

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*When a bishop told me that what I wrote was not Catholic, I was stunned into silence at that moment.*

*He teaches about solar panels, lgbtq acceptance, climate, virus, vax, inclusion, and on, instead of what I had learned in my Catholic schooling and seminary; and I am older than he by a few years.*

*Jared Staudt laments the infidelity among church leaders and Catholic university professors without going into specifics, noting how it damages the church's mission of salvation as well as the salvation of souls.*

*He offers a possible gain for those who occupy the church with their infidelities, noting that they could not compete in the secular world, so they infest the church where they can find approval for their infidelities.*

*“Stay faithful my friend”, to paraphrase the Dos Equis (XX) ad.*

# **The Worst of Both Worlds: Newman on Infidelity Outside of and Within the Church**

Jared Staudt on August 16, 2023

I taught a course this summer on St. John Henry Newman's Idea of a University for the [Albertus Magnus Institute](#). In his description of the essence of a university and the way in which it must teach within modern culture, it may seem odd that Newman included a chapter on infidelity: “[A Form of Infidelity of the Day](#).” When you think about it, however, the inclusion makes perfect sense. **How can we form Catholic students without addressing the infidelity of our culture and preparing them to think and live within it.**

**Newman saw infidelity as a greater threat within a Catholic university during a more faithful period of history, such as the Middle Ages, when skeptics would continue to conform outwardly to avoid condemnation.** He expresses relief that infidelity need not hide in his own day, writing in the mid-19th century, because it simply could come out into the open in its own spheres. He saw no reason for infidelity to be present within a Catholic institution for it had nothing to gain there. For him, this was a positive development, to have the opposition clearly in sight and on the outside, stating his preference “to live in an age when the fight is in the day, not in the twilight; and think it a gain to be speared by a foe, rather than to be stabbed by a friend.”

**He feared that students even within a Catholic university, however, might be convinced to view faith as mere opinion and sentiment when faced with the false claims of unbelievers that faith opposes science. This is why he argues for teaching the full circle of knowledge, including theology, within the university, so that the disciplines could complete and even correct one another.**

Today, however, we have the worst of both worlds. **Like Newman’s day, there is a clear and hostile force of unbelievers assailing the Church, seeking to push faith and its implications to the margins of society. Like the Middle Ages, however, we also have a large force of unbelievers within the Church and schools, claiming to be Catholic while accepting many of the hostile views of the culture. In fact, the overwhelming majority of Catholic universities in the United States do not publicly follow the Church’s moral and doctrinal teaching.** They must find some gain, which Newman could not foresee, in holding hostile positions within the Church, rather than simply moving without its bounds. **They must find some profit from**

**leveraging Catholic institutions and their positions within them for prestige and profit, which they could not do by simply competing within the secular realm. Perhaps they find easy pickings within the Catholic world.**

Newman spoke of the great danger of infidelity within the Church. **“It is a miserable time when a man’s Catholic profession is no voucher for his orthodoxy, and when a teacher of religion may be within the Church’s pale yet external to her faith. . . . A great scandal it is and a perplexity to the little ones to choose between rival claimants upon their allegiance.”** This is our position, when even prominent roles within the hierarchy or at the head of Catholic universities offers no assurance of one’s orthodoxy. **In fact, some may find themselves there precisely by leveraging their infidelity to jockey favor and to prove relevance within our secular culture.**

Why be unfaithful within the Church? **For the Church to renew society, we must come to at least some expectation of faithfulness in belief and practice for our leaders. We do not need a new inquisition but at least we must expect our leaders to faithfully profess the faith given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ and to govern our own institutions accordingly. We must remember that our institutions exist for the salvation of souls, not for worldly gain. For, “what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, but to lose in his own soul” in the process.**