

A Plea for Principled Leadership

By Judie Brown

A watering downs of righteous principle can lead only one way and no one should choose that route. All too often politics will encourage compromise, though few would admit they agree to moral compromise. But when it comes to the protection of an innocent human being or the defense of the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, there can be no room for such wayward logic – or can there?

I believe there are far too many members of the Catholic hierarchy who would say, “Yes, there can!” One particular cardinal comes to mind, one with whom I have recently had an exchange of letters.

Correspondence

Shortly after the November election, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops held its annual meeting. At the time, American Life League ran a full-page ad reminding the bishops that “even a loser’s soul is worth saving.”

At about the same time, American Life League’s summer Crusade walk director wrote to Cardinal Roger Mahony of Los Angeles, asking if the walkers could speak after Mass at parishes in his archdiocese. In response, he wrote me to say that he was surprised to see our letter “in view of the full page ad.” He said that the ad “is both causing divisions within the Church and undermining the pastoral leadership of the bishops.” He then called the ad a vicious and public “attack” on the bishops.

I responded, suggesting that he had misunderstood the intent of our ad. I also asked the cardinal for a meeting to discuss what we think is a perception problem. In response to that request, which the cardinal rejected, he stated that since I had failed to explain the ad in my previous letter, there would be no value in a personal meeting.

Attacking evil

Our ad was not intended as an attack. We clearly expressed our prayer that each bishop will adopt, as his number one priority, the “counseling and instructing” of John Kerry and other pro-abortion “Catholic” politicians in Congress. This ad is an attack on evil, not an attack on bishops. Why would a cardinal see it in a different light? Perhaps because there are confounding factors that blur our limited vision making it difficult to see wickedness spreading faster than any cancer.

It is easier to believe that we are attacking the bishops than it is to proclaim no Catholic can publically support the killing of innocent persons and still claim he right to receive the Body and Blood of Christ?

When we implore our bishops to enforce canon law, we are only asking that they protect Christ from sacrilege. That is not an attack on anyone’s character, but a plea for sanity.

When we tell the public “all American babies will be protected from abortion when the Eucharist is protected by all American bishops,” we are being factual, not hysterical and certainly not disrespectful. We are begging for leadership from the shepherds of our Church.

Having read Cardinal Mahoney’s letter more than a few times, I am forced to review the words of Archbishop Raymond Burke’s closing argument in the article he wrote last year for America magazine:

“For a bishop or any pastor to exclude someone from Communion is always a source of great sorrow. The sorrow is caused by the care that a pastor naturally has for a soul who rejects the teaching of Christ and his church. What would be profoundly more sorrowful would be the failure of a bishop to call a soul to conversion, the failure to protect the flock from scandal and the failure to safeguard the worthy reception of Communion.”

I still desire a conversation with Cardinal Mahoney. It’s not my personal distress that’s at issue; it’s the sorrowing Christ Whose Real Presence is being mocked daily by dissidents. These leaders use their “Catholic” identity to do enormous harm, cause devastating scandal and impugn the integrity of our bishops by arrogantly daring them to take the action we ask them to take.

American Life League isn’t attacking the bishops. However, the devil is using his cunning and deceit to debilitate the authority of the Catholic leadership and the devil knows what we know:

The Culture of Death will be converted by truth.

The Culture of Death will be dismembered by heroic defense of principle.

The Culture of Death will be demolished by courageous leadership.

Each prince of the Catholic Church can inspire conversion to defeat the Culture of Death. Is that too much to ask of our shepherds?

Judie Brown is president of American Life League.

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