

Fr. Perozich comments —

The Catholic Church has the mission to proclaim that Jesus Christ is the Son of God made man, that all who believe and are baptized are joined to Him in transformation to eternal life.

To me this message seemed to be interrupted by trying to unite an earthly utopia to include everyone without faith in Him and what He preached, particularly virulent in the 1970's and beyond.

With Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, the clarity of the message returned in many parts, but not everywhere.

Now those elevated to authority in the church seem, to my thinking, to have a different proclamation in mind from the one of Jesus: inclusion, fairness, equality, justice and rights according to their thinking, worldly utopia with or without Jesus as the center of unity and salvation.

This view seems to be permitted if not encouraged under Pope Francis who is invoked as their reference point rather than the Savior and the Scripture and Tradition of the last 2,000 years.

- ***“All consideration of priesthood and ministry must flow from the Second Vatican Council’s affirmation of the Church’s living tradition as it has been received and developed by Pope Francis.”***

- ***one senses a sort of glee when discussing the declining numbers of seminarians, presumably since that could push the envelope in the direction of dramatic changes.***

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The new message brings a decline in ministry, in the mission, and the membership. It repels rather than attracts those to whom it is directed.

Certainly it attracts those of the same mindset, but the new message and lack of conviction that Jesus is the one Savior of the world has no power.

Still, those in charge seem to have their moment and will not be deprived of it, despite the consequences:

- ***the local Churches that have tried hardest to play catch-up with “history” and “the times” are collapsing.***

- **surrendering to “the times,” even if — particularly if — this means jettisoning the truths that, according to both revelation and reason, make for happiness and beatitude.**

What works?

- **There is, however, evidence that the offer of friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ as the pathway to a more humane future gets traction**
- **turned away from idols in order to turn resolutely to the Living and True God ... You have recognized in Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Open wide your hearts to him ... and always conquer evil with good.”**

A reasonable approach would be to know the mission, to see where it is preached and attracting members, and then to jettison the new plans made by the minds of men, and return to the mind of Christ.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.

*Philippians 2:5-11 **Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:** Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The Martini Curve revisited

Is there a single example, anywhere, of a local Church where a frantic effort to catch up with 21st-century secularism has led to a wave of conversions to Christ?

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Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini in 2006.
(Wikipedia)

Pope Francis concluded his pre-Christmas address to the Roman Curia by invoking the memory of Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, SJ, who died in September 2012. The Holy Father recalled that, “in his last interview, a few days before his death, [Cardinal Martini] said something that should make us think: ‘The Church is 200 years behind the times. Why is she not shaken up? Are we afraid? Fear, instead of courage. Yet faith is the Church’s foundation.

Faith, confidence, courage ... Only love conquers weariness.”

The Martini Curve should indeed make us think. I thought about it at the time and ended up with questions rather than answers. What, precisely, was the Church two hundred years *behind*? A western culture come unglued from the deep truths of the human condition? A culture that celebrates the imperial autonomous Self? A culture that detaches sex from love and responsibility? A culture that breeds a politics of immediate gratification and inter-generational irresponsibility? Why on earth would the Church want to catch up with *that*?

Call me a dullard, but try as I might to adjust my thinking, I'm afraid that's what I still think about the allegation that Catholicism's contemporary failures result from our being stuck in a rut behind the curve of history. Moreover, since Cardinal Martini's death seven years ago, certain empirical facts have become unmistakable: **the local Churches that have tried hardest to play catch-up with “history” and “the times” are collapsing.**

The premier example is Catholicism in the German-speaking world. Weekly Mass attendance percentages have fallen into single digits in German cities and aren't much better in Austria and the German-speaking parts of Switzerland. Has this implosion of the sacramental community compelled a rethinking of the strategy of cultural accommodation? On the contrary. With a bullheadedness once caricatured as typically Prussian, the great majority of German bishops support a national

“synodal process” that seems determined to put the pedal to the metal of surrendering to “the times,” even if — *particularly* if — **this means jettisoning the truths that, according to both revelation and reason, make for happiness and beatitude.**

Is there a single example, anywhere, of a local Church where a frantic effort to catch up with 21st-century secularism and its worship of the new trinity (Me, Myself, and I) has led to an evangelical renaissance — to a wave of conversions to Christ? Is there a single circumstance in which Catholicism’s uncritical embrace of “the times” has led to a rebirth of decency and nobility in culture? Or to a less-polarized politics? If so, it’s a remarkably well-hidden accomplishment.

