

An Open Letter to Our Bishops

Regis Martin

7-8 minutes

Your Excellencies:

It seems almost like yesterday that, among all the bishops scattered about the globe, it was everywhere understood that *care of the soul* was the principal function of your office; that God had given you no greater nor more essential task than getting souls into Heaven. “What must I do to assist the souls entrusted to me—souls for whom God Himself suffered and died—to prepare them for a life of unending glory?” That was the question every honest bishop needed to ask himself.

Alas, like the snows of yesteryear that will not return, it seems no longer to be the case. Other and very different marching orders appear to have been issued. Nowadays, the Church sees herself primarily as a service organization, the ecclesiastical wing of some of the most progressive elements in the country. The Democratic Party, for instance, whose woke fixations might almost be informing her job description. No longer is it the business of the Church, her most sacred and necessary work, to lead the People of God through the world to God Himself.

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It's as if the Letter to the Hebrews had never been written.

Which is why, in reading the sentence, “For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come” (13:14), we more or less shut our eyes to the fact. It is no longer the City of God we are urged to seek but the City of Man—where there is no salvation but only the fleshpots which lead to death.

Why then should we see the Church as anything special or unique?

Maybe Jesus got it wrong when He told His disciples: “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14). It’s as if the pilot light has gone out and no one can find the city on the hill anymore. When the Church is no longer perceived as an institution fashioned by God Himself in order to extend across the vast expanse of space and time the Incarnation of His Son, the prolongation no less of His person and work in the world, why should anyone care what happens to the Church at all? Why bother to join, much less remain?

How far, I wonder, has this particular apostasy spread among you? Are there many of you out there who, having pretty much ceased to believe in the divine design of the Church, are no longer disposed to advance her Incarnational mission? Are you so wedded to the world that you dare not bring yourselves to judge it, lest you appear harsh and rigorous in the eyes of others?

When the physician assumes the illness of his patient, it may strike a note of empathy between them, but it hardly helps the patient get well. What advantage can there be to the sinner when his bishop won’t tell him to stop sinning? If one wishes to get well, isn’t a proper diagnosis in order concerning the extent of the illness? “Our only health is the disease,” writes T.S. Eliot in *Four Quartets*:

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*If we obey the dying nurse
Whose constant care is not to please
But to remind of our, and Adam’s curse,
And that, to be restored,
Our sickness must grow worse.
The whole earth is our hospital
Endowed by the ruined millionaire,
Wherein, if we do well, we shall
Die of the absolute paternal care
That will not leave us, but prevents us everywhere.*

If many of our bishops have, as it were, gone bonkers, doesn’t that amount to an admission of despair, that somehow God has abandoned His bride, and that the Gates of Hell have finally prevailed? Certainly, among the ones who catch all the headlines, who cause the confusion and grief which the rest of us are forced to endure, there have been defections.

Not openly, of course, nor all at once; but in subtle and *de facto* ways over time, some of you have left the deposit unattended. Which—you surely must know this—rather leaves the rest of us with the appalling prospect of a God who decided simply to drop the ball before the end of the game. Unless, of course, the game is already over and, well, we just didn't get the memo yet.

From such counsels of despair, of course, people of faith must simply flee; and they must cling, even if only by a fingernail, to Christ's assurance that He will not leave us orphaned and alone. So, why have so many of you seemingly given up? How does one account for such craven refusals to preserve and defend the teachings of the Church, teachings which the whole point of your episcopal ordination obliges you to uphold? Why this loss of faith in the Church's mission to *sacramentalize* the world and thus bring the saving mercy of Jesus Christ to sinners?

I ask because, if that were the case, then the Church over which you preside, concerning whose governance you will answer before God Himself, would be no different from the fallen world which Christ has enjoined us all to assist Him in redeeming. The Church's life would then be one of complete futility, thereby consigning us all to a state of lassitude and despair.

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This is not the Church Christ instituted in order to help Him rescue the world from its bondage to sin and the devil. Instead, it is an entirely counterfeit church, one which no one will be interested in joining—much less aiding and abetting you in trying to shore it up.

Christ needs you to be bishops, in other words; which is why he called you in the first place, giving you the grace to fulfill your mission. The world needs you to be bishops. If it is not to go straight to Hell, it needs you to show it the Way to Heaven. And we need you to be bishops, too. Which is why we are praying for you. Go ahead and show us, therefore, that our prayers are being answered.

[Photo Credit: Vatican News]



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