

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*The analogy of using sales techniques to arouse desire for something in order to get the customer to buy got my attention.*

*I do not shop. I do not buy what I do not need. My curiosity is not aroused by shiny new merchandise in stores such as clothing, electronics, vehicles (except when my lease expires).*

*Neither do I like it when someone proposes something for me to buy, implying that I need that item.*

*Walter O'Farrell speaks of the need for salvation and of how Catholics do not see a need for conversion, renewal of the Eucharistic covenant, recognition of sin, the need to repent and to be forgiven, also of a false belief that all are going to heaven.*

*If I'm not a sinner, I do not need salvation.*

*The Catholic Church's brand is salvation from sin as revealed by God in the Bible and the commandments. The Church's mission is to make people aware of sin and how salvation is granted. It is a tough sales pitch in a world where so many commit the original sin from leaders in the church, politics, education, science down to the simple folk like me, thinking that I will decide what is right for me; I can pick from the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil without God.*

*The article is 20 years old. It mentions the saintly priest, Fr. John Hardon, SJ. It also quotes the good teachings from a priest who was removed from ministry by his order, Fr. John Corapi.*

*The issues 20 years ago for O'Farrell were contraception, sacrilegious communions, failure to recognize sin in our lives, self justification, failure to preach about sin, forgiveness and repentance, all leading to abandonment of belief in the Eucharist and leaving the Catholic church for other non Catholic ecclesial communities which teach about Jesus*

### **NO PROBLEM: NO SALE**

*In 2020 the problem of sins preached by Catholic church leaders are climate change, acceptance of adulterous and homosexual relationships, income redistribution, supposed right to immigrate and live off the state economically, a guaranteed minimum wage, women's right to be priests, equality, rights, fairness and justice as defined by man rather than God.*

*By failing to “sell the message” more than 20 years ago, our Holy Catholic Church did not arouse a desire for perfection in Christ. Enough Catholics have decided we are perfect enough, and that we don’t need any change in our lives.*

*The church no longer sells the message of Jesus, rather that of the political world. Bishops silence priests who teach salvation from sin, silence priests who do not preach the new earthly values. Is there any need then for anyone to buy the new product of socialism at the church when it is so readily available at the polls, on the news shows, at the universities, NGO’s?*

***NO PROBLEM: NO SALE***

*I still need salvation from sin. The only place I can get it is from Jesus in His Holy Catholic Church where at the Eucharistic celebration the covenant is renewed which forgives sins, offers transformation into the image of Jesus, and the future promise of eternal life in resurrected bodies.*

*This is what I offer to all who will listen to me instead of NGO messages in the church and in the world.*

*This is what the church needs to offer the world in the post COVID-19 pandemic. Those who no longer saw a need for salvation from sin in the church probably will not find a reason to come back. Those of us who are are conscious and willing to admit our sinfulness and need for salvation by Jesus will return. It is up to us to confess our problem and to “sell” the message of the free gift of Jesus to change our lives and grant us eternal life.*

***Salvation is what I need. The classic Catholic faith and the person of Jesus are what I come to receive, not for sale, rather given freely for freedom in Jesus.***

# **Selling Sinners on Salvation**

## **NO PROBLEM. NO SALE.**

*By Walter V. O'Farrell | October 2000*

*Walter V. O'Farrell is a staff member of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.*

When I was an altar boy in Boston during the Korean War, our parish offered three weekday morning Masses — 5:30, 6:15, and 7:00 — and attendance was quite high. Many attendees were praying for their sons at war, I'm sure. Perhaps half of these people, on average, received the Eucharist. Presumably those who didn't had either consumed food since midnight (the old Eucharistic fast) or were not in the "state of grace."

Over a 25-year period, from 1972 to 1997, I watched the percentage of Catholics receiving the Eucharist at Sunday Mass increase markedly. I use the term "watch," because for all those years I was one of the few who remained in the pew. You see, **I was a sinner unwilling to confess and relinquish certain types of sins. Knowing how Jesus railed against self-righteousness, I refused to receive the Eucharist sacrilegiously.**

A half century ago, Pope Pius XII remarked that the paramount sin was that "**we have lost our sense of sin.**" It's gotten worse since then. Does no one commit mortal sins anymore? Not likely.

Maybe all the mortal sinners stay home on Sunday morning? Or most of those who attend Mass are in a state of grace, which explains the high percentage of

communicants, right? If you believe that, I've got some swampland you should buy!