There is, however, evidence that the offer of friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ as the pathway to a more humane future gets traction.

Shortly after last October’s Great Pachamama Flap, I got a bracing e-mail from a missionary priest in West Africa. After expressing condolences for my “recent Roman penance” at the Amazonian synod (which had featured a lot of politically-correct chatter about the ecological sensitivity of indigenous religions), my friend related an instructive story: “You’ll be happy to know that last year, when one of our villages invited me to come and help them destroy their idols and baptize their chief, we did not, before doing so, engage in any ‘dialogue with the spirits,’ as was so highly praised in the [Synod’s working document]. There was no Tiber to throw [the idols] in, so a sledgehammer and a fire had to suffice. Somehow the

village managed to survive without such a dialogue, and in fact they have invited me back ... to celebrate the one-year anniversary of the great event, and to bless a cross that will be set up in the village as a permanent reminder of their decision.”

Three weeks ago, the local archbishop wrote those same villagers, telling them of his “immense joy” that, the year before, they had **“turned away from idols in order to turn resolutely to the Living and True God ... You have recognized in Jesus Christ the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Open wide your hearts to him ... and always conquer evil with good.”**

There’s no Martini Curve in that part of the global vineyard, it seems. Rather, there is, to borrow from the late cardinal’s last interview, “faith, courage, confidence ... [and the] “love that conquers weariness.” That is surely something to think about in the Vatican — and throughout a world Church in which everyone is called to missionary discipleship.

Symposium on priesthood “renews” failed revolution of the Sixties and Seventies

We are, once again, being encouraged to “reimagine” not only priestly formation but the priesthood itself and the Church herself. I’ve been there, and it was a hell-hole of oppression by the Radical Left.

January 7, 2020 Peter M.J. Stravinskias



Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago (left), seen here with Cardinal Walter Kasper in a 2017 photo, was one of the "ecclesial heavy hitters" who took part in a recent symposium on the priesthood, held at Boston College. (CNS photo)

Recently, we were treated to **an article at *Cruce*** describing a “two-day symposium at Boston College” of “ecclesial heavy-hitters” dealing with the future of the priesthood. This was a follow-up to a previous confab which served up a wish-list in December of 2018. Key expressions say it all: “a call for a reimagining of priestly formation”; “renewing the conversation”; “threefold dynamic”; “foster authentic psychosexual maturity and integration.”

Who talks like that? I can tell you who: Left-overs from the failed revolution of the Sixties and Seventies. As

Yogi Berra put it, “It’s like deja-vu all over again.” I know whereof I speak because these phrases brought back nightmares of my would-be priestly formation from that precise era. Yes, I admit I am a victim of post-traumatic stress stemming from those worst eight years of my life.

I am amused when liberals call for “dialogue” or “conversation” because that suggests they see themselves on the short end of the stick. Once they are on the ascendancy, all “dialogue” and “conversation” cease. My seminary was a hell-hole of oppression in the pre-Vatican II era; in my time, it was a hell-hole of oppression by the Radical Left (the agenda had changed but the agents were the same). Indeed, the initial steps were hesitant and conversation-oriented. However, when someone raised an issue for conversation that did not fit the proper “paradigm” (yes, we had “paradigm shifts” then as well), the axe fell fast and furiously.

We had been encouraged to “reimagine” not only priestly formation but the priesthood itself and the Church herself. Naively, I took the bait and wrote an article for *The Priest* in November of 1973, entitled “The Parish: Crucible of Priestly Formation.” I critiqued the whole disastrous system and “suggested” that a different “model” was needed, namely, having seminarians live in parishes and commute to theological schools. By January of 1974, I was shown the door. The “dialogue” was over. The personal harassment and persecution, however, went on for nearly two years more.

The Leftists today, however, are not quite so subtle and clever as their forebears of an earlier time. They have

actually handed down the demand in no uncertain terms: **“All consideration of priesthood and ministry must flow from the Second Vatican Council’s affirmation of the Church’s living tradition as it has been received and developed by Pope Francis.”** The key words, of course, are “as it has been received and developed by Pope Francis.” Not even Vatican II itself is a starting point, with *Presbyterorum Ordinis* or *Optatam Totius*. Certainly not John Paul II’s *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. Not even, apparently, the brand new Program of Priestly Formation, approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops this past November.

