

Fr. Perozich comments —

Part of the human weakness is **groupthink**. As a priest I am as susceptible to it as is any other human being.

- **Groupthink**, the psychological drive for consensus within a group. “Groupthink” impedes or prevents the kind of independent thinking and analysis that prompts members of the group to ask, “We are not going to do something really stupid here, are we?” Groups of priests are subject to the same psychological stresses as are others in, say, business or government. The “groupthink phenomenon” may well inhibit their asking, “We aren’t going to do—or tolerate—something really evil here, are we?”

In part groupthink has its root in fear of being “canceled” by peers, by those above, and those to whom we minister. This, however, does not make it right.

- **By their cowardly silence, they aided and abetted perversion.**

Even in the seminary at least one professor, in order to impose his viewpoints, used the manipulative tool that, “You wouldn’t go against the majority, would you?”

- Reply of St. Thomas More to Bolt, “**And when you go to Heaven for following your conscience and I am consigned to Hell for not following mine, will you come with me for fellowship?**”

- **It is small wonder that we, too, often have episcopal and presbyteral “leadership” that accommodates the culture, that does not speak out about the evil of our day, that will not denounce heresy masquerading as “development of doctrine.”**

- **The sin around us is rampant. Has it made our love of God and of God’s commandments grow cold? Are we so eager for popularity (cf. John 12:43, Galatians 1:10, and 1 Thessalonians 2:4) that we will not admonish the sinner? Are we so afraid of being called “traditional,” or “old-fashioned,” or “biased” that we abandon what is good and true and beautiful—that we**

become traitors to the Gospel—to preserve the good opinion of our “friends”?

*Beware of diocesan synods. I wrote this several weeks ago. **GROUPTHINK will be on display openly and manipulatively.***

“In the diocese of San Diego’s previous synod while I still was an active pastor, the two representatives that I sent as well as one other from another parish, complained to me after the synod was over, that their comments were rejected by the synod leaders because “it was too late to include their reflections”.

Why was it too late? Could it be that the synod results were written before the synod closed or even opened?

Synods might have some value, but not for directing the action of the church..

I fear they are processes used to manipulate and to change the church’s teachings to be in conformity with worldly ideas rather than with the message of God and His holy gospel.

ALWAYS beware of slogans and euphemisms. “The voice of the people is the voice of God.” Really?

The voice of God should be voiced by His people.

The authors are clear in these 3 articles, so that the average pew Catholic need not have formal theological education to understand the cautions presented here.

<http://richardperozich.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/synods.pdf>

*The USCCB instructed synod participants to reflect on these things rather than on Jesus in Scripture and Tradition: "Here are seven attitudes we can all adopt as we continue our synodal journey together. Which one inspires you the most? Let us know in the comments below," the USCCB tweeted. **The attitudes listed are: innovative outlook, inclusivity, open-mindedness, listening, accompaniment, and co-responsibility, dialogue***

Participants really need to confront these as the issues of faith:

- *God is not central in His creation and guiding of the world*
- *The Church does not always propose God to the world*
- *The Church’s agenda is determined by the modern culture*
- *The Church’s leaders do not hold to the tradition passed to her.*
- *Holy Church is not offering salvation and transformation*
- *United to the world, the churches are now empty of people.*
- *Personal rights and entitlements rather than duties now rule.*

- *The individualism of the world infected the church's thinking.*
- *"the obligatory themes of the Church's agenda were those imposed by the new culture and the new anthropology: contraception, divorce, abortion, euthanasia, the homosexual condition, women and the feminist question, the nature of the priesthood and ecclesiastical celibacy."*

Deacon Toner is an excellent analyst of faith and culture. Each of us is susceptible to group think in order to avoid derision and cancellation. Don't fall for groupthink when you go to the synod. Reject the "obligatory themes outlined and imposed by the new culture. Get back to evangelization and faith, not just how someone might or might not receive it as the manipulative tool to change your direction and your faith.

Rampant Sin and Cold Love

DEACON JAMES H. TONER



A few years ago, I wrote a [column](#) about “Father Smith,” whose degenerate conduct still remains a source of deep sorrow to me.

As I wrote there, I cannot understand how a holy priest and good man descended into the depths of depravity and became part of the evil which came shriekingly to light in and about 2002, and even after.

There is, tragically, much more to that particular and general ignominy. The Father Smiths who preyed on adolescents, and others, had “friends.” And their friends had friends. And some of those friends knew what “Father Smith” was doing. In turn, *they did and said nothing* to halt the monstrous evil being perpetrated by “friends,” predators in priestly collars.

Fifty years ago, Irving Janis wrote about ***Groupthink***, the psychological drive for consensus within a group. “Groupthink” impedes or prevents the kind of independent thinking and analysis that prompts members of the group to ask, “We are not going to do something really stupid here, are we?” Groups of priests are subject to the same psychological stresses as are others in, say, business or government. The “groupthink phenomenon” may well inhibit their asking, “We aren’t going to do—or tolerate—something really evil here, are we?”

In colleges with honor codes that have non-toleration causes (meaning that students or cadets must report instances of lying, cheating, or stealing), there is often resistance to what is seen, mistakenly, as “snitching,” or informing on someone, even a friend. But there is a verity above friendship—*justice*, which may oblige one to put cold (but bona fide)

principle ahead of warm (but, in this instance, guilty) people. When “good” priests failed to report the predations of malevolent priests, they “groupthinkingly” sinned grievously.

