, splendor, glory in order to lift up the soul to God. The preaching of salvation from sin for eternal life as a priority then will lead to the conversion of heart.

We clerics need to take a stand against the world, not walk with it into the darkness, rather to lead it to the light of Christ who gave His life to save it.

Clerics, if you want to be a politician, resign the clerical state and run for office.

If you wish to be a cleric, preach Jesus against the world and lead souls to Him in worship, teaching, and charity. Then our young will come to us for that unique most satisfying experience that nothing in this world can offer them, the person and salvation of Jesus Christ and His love for them.

APPROPRIATING CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING FOR PARTISAN PURPOSES

[Randall Smith](#)

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You find interesting things reading the documents of the Second Vatican Council. I was looking through *Gaudium et Spes* the other day, the document John Paul II was instrumental in crafting when he was a bishop, and came upon this:

Secular duties and activities belong properly although not exclusively to laymen. Therefore, acting as citizens in the world, whether individually or socially, they will keep the laws proper to each discipline, and labor to equip

themselves with a genuine expertise in their various fields. They will gladly work with men seeking the same goals. Acknowledging the demands of faith and endowed with its force, they will unhesitatingly devise new enterprises, where they are appropriate, and put them into action. Laymen should also know that it is generally the function of their well-formed Christian conscience to see that the divine law is inscribed in the life of the earthly city.

This is the well-known (but too rarely acknowledged) focus by the Council on the indispensable role of the laity as a leaven within society.

The Council goes on to warn: *“Let the layman not imagine that his pastors are always such experts, that to every problem which arises, however complicated, they can readily give him a concrete solution, or even that such is their mission.”* I’m not sure how many of the laity would suffer from this particular delusion anymore. But be that as it may, the Council suggests a different course: *“Rather, enlightened by Christian wisdom and giving close attention to the teaching authority of the Church, let the layman take on his own distinctive role.”*

Oddly, after the Council, rather than lay people taking on their “own distinctive role,” some made a mad rush to the altar – not to get married, but to do the things the priest does: preach, hand out communion, and pronounce on central Church doctrines. This is to misunderstand completely what the Vatican Council called for. But there is something more. Consider this passage:

Often enough the Christian view of things will itself suggest some specific solution in certain circumstances. Yet it happens rather frequently, and legitimately so, that with equal sincerity some of the faithful will disagree with others on a given matter. Even against the intentions of their proponents, however, solutions proposed on one side or another may be easily confused by many people with the

Gospel message. Hence it is necessary for people to remember that no one is allowed in the aforementioned situations to appropriate the Church's authority for his opinion.

Here the Council made clear that the task of prudently applying the general biblical-moral principles enunciated by the Church to the specific circumstances of each country properly belongs to the laity, the members of the Body Politic of each country.



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Unfortunately, there are clerics who, contrary to the teachings and admonitions of their Church, make the mistake of too eagerly entering into the political arena, siding with the specific agenda of one party over another, which is something they should not do unless there is a clear violation of the natural law, as, for instance, in the case

of slavery, or the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany, or the abortion of children.

What the Church has said is that, in most cases, the job of the clergy is to set out the basic moral principles and leave it to the laity to apply them prudently and to argue about what a prudent application of those principles would be. The Church would enter into the debate only to reiterate these basic principles, to indicate problematic interpretations, or to restrict clergy who are becoming too partisan or political.

I do not wish to be mistaken here. It is certainly the duty of the successors of the apostles to remind the nation of its obligations to widows and orphans, to the poor and dispossessed, and of the justice due to those who are without power or status within the society. And they may at times need to call government officials and the citizens to account for policies that are clearly unjust.

But take note: *“no one is allowed in the aforementioned situations to appropriate the Church’s authority for his opinion.”* Did anyone send this memo to the faculty at Georgetown University when they objected to a speech by Paul Ryan because his budget proposals were supposedly contrary to the Church’s social teaching?

Doesn’t this happen far too often, where people with good-faith proposals are rejected because their proposals are not seen as being in accord with what elite members of the Catholic social-justice regime think are the required positions? And why were bishops in the 1980s laying out policy guidelines in areas in which they had no expertise rather than taking care of the liturgical abuses, moral rot, and dissolution of Catholic education in their own dioceses?

The Church’s teachings on social justice are an invaluable resource, not a club to beat others over the head with. They are meant to inspire critical dialogue, not end it. I fear some people in the social justice community are suffering from a “pre-Vatican II ecclesiology” wherein bishops, priests, and theologians simply tell the laity what “good Catholics” should do rather than simply laying down basic principles and letting lay people creatively figure out various ways to apply them and sort out which are the best.

Every bishop, priest, and professor of Catholic social justice (and, full disclosure, I am one of those professors) needs to remind people of these passages whenever the media asks for a comment and say: “I am

not an expert in this particular area, and even if I were, mine would only be one view among many; it is not for me to make a final judgment on how the Church's teaching ought to be applied."

Clerics and theologians who persist in this sort of "top-down" thinking on Catholic Social Justice need to re-read *Gaudium et Spes* and get with the times.

**Image: A Little Leaven by James Janknegt, 2008 [Trinity Presbyterian Church, Nashville, TN]. Jim Janknegt is a daily reader of TCT. You can see his work (and purchase it) at his website [by clicking here](#).*

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