It is important to have handy a lexicon to interpret the gibberish emanating from the “Woke” participants. Here are my English translations of a few of the goals of the *cognoscenti*:

- “an evaluation process for candidates that allows institutions to ‘be free to evaluate candidates honestly,’ without a concern to ‘maintain numbers’ by persevering with unsuitable candidates”: *Get rid of conservative seminarians.*
- “a call for exploration of new models for ordained ministry” and “There have to be adjustments made.” “The future of the ministry of the priesthood cannot be the same of the past.”: *A Protestantized priesthood, which would include women and married men.*
- “As the number of priests declines, we have an opportunity to recognize women in ministry, and make

space and resources available for their formation, so that they can better serve the people of God.”: *Ordain women.*

- “This incorporates the vision of Vatican II in ways that are not always evident today among those who emphasize a cultic priesthood and a priestly identity that is set apart and above the laity.”: *Out with a sacramental understanding of both Church and priesthood!*

So, who are these forgers of a “brave new Church”? We learn that cardinals were present, including—surprise, surprise—Blase Cupich of Chicago and Reinhard Marx of Munich! Six other American bishops were involved also; among those “heavy hitters” were none other than Bishops Robert McElroy of San Diego and John Stowe of Lexington. In truth, with one notable exception, every hierarch cited is as far Left as you can go without tipping over the canoe. Non-bishops include such worthies as the peripatetic Richard Gaillardetz of Boston College, the ex-priest Thomas Groome (What does he have to offer of value to priestly formation? More to the point, according to the rescript of laicization, he should not even be teaching Catholic theology.), and Richard Lennan (an Australian priest of the suit-and-tie variety). The rest I had never even heard of.

Christopher White, author of the article in question, very honestly notes:

Some of the strongest language is reserved for the role of women in priestly formation, where

organizers noted that women should be included in the faculty of seminaries.

In point of fact, one can see that the driving force behind the entire endeavor is the issue of “women in ministry.” White goes on to observe: “The event was closed to the press, prompting some Catholic commentators to voice frustration that one of the major lessons of recent scandals has been the need for greater transparency in the Church.” Never to be outdone in double-talk, we are informed: “Organizers, however, contended that the purpose of the closed-door format was to allow for free-ranging, open discussion among participants.”

Even more: “Groome told *Crux* that such an environment provided freedom for participants to speak with candor in an environment of mixed participants.” This has the echo of the Bergoglian synods of the past few years, from which the press was banned and no records of episcopal interventions were produced. *Parrhesia*, to be sure. Apparently, these erstwhile fans of Papa Bergoglio missed the document in which he essentially rid the Church of the pontifical secret!

Is there a place for laity (including women) in the formation of future priests? When Cardinal Newman was asked about the place of the laity in the Church, he quipped: “We’d look rather silly without them!” So, yes, there is a place. However, it is worth noting: Future doctors are trained by doctors. Future lawyers are trained by lawyers. Future farmers are trained by farmers. Similarly, **future priests need to be trained by priests** – in the main. Lay participants ought to be the

exception, not the rule, and surely not the majority of faculty members.

If anyone reads my article from 1973 (to whose main lines I still subscribe), he will see that I am no uncritical supporter of the status quo. However, my vision of priestly formation would seek to strengthen priestly identity, not water it down or even eliminate it completely. Reading between the lines of comments made by several of the seminar participants, **one senses a sort of glee when discussing the declining numbers of seminarians, presumably since that could push the envelope in the direction of dramatic changes.**

Strangely, these people seem to be totally unaware of the fact that the Eastern Orthodox churches have had a married priesthood for a millennium – and they have a more serious vocations crisis than we. Mainstream Protestantism has been “ordaining” women for decades, and the churches are emptying out faster than one can recite the “Our Father” (oops, not that sexist prayer).

Bottom-line: Groome and Company want to keep the pot stirred. And like the old Soviet re-education camps, they proudly proclaim: “We sent home a number of significant leaders...with a new consciousness.”

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Reverend Peter M.J. Stravinkas is the editor of the *[The Catholic Response](#)*, and the author of over 500 articles for numerous Catholic publications, as well as several books, including *[The Catholic Church and the Bible](#)* and *[Understanding the Sacraments](#)*.

