

What is Wrong with Our Bishops?

In this political year, the failure of the majority of our bishops has become a great source of embarrassment, frustration and even righteous anger brought about by their refusal to adhere to the Vatican's instructions on dealing with pro-death Catholic politicians; specifically, Canon 915. Also of concern, the USCCB will not provide a clearly written voter's guide. This is a source of disunity and confusion for the faithful. These two issues are discussed here in hopefully, a charitable manner followed by some general comment regarding the bishops.

Canon 915:

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI, said without ambiguity: "The minister of Holy Communion must refuse to distribute it..." when warning and counsel given to the manifest sinner "have not had their effect." Why have our bishops failed to implement Canon Law's Canon 915, a clearly taught discipline against politicians who obstinately persist in promoting and supporting the legality of grave, manifest sins such as the murder of the unborn child and infanticide? This is a moral stand, not a political one.

When a publicly pro-abortion Catholic disregards a bishop's directive and 'of his own volition,' receives the host from the Eucharistic Minister the bishop is doing evil [CIC, n1755] because he has not instructed his ministers to deny Holy Communion to a public sinner.

Sadly, bishops have indicated it is the responsibility of the communicant to stay away from the Communion rail. This is not correct. Rather, **it is the responsibility of the minister of the Eucharist to deny Holy Communion.** This directly opposes Church teachings regarding Canon 915 as well as recent statements from the Vatican declaring that manifest pro-abortion politicians must be denied Communion, and placing the burden upon the minister to deny, not upon the communicant to stay away.

Canon Law also places the responsibility on the minister — 'ne admittantur' — who, in some canonists' opinion, could be punished himself according to Canon 1389 §2, should he unlawfully administer the sacrament with the consequent danger of scandal for the rest of the faithful. Canon 1339 prescribes the possibility of punishing any person who causes grave scandal by any violation of a divine or ecclesiastical law.

Pope Benedict XVI recently appointed Archbishop Raymond Burke, formerly Archbishop of St. Louis, as Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, which, after the Pope, is the highest judicial authority of the Catholic Church. In an interview published in the current edition of the Italian magazine, *Radici Cristiane*, Archbishop Burke addresses the issue which has caused great controversy among the hierarchy in the West.

The Archbishop first noted that pro-abortion Catholic politicians should be publicly corrected and instructed not to receive and if they persist, Communion should be denied. He spoke of dealing with "public officials" who contravene Divine and

Eternal law, for example, "...if they support abortion, which entails the taking of innocent and defenseless human lives."

"A person who commits sin in this way should be publicly admonished in such a way as to not receive Communion until he or she has reformed his life," the archbishop said. "If a person who has been admonished persists in public mortal sin and attempts to receive Communion, the minister of the Eucharist has the obligation to deny it to him. Why? Above all, for the salvation of that person, preventing him from committing a sacrilege," he added.

The Archbishop explained that the Church does this "not with the intention of interfering in public life but rather in the spiritual state of the politician or public official who, if Catholic, should follow the divine law in the public sphere as well," reported Catholic News Agency.

"We must avoid giving people the impression that one can be in a state of mortal sin and receive the Eucharist," the archbishop continued. "Secondly, there could be another form of scandal, consisting of leading people to think that the public act that this person is doing, which until now everyone believed was a serious sin, is really not that serious -- if the Church allows him or her to receive Communion."

It is out of concern for the eternal salvation of souls of persons who refuse to abandon their pro-abortion, pro-sodomite views that Communion be denied. Abortion is murder, and evil actions have consequences. A bishop is called to 'govern' and 'correct' in keeping with the discipline of Canon 915.

Out of the 268 bishops in the U.S. only 15 have publicly stated they would deny Holy Communion to such persons. **For some U.S. bishops to deny and other U.S. bishops not to deny Holy Communion to pro-abortion politicians is a source of disunity and confusion for the entire Church.** Why can they not agree on the most fundamental and crucial teaching of the Church, that abortion is murder, and support for that murder is a very grave violation of God's laws of love?

