

Fr. Perozich comments —

Why do I have to get this message of returning to Jesus from a non Catholic Christian rather from leaders in my own Catholic Church? In previous times a Catholic never would have looked outside the church for faith formation from non Catholic Christians. I learned yesterday that at my small church on Dauphin Island, the children do not attend religious formation on Sunday at the Catholic church, rather they flock with their friends to the Baptist church for faith formation on Wednesdays. While they may be learning about Jesus there, why are they not in their own church? How have we failed and fallen.

Reflecting on Dr. Frank Wright's exhortation to stand firm for Jesus in the light of the readings for the Third Sunday Cycle B Ordinary Time (the Ordained time of the Lord), several observations come to mind regarding Christians living a Christian faith in the United States in 2021, particularly Catholics.

By God's grace I was formed in America and in the Catholic Church in the 1950's and 1960's. While Catholic schools had waiting lists, I was fortunate to attend a double grade Catholic school. Another parish had their school 2 blocks away, and a third on another side of town had a full school all with 90% religious sisters teaching us and disciplining us even though we all have exaggerated stories of their severe methods which we love to tell.

We learned a systematic faith through the now often derided Baltimore Catechism, augmented by weekly Mass, weekly teaching of hymns, monthly confessions. I knew what I believed, and believed what I knew.

My family watched Bishop Fulton J. Sheen who was on TV from 1952-1965. We prayed the rosary along with the broadcast of the radio at home. We attended Mass every Sunday, holy day, and followed the commandments and precepts of the church including ember days, devotions such as the Stations of the Cross, days of fast and abstinence, 40 hours devotion when offered. I served as an altar boy, learned my Latin responses, and lived a Catholic culture in a Christian nation of majority non Catholic Christian ecclesial community adherents.

We spoke about Jesus often and freely, yet still enjoyed sports, family gatherings, wholesome television (Donna Reed Show, Leave It To Beaver, I Married Joan, Father Knows Best, later on Star Trek and other shows.

There was not public talk of abortion, pornography, adultery, divorce, homosexuality, transgenderism, government control of speech and of movement such as we have now with Wuhan virus controls, welfare for all, open border immigration with benefits for everyone, gun control; climate change consisted of filtering the emissions from the steel mills rather than imposing a trillion dollar green new deal.

When a foreigner was admitted to the US, his family or church took care of his housing, providing a job, health care, English learning; now the government has supplanted people and the church with their control and money.

- ***“The history of America is like the history of the Christian church—a miraculous birth, followed by spiritual strength and prosperity, but periodically troubled by weakness of faith, timidity, and forgetfulness. But each falling away is succeeded by a Spirit-led revival and renewal, when the people of God remember the heights from which they have fallen and return to the standard of their Great King and Savior.”***

The church spoke of Jesus, salvation, sin, redemption, death, judgment, heaven, hell. She delved into some social issues such as ending segregation, and excommunicated Catholics who resisted this truth such as did Archbishop Joseph Rummel of New Orleans. He later received back into the church these folks upon their repentance, since this is a medicinal measure, not a permanent punishment.

Where are the bishops regarding Catholic Joseph Biden and his abortion advocacy? Perhaps in his train hoping for crumbs for immigration, income redistribution, climate change, money for their conference and social programs? They are silencing and removing from ministry priests who preach the classic teachings of Jesus and salvation rather than a novel gospel of social justice.

We are in the period now ***“troubled by weakness of faith, timidity, and forgetfulness.”***

Catholics do not know the basic doctrines because they are not systematically taught anymore. They believe what they know, but like Ronald Reagan said quoting Mark Twain, ***“The trouble with the world is not that people know too little; it's that they know so many things that just aren't so.”*** A faithful Catholic woman last year asked me, “What did you preach about on Corpus Christi?” I replied, “The Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist”. She responded, “We got a homily on climate change.”

The devotions that united us are not publicly done or done in families. The novelties from the church are climate change, sexual rights, open borders, income redistribution, Eucharist not as important as health during this virus, isolate at home but donate to our pet church social justice projects, resist the political leaders with whom church leaders disagree, but work with and support the ones who continue to lock us down, government money for the church leaders to spend on their episcopal conferences, guaranteed income for all, increase taxes, expand the killing of children in the womb and infants born alive by a Catholic president with no excommunication. Oh, archbishop Rummel, where are you when we need you.

