

Forty Blessed Years a Priest

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I was ordained a priest on December 1, 1984, by the late Archbishop John J. O'Connor at New York's St. Patrick's Cathedral. Forty years later, I am moved to thank God for all that He has done for me in my life. I entered the seminary with a desire to serve as a Catholic priest, and that was granted to me. I had excellent teachers at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, NY. In Rome, Pope John Paul II was leading the Church in the path of true renewal in fidelity to Catholic doctrine amidst the various crises that had arisen in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. That effort would continue under one of the greatest theologians ever to become pope, Benedict XVI.

No newly ordained priest knows what the future holds for him beyond his first assignment. I was sent to serve at St. Athanasius Church in the Bronx under a holy pastor, Monsignor Raul del Valle, a Cuban priest exiled by Fidel Castro. It was a short but instructive assignment. I then served in three other city parishes before being *sent to Rome to study canon law*. *My gratitude to Cardinal O'Connor for this assignment is heartfelt: knowing canon law has proven immensely useful in my analyzing and commenting upon what is happening in the Church – on television, radio, and at The Catholic Thing.*

The life of the Church these past forty years has been marked by devastating revelations of passivity and cover-ups by bishops regarding horrific crimes of sexual abuse of minors (and adults) by priests, bishops, and cardinals. A cowardly refusal to confront evil was standard operating procedure until the veil was ripped off and the harm caused to

innocent victims by unchaste clergy – and their protectors – became known.

Catholic moral teaching has been subject to a relentless assault by prominent theologians. The repudiation of reverence in the sacred liturgy in favor of self-expression (in reality, self-worship) has become widespread and is by now almost expected. This was abetted in the past by ineffective Vatican interventions – and **now by the outright indulgence of the perennial temptation to reduce worship of God to self-congratulatory affirmations of human genius and accomplishments.**

Catholic unity in faith, morals, worship, and discipline depends, in large measure, upon the willingness of those in authority to reverently and gratefully acknowledge and conform to Catholic teaching and practice, which are blessings of Divine providence. **The defense of that unity, which is a fruit of fidelity to what has been handed on to us by the Church, is now treated cavalierly as unhealthy, retrograde, and rigid.** It's regarded as an infantile clinging to the familiar, a fearful refusal to break out of an obsolete form of Christianity, a prideful claim of unattainable certainty. **Believers are, instead, being called to embrace ambiguities and nuance, as if the world didn't already have enough of those.**

The motto “To restore all things in Christ” has been stunningly replaced by a coercive demand that we submit ourselves to a seemingly never-ending “synodal” re-education, an amorphous category whose most prominent feature seems to be a readiness to question just about everything the Church has taught and done in her 2000-year history of God acting in the world through the Mystical Body of Christ.



December 1, 1984: Father Murray is ordained to the priesthood by Cardinal O'Connor.

I became a priest with the unshakable conviction that the Catholic Church is the one true Church and that, under the protection of the Holy Spirit, she authoritatively teaches the doctrine of Christ in its purity and integrity. This conviction is not my opinion, nor is it an exaggerated pretension that attributes to the Church something she does not claim. It is simply the truth of the Catholic Faith.

Much of the current situation of chaos and confusion in the Church is attributable to a fatal turning away from the proclamation of the Gospel message of eternal salvation in Christ to a fatal acquiescence in the diabolical insinuation that everyone is already guaranteed eternal life because God's unconditional love

could not possibly encompass the idea of eternal damnation.

When this denial of eternal justice is treated as the true Gospel imperative, any doctrine or practice that causes anyone to feel judged, unaffirmed, marginalized, or rejected must be discarded. There is no place for such stigmatization of people whom the Church once judged to be acting and thinking wrongly; now, they simply act and think “differently.” They’re “diverse.” Nothing anyone does on earth could lead to his suffering for all eternity in Hell.

The religion of affirmation has replaced the religion of salvation. This poisonous error contradicts the Catholic faith and leads to personal and social destruction. **Why should the Church continue to claim that we are obligated to follow what she “once” taught as truths of God’s revelation when the Synodal Church of encounter and listening now assures us that all religions are paths to God.** Presumably that “all” includes the self-curated religion that each person decides upon as good enough for himself. **Man is now effectively equal to God when he, not God, can determine what is owed to God.**

I am confident that this time of disorientation in the life of the Church will not last beyond the current pontificate. God does not want the Church to proclaim a religion without dogma, which is to say without truth. I find little support among the faithful for a new Catholic Church without Catholicism. **What remains for us to do is to defend the perennial teaching of the Church by rejecting current errors. We must pray God to raise up courageous shepherds who will restore all things in Christ.**

Forty years of priestly service has been a continuous blessing and source of immense joy for me. **The Church belongs to Jesus Christ, we are His servants, and He will strengthen us to embrace, defend and uphold her**

teachings against the current wave of error, heresy and immorality sweeping through the Church.

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