Isn't it time that the Church — the bishops, priests, and concerned laity — address this sacrilegious travesty? I am urging this long overdue action out of love for my fellow man and concern for souls that are off-track due to ignorance, sinful pride, lax conscience, or a combination thereof.

During my career in sales, sales management, and sales training, I learned a cardinal rule: **People won't buy something new unless given a reason. The underlying premise of selling is simple: "No problem, no sale."**

Unless the seller can convince the prospect that the latter has a problem, he is unlikely to sell him anything. Expressed another way: What causes the sale of new shoes? The answer is old shoes. The shopper sees a pair of new shoes in a display window in the mall; her mind races. The new shoes are attractive. So, old shoes are the primary reason why people buy new shoes. No problem, no sale.

**If the Church wants to sell new shoes (the Good News) to the growing number of Catholics, young and old, who are losing their faith, she must make them realize that their old shoes (the sinful lives they may be leading) are inadequate. To be frank, until a person becomes disgusted with himself for being spiritually dead as a sinner, a hypocrite, and a slave to Satan, he is unlikely to repent and truly believe.**

In 1997, U.S. News & World Report published the results of a survey in which 1,000 Americans were asked, “Are you sure you are going to heaven after death?” A whopping 87 percent responded “yes.” But Jesus said, “Broad is the path, and wide is the gate, on the road that leads to destruction. And many are traveling that way. But narrow is the path, and narrow is the gate, on the road that leads to life. And those who find it are few” (Mt. 7:13-14).

Surveys show that only one-third of American Catholics believe in the Real Presence. And about 82 percent of married American Catholics disagree with the Church’s teaching on contraception. Yet, at Sunday Masses, it appears that 95 percent of adults receive the Eucharist. Are all the contraceptors and nonbelievers in the Real Presence playing golf or staying home during Sunday Mass?

The Rev. John Corapi asks, “Am I expressing my love for you by doing nothing as I watch you skip and dance your way to perdition — in this life and the next?”

The Catechism is very clear about the conditions necessary for receiving the Eucharist: “Anyone who desires to receive Christ in Eucharistic communion must be in a state of grace. Anyone aware of having sinned mortally must not receive communion without having received absolution in the sacrament of penance” (#1415). We all know how Jesus railed against hypocrisy, but here we may have a double layer of hypocrisy. First, we have laity who either don’t believe in the Real Presence, or do believe but have a lax conscience about sins of “the flesh” and forgive themselves on the way to Communion. Second, we have

the Church which turns her eyes away, perhaps afraid that any discussion of the objectivity of sin will alienate the flock and upset revenue projections. “Don’t ask, don’t tell!”

**The first day I reported for training as an acolyte the priest asked, “What is the main mission of the Catholic Church?” The answer was, and is, the “salvation of souls.” Are American Church leaders doing all they can to help save souls?** Or is the Church ignoring her mission by burying her head like an ostrich as the Sunday “rush of lemmings” to the altar takes place? The book of Wisdom (6:2-5) warns of terrible consequences for Church leaders who abrogate their shepherding roles.

**Salvation can’t be earned, but it sure can be lost.** Whom do self-justified communicants and comfort-seeking clergy think they are fooling? Remember the final words of the “Act of Faith” prayer: “God...can neither deceive, nor be deceived.”

What would Jesus do under today’s circumstances? Peter Kreeft says in his book *Back to Virtue*: “One thing Jesus certainly is not is tame. The lion of the tribe of Judah is feared, so feared that He is crucified. He never simpers and often roars. His very language shows a penchant for gigantesque metaphor: millstones around the neck, whitened sepulchres, logs in the eyes, gnashing of hellish teeth. No one in Scripture ever talked more about Hell than Jesus did. In all these ways, He is the total opposite of our modern Catholic catechists and liturgists.”

Kreeft continues, “But all of Jesus’ roaring, including his hell-fire and damnation sermons to the Pharisees, was

to help rather than to harm. When shock therapy was needed, Jesus did not offer sweetness and light.”

At the beginning of Lent in 1999, our parish witnessed a megadose of shock therapy in the person of Fr. John Corapi. To those who attended his mission, he was worth the two years it took to book him. His basic theme was from John 14:6, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.” Fr. Corapi preached that though we are all sinners, there’s hope, because God’s mercy, for the truly repentant, is infinite.

