

Fr. Perozich comments —

I don't need to comment. Mr. Coe says it all so clearly for me, that I am sure you too will see it just as clearly. You don't have to be clergyman to get it all.

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How to React When Priests and Prelates Act Badly

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Several years ago, when I was received into the Catholic Church, I thought I had come into the experience with my eyes fully open. The scandals of 2002 had already happened, and their details and significance were being

truthfully unpacked by many Catholic commentators for all the world to see.

Because I had spent several years in leadership roles in evangelical-charismatic circles, I had seen **certain ministers of the gospel foster an idolatrous relationship with what Aquinas described as the four common substitutes for God: wealth, pleasure, power, and honor.** One pastor I rubbed shoulders with embezzled money from the local church he pastored. Another fell into a long-term adulterous affair. Still another returned to the drug and alcohol addictions that dominated his pre-Christian life. The vast majority, however, remained on the straight and narrow path, and, I trust, will receive their reward in the life to come.

Yet in the McCarrick scandal, with its subsequent fallout and whitewash, even someone like me, who is privy to the frailty and fallen condition of clergymen, was taken aback. Since the “summer of shame,” I had to admit to myself that I “came into this thing” with my eyes only half-open. Recently, I joked to myself that **it would be a kind of public service to provide earnest people, especially converts and reverts, with a beginner’s guide to bad priests and prelates**—not so much a guide about bad behavior, because those 40 acres have already been well plowed, but **a guide about some of the underpinnings that lead to bad doctrine and practice.** I use the word “some” because this is by no means an exhaustive treatment but only an introduction.

It took me too long to learn that *professed orthodoxy can be hollow.* My second archbishop, [John Nienstedt](#), projected a robust orthodoxy to his diocese and the local media. But very compelling evidence later revealed that

he covered up sexual abuse. And we all know that Marcial Maciel's "orthodoxy" was just a façade for monstrous iniquity.

Other bishops give mental assent to the Faith once delivered but don't have the courage to consistently live it out in word and deed. Prelates with *both* orthodoxy and courage are rare. Take the curious case of [Fr. James Martin](#). We all know that Martin has made outrageous statements about LGBTQ issues. When taken as a whole, any *sentient being* could inductively conclude that Martin supports homosexual behavior and believes those practicing the sin that cries out to heaven should be fully included in the life of the local church. And yet, few bishops speak out against Martin being able to peddle his lavender gospel almost anywhere he wants.

Such silence exposes certain types of bad bishops: the orthodox who lack courage; the heterodox who, whether they are practicing homosexuals or not, support his message; the apathetic, who promote business as usual; and the ambitious, who sense a "lavender mafia" in the higher echelons of the Church and therefore maintain their silence in order to advance their careers.

The story of Moses, Aaron, and the golden calf (Exodus 32) provides an excellent window of insight into the lives of good and bad priests and prelates. It's interesting to note that the Psalmist says that "Moses and Aaron were among his priests" (99:6). While Moses was up on the mountain for forty days and forty nights, Aaron was given authority over the people and gave into their desire to have visible gods to lead them. A golden calf was formed and became Israel's first act of national apostasy.

The first thing to note about the story is that Moses was in the presence of God in prayer, and Aaron was not. The spiritual obituaries of many priests and prelates often begin

with the words, “Father stopped praying.” Fulton J. Sheen disclosed that the secret to his fruitful ministry was spending one hour a day in Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

When we are bathing our lives in the Divine, we are more apt to have our thoughts, words, and deeds conform to the will of God. It is also a place where sin is revealed and sanctification begins. After seeing the great catch of fish and spending time in Christ’s presence, Peter said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

A recurring theme in Cardinal Sarah’s, *The Day Is Now Far Spent*, is the rebuke of priests and prelates for their lack of prayer: “Without union with God, every attempt to strengthen the Church and the faith will be in vain. Without prayer, we will be clanging cymbals. We will sink to the level of media hypesters who make a lot of noise and produce nothing but wind.”

While Moses was in communion with Yahweh, he received a portion of the law prefiguring today’s priests’ and prelates’ submission to a divine metanarrative (Scripture and Tradition). Meanwhile, Aaron listened to the people and his own heart and mind. There was a consensus among the people (“Make us a god to lead us”) much like today there is a *Zeitgeist* that can lead a priest or prelate astray.

Many, after all, don’t want to be identified with a benighted Church that is out of step with the times. For them, it is more important to have a *relevant* Church rather than a *repentant* one. **Sometimes the laity doesn’t understand that these men have unhealthy emotional needs to be loved and accepted by “the cool kids on the coasts” who frequent the cocktail parties in Manhattan, Georgetown, and San Francisco. These**

***Zeitgeist* puppets “love the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:43).**

The consensus of the people is what Aaron used in making up his mind what course of action to take. Now we come to the origin of much ecclesial malfeasance: *vital immanence*. Pius X defined this as “a philosophico-religious system which, in its most rigid form, *reduces all reality to the subject*, which is said to be the source, the beginning, and the end of all its creative activity” (emphasis mine).

With Moses on the mountain, there was a transcendent God (the God “out there”) giving him the law; with Aaron, there was the voice of the people and his own subjective voice influencing his words and deeds. “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death” (Proverbs 14:12). We see the signature of vital immanence in the lavender gospel of James Martin, in *Amoris Laetitia*, in the Pachamama debacle, and in the heterodoxy of many German bishops.

The fruit of vital immanence is idolatry. Eve took God off the throne of her heart and mind and put herself there. She also became over-attached to created things and replaced the Beauty of the Uncreated God with the beauty of the forbidden fruit. **Aaron and the nation of Israel replaced God with the golden calf.**

We see this idolatry today in the Church in the four areas that Aquinas defined as substitutes for God. We see it in the over \$2 million dollars that was designated for Archbishop Emeritus Wuerl for “continuing ministry activities for [the] Archbishop Emeritus”; in the lavender gospel’s agenda to legitimize sodomy; in the ecclesial power plays where orthodox bishops are demoted (e.g., Burke) and the heterodox are promoted (e.g., Cupich, Tobin); and, in the

cover-up of homosexual predation in order to keep our good name.

Many priests and prelates are morally obtuse because of vital immanence. Because there is no fear of God, there is no wisdom. Those who have, *in their pride*, abandoned the teaching of the Magisterium have abandoned the wisdom that the Magisterium provides, and they are left with a bankrupt moral theology. In contrast, “He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way” (Psalms 25:9).

This is why the Vatican has become a kind of sanctuary city for credibly accused homosexual predators while Pope Francis laments the presence of plastic in our oceans and excoriates those in the U.S. who want to build a wall to secure our borders. This is why Blaise Cupich equates abortion with joblessness and supports giving Communion to the divorced, remarried, and those in same-sex unions because the “conscience” of the recipients of the Eucharist trumps Church teaching.

We should continue to pray for our priests and prelates. If you go online and find your diocese, you’ll find an alphabetical list of their names. Unless you have a huge diocese, it really doesn’t take that long to pray for them *all* every day. This could be the first step in fulfilling Bishop Sheen’s prophecy that *the laity will save the Church and to fulfill the mission he described: “to see that the priests act like priests, your bishops act like bishops, and the religious act like religious.”*



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