

Fr. Perozich comments —

I've been a Catholic since 1951. I've been a priest since 1992.

My experience shows a shift from a solid foundation in the deposit of faith from Scripture and Tradition, to a muddy proclamation of personal opinion as a slippery substitute for true faith.

The ten commandments have become the ten suggestions for some.

Personal rewriting of liturgy, morality, substituting dialogue for evangelization, synodal talk and decision making supplanting truth and outreach to bring Jesus to others is the condition of the church that I see today.

Years ago when I tried to guide my parish to vote Catholic, my bishop told me my teaching was not Catholic, that it was anti gay and anti Muslim. It was not; rather it pointed out the cautions of living under the influence of both of these new gospels.

Banal officiousness has replaced evangelization, the sacred, the truth of dogma.

In a meeting with the local bishop of the diocese where I now reside, I told him that I don't preach virus/vax. lgbtqxyz, DEI, ESG, climate, race, immigration, open borders and the other gospels that have infected our church including some leaders.

I stated that I preach Jesus Christ crucified, the only name in heaven and earth by which man is saved, Jesus in whom we live, move, and have our being.

Whenever I offer Holy Mass, be it in English, Spanish or Latin, I try to do so with the reverence and beauty to connect myself and those for whom I offer it with God.

Homilies are prayerfully prepared, even for daily Mass, and never from a stale saved one from former years, rather with a plea to God that He speak through me so that each listener receive what God needs for that person to hear for each person's salvation.

While the "world is losing its way, the Church is losing herself in the world."

*"There is, of course, only one real mission statement, the "Great Commission" of Christ in St. Mark's Gospel. When you view the alternatives offered to twenty-first-century man – the green religion, sexual revolution, nihilism, or a return to Communism, indeed any false hope in a political solution to man's needs – **"What else is there?"** stands up well as expressing the truth of the Catholic faith." — Fr. Keily*

The Drama and the Dogma

Fr. Benedict Kiely

Friday, November 22, 2024

I recently saw a request on social media for people to say why they were Christians in five words or less. I was tempted to paraphrase Chesterton's reason for his Catholicism and use three words: "It is true." Then I remembered novelist and Catholic convert Walker Percy, when asked why he had converted to Catholicism, responded: **"What else is there?"**

Is there any greater mission statement, which every parish seems to require, or a better blueprint for evangelization? **There is, of course, only one real mission statement, the "Great Commission" of Christ in St. Mark's Gospel. When you view the alternatives offered to twenty-first-century man – the green religion, sexual revolution, nihilism, or a return to Communism, indeed any false hope in a political solution to man's needs – "What else is there?" stands up well as expressing the truth of the Catholic faith.**

The **"what else is there"** of Catholicism implies a passionate belief, not only in the dogma but, as Dorothy L. Sayers would have it, in the "drama." At the heart of the drama is the liturgy, the Divine Mysteries. Without the dogma, there is no drama. So robust orthodoxy, as Chesterton described it, is the fuel that lights the fire.

Without getting into polemics, after sixty years since the opening of the Council, **we should honestly examine the**

effect secularization has had on both the drama and the dogma.

Benedict XVI, in one of his writings, referred to the words of the writer Eugène Ionesco, one of the founders of the Theatre of the Absurd. Writing in 1975, Ionesco described the secularization he experienced in the Church as “truly pitiful.” He added that **while the “world is losing its way, the Church is losing herself in the world.”** Words from nearly fifty years ago that sound remarkably contemporary.

Benedict XVI proposed a solution, answering Ionesco: **the contemporary Church needs the “courage to embrace what is sacred,” and not, what he called, “banal officiousness.”**

The response from much of the Church to the Coronavirus pandemic revealed much “banal officiousness.” **It exposed what had been lurking below the surface for some time, in the sacred and secular worlds.**

In the secular world, the ever-encroaching State expanded its control with draconian laws over every aspect of life in what many had naively believed were liberal democracies. **Sadly, in the Church, there is also much that seems mundane and superficial. Ionesco described the world then, as now, as “in flux,” “nothing is left to us; nothing is solid,” but what we need is a rock.”**

When the world is in flux, when nothing is solid, **the Church must be the rock, presenting the dogma and drama of Catholicism to those seeking the truth.**

On another occasion, Walker Percy remarked that the Western world was “so corrupt and boring” that, eventually, young people “will get sick of it and look for something else.” **The true peripheries in modern secular society are to be found among those seeking the good, the true, and the beautiful.** It is unhelpful to offer gruel when strong meat is called for, as it is to deny there is a problem.

In Edward Pentin's book, *The Next Pope* ^[2], Cardinal Willem Eijk is quoted (are we allowed to say "I like Eijk"). The Cardinal compares the work of the bishop today as rather like a meteorologist: "a bishop has many duties, but pretending good weather is coming is not part of it." He continues, "a real storm front is coming."

Yet he goes on to say that we should not encourage a passive retreat into obscurity, or an admission that the mission is defeated. Rather, the very opposite must happen; **the Church must once again be proposed in all its truth and beauty.**

A storm front may indeed be coming, certainly for much of western Europe, and increasingly in the United States. But the Cardinal's word of prophecy, if faced realistically and with discernment and apostolic zeal, **provides the Church with a perfect moment to convince the world there really is an answer to the question, "What else is there?"**

It will take courageous, orthodox leadership, vision, and authentic creativity, not something, unfortunately, on widespread display just now at the mass gatherings of the successors of the apostles.

It's not just the clergy obviously. We already see much creativity, orthodoxy, and vision from the faithful laity: in the media, academia, and many other areas.

Is there a better moment, when the world is in flux – with war clouds all around, governments introducing euthanasia laws, and basic questions about mortality and the place of humanity on this earth, greatly exacerbated by the pandemic – **for the Church to proclaim the Gospel of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and the true hope the Gospel brings?**

This is the time to offer the succor and beauty, the experience of transcendence, of true worship, for parishes to be schools of prayer, as Pope Benedict encouraged. Rather than literally or metaphorically locking the doors, **it's the time for**

throwing them open to reveal the sacred, with both the dogma and the drama as the foundation stones for a renewed society.

The courage to embrace the sacred, involves presenting to those who are “sick” of what the world has to offer, not, as Benedict XVI wrote, “confirmation” of the world, but the “radicalism of the Gospel.”

The world, or at least the West, may be “already a wreck,” as Whittaker Chambers once remarked to William F. Buckley Jr. But at least we believers can be people, said Chambers, who “at the great nightfall, took loving thought to preserve the tokens of hope and truth.”

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Article printed from The Catholic Thing: <https://www.thecatholicthing.org>

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[1]

Plaque with Christ Presenting the Keys to Saint Peter and the Law to Saint Paul: <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/wp-content/uploads/1979.399.jpeg>

[2] The Next Pope: <https://amzn.to/3CBwb4J>