By their cowardly silence, they aided and abetted perversion. By their willingness to tolerate sexual predators—to look the other way, to hear and to see no evil (cf. Psalm 1:1)—they gave aid and comfort to the enemy.

In this case, the enemy to whom they gave succor was not an armed menace to the Republic (see the Constitution, Article III, Section 3, which defines “treason”), but the greatest Enemy of us all (see 1 Peter 5:8). The priests innocent of sexually violating the young, but who knew of the depravities, nevertheless were guilty of manifest grave evil themselves in tolerating such evil. They were, in fact, traitors, for they betrayed the Gospel; they disavowed our Lord as surely as did Judas.

But in current favor is the noun *accompaniment*, which may imply or endorse a go-along-to-get-along attitude. In Robert Bolt’s play *A Man for All Seasons*, Sir Thomas More, who refused to sign a statement saying that King Henry was head of the Church in England, was asked by a friend to sign it “for fellowship.” Bolt has More reply: “And when you go to Heaven for following your conscience and I am consigned to Hell for not following mine, will you come with me *for fellowship?*” Whom do we “accompany,” and how far do we go? Can it be that St. Paul was right in agreeing with the admonition: “Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33)?

The Church has traditionally taught nine ways of cooperation with evil: commanding it; consenting to it; counseling it; concealing it; praising it; provoking it; partaking in it; *remaining silent about it*; and, by sophistry,

defending it. Not only, though, do we read or hear little today about these nine ways of cooperating with evil, we study the contemporary *Catechism* in vain (see #2447) to find the work of mercy that the *Baltimore Catechism* (item #192) used to list as the *first* spiritual work of mercy: to admonish the sinner.

The [USCCB](#) website does manage to tell us that “we must strive to create a culture that does not accept sin,” while warning us to remember that “we all fall at times”; that we must be humble and not arrogant; be non-judgmental, certain to remove the beam from our own eye before we care about the splinter in our brother’s eye; and, naturally, the bromide that “We should journey together to a deeper understanding of our shared faith.”

This is morally flaccid, spineless, and jejune. It is small wonder that we, too, often have episcopal and presbyteral “leadership” that accommodates the culture, that does not speak out about the evil of our day, that will not denounce heresy masquerading as “development of doctrine.” Forgotten is Ezekiel’s warning that if we do not denounce the evil in others then we will accompany them to perdition (see 33:8; cf. Lamentations 2:14).

- No more of the evidently outdated notion that we must “convince, rebuke, and exhort,” whether the time is convenient or not (cf. 2 Timothy 4:2).
- No more of the adjuration in Leviticus—“Rebuke your neighbor[s] frankly so you will not share in their guilt” (19:17).
- No more of the “old-fashioned” teaching of St. Paul that, with love and “replenished with all knowledge, . . .you are

able to admonish one another” (Romans 15:14, Douay-Rheims).

- No more of Luke that, “if your brother sins, rebuke him” (17:3)
- No more of the Proverb that “wounds from a friend may be accepted as well meant” (27:6; cf. Psalm 141:5).

So, we have a Maciel, whose followers utterly misunderstood what loyalty truly demands; a Martin, whose writing and speaking about homosexuality directly contradict the Magisterium, but whose followers (and those who invite him to speak) think is morally stylish and oh-so *au courant*; and a “Father Smith,” whose “friends” had neither the backbone nor the will to report to the police for prosecution.

We will thus continue to have “[gay Masses](#)” in churches festooned with rainbow flags, and “gay-friendly” Catholic campuses, and parades honoring saints laced with gay marchers and featuring a beaming cardinal of the Catholic Church.

This is theological scandal, which “damages virtue and integrity” and “may even draw [people] into spiritual death” (CCC #2284). Thus, we have the warning found in Hebrews: “Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many” (12:15; cf. 3:12). This admonition is based upon the “root of bitterness” described in Deuteronomy (29:18-19), in which the dangers of moral infection are described.

The “Father Smith” of my youth was part of what was subsequently called a “*priests’ ring*,” which preyed upon boys. Were there then no brother priests to denounce him? Or were those who knew (but were not part of the actual ring) so

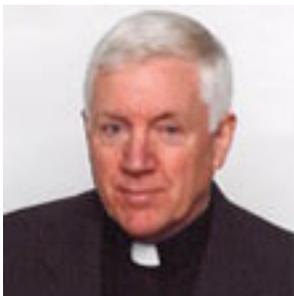
concerned about being “humble and non-judgmental” that they supinely—and smilingly—ignored the [monsters](#) in their midst?

Or were those many instances of cooperation with evil—the silence and the concealment—just plain cowardice? And did anyone tell those who participated in the evil by looking the other way and saying nothing that, as cowards, they, too, would buy their tickets to Hell (see Revelation 21:8)?

There is, then, a pressing question today for *us*. The sin around us is rampant. Has it made our love of God and of God’s commandments grow cold? Are we so eager for popularity (cf. John 12:43, Galatians 1:10, and 1 Thessalonians 2:4) that we will not admonish the sinner? Are we so afraid of being called “traditional,” or “old-fashioned,” or “biased” that we abandon what is good and true and beautiful—that we become traitors to the Gospel—to preserve the good opinion of our [“friends”](#)?

Is this what we teach, what we preach, what we exalt? Do we betray our Lord to keep fraudulent “friends,” to sit on a dais, to march in a parade, to host a sacrilegious event in our parish, sycophantically to sponsor speakers who deny or denounce or disparage the Faith? I’d rather just have the thirty pieces of silver.

[Image credit: Shutterstock]



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