Hordes of relativistic, “feel-good” columnists, some of them popular on Catholic campuses, assert: There is no right; there is no wrong; there are only different opinions. To them, Fr. Corapi would respond, You are dead wrong. The Truth is absolute. If there’s no right or wrong, then no one can sin, which is ridiculous, and everyone goes to Heaven. **He told listeners that our opinions about God’s laws hold no water: “What the Church says is right or wrong is exactly that, regardless of whether we agree. The Truth is not determined by a democratic vote.”** Fr. Corapi held up a glass of water at the lectern saying, “The Truth is that this is a glass. Now, one of you might say, ‘No, I think it’s a pepperoni pizza.’ I’m here to tell you that **your opinion makes no difference.** The Truth is that it’s a glass, and I can assure you if you come up here and try to bite into it, its reality will assert itself.”

And he added: “Even though 82 percent of married Catholics disagree with the Church’s teaching on artificial contraception, their opinions won’t change the Church’s

teaching.... And, if you take it one step further and receive the Eucharist, now you've committed a sacrilege, objectively speaking. Why should I tell you any different? That would not be loving you!"

Fr. Corapi, who holds a doctorate in Sacred Theology, isn't deterred by those in the contemporary Church who disagree with him. He points out what we all know: **Some bishops and priests crave social acceptance and respectability.** "They won't stand up for the Truth because without a spine they can't stand up. With no backbone they hunker down and hide from the Truth, telling people, for example, that 'it's OK to use the pill as long as it doesn't bother your conscience.' Meanwhile, this nation of ours is headed for slavery. Mark my words!"

A month after Fr. Corapi left town, I asked a priest what he thought about his style and message. He thought carefully before replying that, yes, we must seek and abide by the Truth, but if he himself used that approach, "in no time I'd be driving parishioners out of the Church and into the pentecostal churches nearby." He also commented that missionary speakers like Fr. Corapi, though effective, don't have to face the same folks every week because, unlike him, they catch the next plane out of town.

This experienced priest is a realist. He is correct about the Corapi approach, if used every Sunday. **But the answer to the question of what the Church should be doing for the salvation of souls might include use of direct methods like Fr. Corapi's, in combination with an emphasis on trust in Jesus as Lord, and belief in the power of the Holy Spirit.**



What must be scrapped is the “ostrich” approach of conscious permissiveness that the Church has used for the past 35 years.

Bishops must lead the Way to the Truth and Life. **They first need a plan, involving both priests and evangelized laity.** Priests must be courageous from the pulpit, but selected laity should be permitted to take some of the burden off priests by their witness. Open testimonies by the laity about matters such as “the efficacy of Natural Family Planning” or “the role of the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit in my life” would play a key role in this plan. If it’s just priests acting alone, then squirming parishioners will take out their feelings on the priests by fleeing to another parish. So bishops must see to it that no neighboring parish or pastor is “soft” on these important issues.

In the book *The Reform of Renewal*, the learned, street-smart Fr. Benedict Groeschel writes: “A word must be said here about the growing number of young Catholics who actually did give up the practice of their faith — and later returned to it with a real personal conversion.... They are an encouraging breath of fresh air and may represent the most vibrant hope for...real reform....”

In another chapter of the same book, on “Reform in the Clergy,” Fr. Groeschel, who has a doctorate in psychology and is Director of Spiritual Development for the Archdiocese of New York, lays it right on the line in saying, **“The moral teachings of the Church are so much at odds with the prevailing mores that often priests are too intimidated to preach about**

**personal sin and the need for confession and repentance.”**

Did Jesus wilt in the face of adversity? He said straight out, “I have not come to make peace. I have come to make division” (Lk. 12:51). Did the threat of being fed to lions intimidate early Roman priests?

All bishops and priests need to preach about the prideful sins of hypocrisy and self-righteousness, the sinfulness of contraception, abortion, sacrilegious reception of the Eucharist, the objectivity of sin, and the need to repent. Why do veteran priests admire courageous homilies by visiting missionary priests, or by zealous young priests, but remain silent themselves? Most of these “veterans” are wonderful homilists and seldom use “tough love” homiletics. But these are exactly the priests who would be most effective with the shock therapy approaches because their sheep would be “all ears.”