- ***But each falling away is succeeded by a Spirit-led revival and renewal, when the people of God remember the heights from which they have fallen and return to the standard of their Great King and Savior.”***

Indeed we have fallen from the heights and are being held down by ideas from church leaders subjecting themselves to worldly ideals, and like frogs put into cold water that now is boiling them alive, we need to ***“return to the standard of their Great King and Savior.”***

Lest this lament of Dr. Wright end in an empty exhortation, here are some practical steps for us Catholics. The list is not complete, but you can complement it with your own faith and devotions.

- ***A rule of life that respects time work, pleasure yet allows for prayer and worship privately, as a family, as a church***
- ***Sunday Mass in person, holy lives, and Holy Communion***
- ***Knowing and living the 10 commandments and church precepts***
- ***Monthly confession***
- ***Daily Rosary***
- ***Faith formation in systematic teaching by a sound catechism such as the Baltimore Catechism which most people under 60 do not know***
- ***Devotions that we are no longer obliged to do such as fast and abstinence on Fridays and ember days***
- ***Visits to the church for adoration***
- ***Daily scripture reading such as the readings for the Mass of the day and more.***
- ***Daily prayer of ACTS: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication (intercession).***
- ***Avoiding the pied pipers of climate change, homosexuality, “reproductive rights”, etc, and rejecting politicians who promote them, nor following down the path of church leaders who preach these over the salvation from sin by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross***

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Stand Firm

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In Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians, he writes to believers living in the Roman capital of the province of Asia. As such it

was an important center of commerce, education, and politics. And Ephesus was marked by its profoundly pagan culture, as the magnificent temple of Artemis (Diana), considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, adorned the great city.

In his concluding exhortation, Paul urges the Ephesians (and us) to put on the full armor of God:

*"Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, **to stand firm**" (Ephesians 6:10-13; emphasis added).*

We who are followers of Jesus Christ, trusting Him as Savior and Lord, also find ourselves living in an increasingly pagan culture. The Judeo-Christian consensus—prevailing since the founding of America—has seemingly evaporated in our day.

In past generations, practitioners of witchcraft, satanism, and black magic were seen as shadowy figures ensconced in disreputable cults. Today they have websites and marketing strategies. Human life, as in pagan times, is now disposable based upon convenience. Biblical Christians are deemed haters by the enlightened souls at the Southern Poverty Law Center. Amazon makes millions selling Bibles on the one hand, while seeking to abridge religious liberty on the other. Governments abridge religious freedom by fiat, using the

coronavirus pandemic as cover. And internet gatekeepers have anointed themselves the arbiters of freedom—the new book-burners of our time.

Blessed Beneficiaries

Yet, Americans alive today are the blessed beneficiaries of a distinctly Christian national heritage—whether they realize it or not. For each of our beloved freedoms (that we often take for granted) we stand on the shoulders of giants, of patriots—many of whom gave the last full measure of their devotion in defense of those freedoms.

In fighting to preserve America’s heritage of spiritual freedom and prosperity, we seek the welfare of others above our own. Like our forebears, we seek the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom—because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope of mankind. We seek American renewal, because in her welfare lies the welfare of uncounted millions.

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And in spite of the seeming chaos of our day, America remains that solitary City on a Hill, shining the light of freedom before a world that yet sees us as the last best hope of mankind. Like our forebears, we must be a people of hope,

active in defense of freedom—even as we also look forward to a City with Foundations whose architect and builder is God.

Stand for Truth and Freedom

Yes, we do seem to be entering a new rising of “this present darkness.” And as Yogi Berra is purported to have said: “It’s déjà vu all over again.” But having put on the full armor of God, we must stand firm against this present darkness in the power of the Holy Spirit—for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Writing from his jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us:

"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."

Now is the time for the men and women who name Christ as Savior and King to stand for truth and defend freedom, because America is a nation worth fighting for.

Frank Wright, Ph.D., is President and CEO of D. James Kennedy Ministries, DJKM.org.