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

The USCCB's Publication, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship", is too complex for the advisement of the Catholic public on deciding how to vote over the next 90 days. The true meat of the message is buried in nuanced philosophical and moral discussion leading to confusion. As an example, it states, "The direct and intentional destruction of innocent human life from the moment of conception until natural death is always wrong and is not just one issue among many. It must always be opposed...It is a mistake with grave moral consequences to treat the destruction of innocent human life merely as a matter of individual choice." **This is interpreted by many as an effort to equate war and capital punishment with the condemnation of abortion and euthanasia.**

This pretense of moral equivalence was addressed by Pope John Paul II: "Above all, the common outcry, which is justly made on behalf of human rights -- for example, the right to health, to home, to work, to family, to culture -- is false and

illusory if the right to life, the most basic and fundamental right and the condition of all other personal rights, is not defended with maximum determination."
(Cristifideles Laici, no 38.) Pope Benedict XVI has also stated: "Not all moral issues have the same moral weight as abortion and euthanasia have. There may be a legitimate diversity of opinion even among Catholics about waging war and applying the death penalty, but not however with regard to abortion and euthanasia"

The USCCB's Publication, "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," due to its ambiguity, results in many bishops and priests providing their own interpretation. As an example of a priest or bishop misinterpreting the intentionally obtuse publication of the "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship," we have the Rev. Ronald J. Cioffi, director of the Office of Social Concerns for the Diocese of Trenton, New Jersey. He states, "You may vote for a person who is pro-choice if you feel you have a moral reason to support the candidate for his stand on other issues." He continues with other lies and half-truths, quoting one of his staff as saying, "... conservatives who oppose abortion often support the death penalty. The Catholic Church opposes both." Thus he is implying that the death penalty applied to a few hundred convicted murderers equates to the killing of tens of thousands of innocent children. He also somehow equates the deaths of 4,000 volunteer military in six years of defending our freedom from terrorists with the death of 4,000 innocent babies a day. His publication goes on to justify voting for any candidate you believe is acceptable, no matter what his position is on abortion.

Nowhere in the article by Rev. Cioffi is the need to form one's conscience ever addressed. Instead, readers are led to believe they should vote on the basis of what they "think" or "feel". There is no reference to the active process Catholics are instructed to perform. The very essence of what it means to be a "faithful citizen" is omitted.

Comments on the Bishops (Minus Fifteen):

If the U.S. Bishops don't strongly adhere to Canon 915, they may never have another chance to effect a positive change in this country. But waiting for the Bishops to act has cost us dearly. We lost Roe v. Wade, we lost Terri Schiavo, and many other critical moral issues because of pathetic shepherds who refuse to cut the diseased sheep from the rest of the flock as they are required to do according to Canon Law.

It is an act of charity to let all pro-abortion Catholics know that what they are advocating is mass murder and could have eternal consequences for their souls Scripture tells us that if we do not tell the sinner, the sin shall be on our souls, but if we tell the person and they do not listen, the sin is on their soul.

It appears total negligence that certain Catholic prelates and leaders do not publicly correct the misconception that anyone can use his/her Catholic identity to undermine Catholic teaching without ever being held accountable. This total silence is a sin on the part of the bishops. *Why? Because the truth is that CINOs (Catholics in name only), are literally getting away with reinventing Catholic*

teaching to suit their own agenda – a social agenda that creates havoc in the lives of others and murders thousands of unborn children. The recent excellent words from several of our bishops correcting the obscene statements of two CINO politicians were just that – words. We need more than words – we need action on the part of *all* our bishops.

Bishops and priests like Rev. Cioffi are as much Catholic frauds as the CINO politicians being given a free pass to Hell for themselves and all who buy into their heinous lies. They also deserve public admonition for the sake of the souls of all concerned, not the least of which being their own souls. **Christ will not admonish you for criticizing your clergy – He will admonish you for doing nothing but watching these men send themselves and others to Hell.**

Many Catholics believe our clergy seem frozen in fear of violating the tax laws of this nation. They don't seem to worry about God's Law. Catholics rightly note the majority of priests and deacons skirt the issue of abortion, homosexuality and artificial contraception yet expound on the environment, injustice of the minimum wage, the incarceration of criminals, "free" health care, tax-paid college education, and the legal enforcement of immigration laws.

Worry about the tax laws may be one issue; however, a survey completed several years ago which disclosed the fact that 70-80 percent of our bishops are registered as Democrats, is probably closer to the truth. Unfortunately the Democrat Party in recent years has taken up the mantra of the abortion industry, placing the anti-Catholic 'right to abortion' as a plank in its party platform. There are several pro-life Democratic politicians but they face an impossible task in changing their party platform. *It appears our bishops have given up their moral values for political reasons.*

We know there are some good bishops who disagree with the situation. Why are they not speaking out? One problem is that bishops are usually chosen for their office because the Vatican prefers diplomats, conciliators, and team players to confrontational personalities who make waves. Pray these faithful bishops receive the courage they need.

Pray for all of our Bishops!

We have a movement going like those which changed the course of history in previous times of peril. At 9 PM EST every night, stop what you are doing and pray for our clergy, for this election and our country.

Jim Fritz