In addition to “hardline” preaching, **priests also need to do a better job of telling us how wonderfully good the Good News of salvation really is! Until three years ago, despite over 50 years of listening to Catholic sermons, I always thought I had to do things to save myself. I never knew the heart of the Good News — the free, undeserved gift of salvation — until I learned about it in a parish retreat and then started to read books and listen to tapes.**

**Catholics who have joined pentecostal churches say that they never heard the true gospel message expressed in the Catholic Church from**

**the pulpit. The loving Father, who created us, sent His only Son and Holy Spirit — while mankind was still sinning! Why are we keeping that a secret? Evangelization means Jesus uses our voices to take His message to someone else's heart. If more people knew that salvation is something they can't earn and don't deserve — but is still offered (Eph. 2:1-9) — they would not be so disinclined to proclaim it.**

And we need to be told about the joys of our faith: the joy of the Cross, the joy of surrendering to the lordship of Jesus, the joy that results from the union of our will with God's will. We hear the words of the priest celebrating Mass, "This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to His supper." This very idea should bring a glad smile to all those receiving the Eucharist.

But many communicants look like they are part of a mindless procession to the altar. Why? Maybe they lack spirit — the Holy Spirit — whom we drive away when we commit mortal sin. These listless communicants, the hapless "lemmings," have not been given a reason to buy new shoes. They are too smug wearing old shoes. They see no personal need to repent, perhaps because priests are reluctant to prick their consciences about the present state of their souls.

Another priest who lays it on the line is theologian John A. Hardon, S.J. On the 30th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* in 1998, he wrote: "the deliberate practice of contraception between husband and wife is objectively a

mortal sin. Those who persist in its practice are acting contrary to the explicit teaching of the Roman Catholic Church.” And this is not just one theologian’s opinion. We read in *L’Osservatore Romano* (Dec. 4, 1996) that “for the Magisterium contraception is such a morally disordered form of behavior that it constitutes gravely [i.e., mortally] sinful matter.”

Fr. Hardon offers a recommendation: “The Church’s leaders [need] to stand behind the Vicar of Christ in proclaiming the Church’s two millennia of teaching that no marital act can be separated from its God-given purpose to conceive and procreate a child.” He continues, “I make bold to say that the Catholic Church, the real Roman Catholic Church, will survive only where her bishops are courageous enough to proclaim what the followers of Christ have believed since apostolic times. But the bishops are frail human beings. They need, Lord how they need, the backing and support of the faithful under their care.”

Fr. Hardon also notes that, “When the present Holy Father made his first pilgrimage as Pope to the United States, he pleaded in Chicago with the American bishops to do something about the scandal of so many Catholics on Sundays going to Communion and so few going to confession.” The Pope has to plead? That’s absurd. No boss of mine ever resorted to pleading.

When the bishops come forward and proclaim the Truth to their flocks about the mortal sins of contraception and sacrilegious reception of the Eucharist, they will be so buttressed by Jesus and His Holy Spirit that the tide will

turn against Satan. **We must pray for courage in our priests and bishops.**

Concerned laity need to convey to our bishops and priests that talking to their flocks about the power of sin — and the need to repent — is nothing short of love. Anything less from the pulpit is pablum and drivel. We need to teach a “no-nonsense” line about the objectivity and slavery of sin before we can sell people on the need to convert.

People need to hear about what they are capable of doing once they permit the Holy Spirit to animate them. On our own, we have little chance against Satan. But with the full power of the Holy Spirit in us, not only does He help us resist temptations as part of our defense, He puts us on the offense, enabling us to find God’s love because He is God’s love. **We begin to return love to God — and willingly join His army of evangelizers, the ones who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, will “go forth and make disciples” of the 75 percent of American Catholics who don’t attend Mass regularly — and have never heard the Good News proclaimed with joy.**

The battle to evangelize fallen-away or lax Catholics is more important than any fund drive to pave the Church parking lot. I call on bishops, priests, and evangelized laymen to step out of their comfort zones and realize that a well-organized team effort is needed. **Laity, remind your priests and bishops that you will support them when they courageously “go public” with the full Truth.**

A priest and a veteran lector separately told me a sad statistic: Eighty percent of those in the pews aren't listening. If that number is factored into the estimated 75 percent of professed Catholics who fail to attend Mass regularly, it means that we are reaching only about five percent with our "message." **If 95 percent are not being moved or reached by the Church's current methods, how much longer are we going to cling to them?**

The Holy Father has called for a "New Springtime" of evangelization. Two groups that will have difficulty seeing and smelling the glories of that Spring are clerical ostriches with heads buried and lay lemmings intent on marching to the sea to perish. If priests fear to teach the Truth, and laymen fear to practice the Truth, then both fear the Truth, who is Jesus. But sheep are supposed to fear the wolf, not the Good Shepherd.

Let's face it. What most of us — bishops, priests, laity — have been doing isn't pleasing Jesus. The Holy Father is right. We need to change! We must cast off those old shoes and adorn ourselves with the Good News!