Catholic persecution worse after Vatican-China deal, Congress finds

China is reportedly ramping up stricter controls on religious groups and events in 2020.

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A man prays during Mass in 2017 at in the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Beijing. (CNS photo/Wu Hong, EPA)

Washington D.C., Jan 8, 2020 / 10:00 am (**CNA**).- A new U.S. government report says that human rights abuse in China has worsened in the last year, and specifically highlighted the escalating persecution of Chinese Catholics in the wake of the Vatican-China agreement of 2018.

“During its 2019 reporting year, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China found that the human rights situation has worsened and the rule of law continued to deteriorate, as the Chinese government and Party increasingly used regulations and laws to assert social and political control,” stated the commission’s annual report, released on Wednesday.

The report said that “After the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs signed an agreement with the Holy See in September 2018 paving the way for unifying the state-sanctioned and underground Catholic communities, local Chinese authorities subjected Catholic believers in China to increasing persecution by demolishing churches,

removing crosses, and continuing to detain underground clergy.”

The report’s time frame covers human rights in China from August 2018 to August 2019. The commission was established by Congress in 2000, as China was set to enter the World Trade Organization, to report on human rights in the country and to maintain a database of political prisoners.

Wednesday’s report notes the rise of mass internment camps in the country’s western Xinjiang province, the brutal persecution of Christians, Muslims, and other unregistered churches or religious groups, and repression of pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong.

The Chinese Communist Party’s five year “sinacization” plan is underway to establish state control over religion. “Scholars and international rights groups have described religious persecution in China over the last year to be of an intensity not seen since the Cultural Revolution,” the report said.

And China is reportedly ramping up stricter controls on religious groups and events in 2020.

New restrictions set to be enforced in February include mandates that religious groups “adhere to the directives on religions in China, implementing the values of socialism” and promote the “principles and policies of the Chinese Communist Party.”

Another article “requires that the government authorities be involved in the selection of religious officers and involved in disputes.” Underground churches or “home” churches are outlawed.

The 2018 Vatican-China agreement on the appointment of bishops aimed to bring about the unification of the state-sanctioned Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association and the underground Church in communion with Rome. Instead, persecution of the underground Church has continued and, according to some, intensified.

The number of Catholics in China is estimated to be more than 10 million, the report said, with official statistics saying that 6 million Catholics are part of the state-sanctioned church.

“Observers and Catholic believers expressed concern that the agreement did not provide sufficient support for the Chinese Catholic community, with one scholar pointing out that the authorities’ persecution of both underground and official Catholic communities has actually intensified over the last year under the ‘sinicization’ campaign,” the report found.

“In spring 2019, authorities detained three underground priests of Xuanhua diocese in Hebei province.”

“Local Chinese authorities subjected Catholic believers in China to increasing persecution by demolishing churches, removing crosses, and continuing to detain underground clergy,” the report said.

One of the report’s recommendations to Congress is for members to advocate for “the right of Catholics to be led by clergy who are selected and who conduct their ministry according to the standard called for by Catholic religious beliefs.”

The Chinese government's treatment of other religious communities was also highlighted by the report.

In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in the country's far west, "the Commission believes Chinese authorities may be committing crimes against humanity against the Uyghur people and other Turkic Muslims," with estimates at "one million or more Uyghurs" detained in internment camps and reports of forced labor in the camps.

"Security personnel at the camps subjected detainees to torture, including forced ingestion of drugs; punishment for behavior deemed religious; forced labor; overcrowding; deprivation of food; and political indoctrination," the report said. Due to overcrowding, some detainees were sent to camps elsewhere in China; some "reportedly died in camps due to poor conditions, medical neglect, or other reasons."

There were reports of "the use of electric shocks and shackling people in painful positions" in camps.

Elsewhere in the region, authorities have set up "a pervasive and high-tech surveillance system" with facial recognition cameras and cell phone monitoring, as well as biometric data collection of members of ethnic minorities.

While Muslims have been subject to strict controls on religious practice in the region, the purported "anti-terrorism" measures of the government might be used elsewhere in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (Ningxia) where many Hui Muslims reside, the report noted.

Both the House and the Senate have passed legislation, the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act, to provide more reporting to the federal government on the human rights abuses committed against ethnic minorities in Xinjiang and the transfer of technology to enable mass surveillance.

The two bills must be reconciled before a final vote to send the legislation to the President's desk, which members of the commission promised would happen in 2020.