

# *Los Pequeños Pepper*

*Publication of Los Pequeños de Cristo*

*July 2012*

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*Cover:* Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, -  
July 14 (She will be canonized in  
October)

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Newsletter of Los Pequeños de Cristo  
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*The Pequeños Pepper* is published monthly

*We are an Archdiocesan-wide Catholic lay organization committed to a charitable defense of the Catholic Faith by means of education, communication, and prayer. We are devoted to the Roman Catholic Magisterium, the Holy Father, and to the bishops and clergy in union with him. Our members believe what the Church believes and we promote what the Church teaches. To this end, we believe that no individual, whether cleric or lay person, has the right to alter the substance of the gospel message or moral truths which have been inerrantly and infallibly held by the Catholic Church since Her founding.*

# The USCCB and Pogo

By Jim Fritz

Many readers will remember the famous quotation from an animal character named Pogo by cartoonist Walt Kelly back in the 1950s, “We have met the enemy and they are us.” Set in the Okefenokee Swamp of the southeastern United States, the strip often engaged in social and political satire through the adventures of its anthropomorphic funny animal characters. As stated by one biographer of Kelly, “It perfectly sums up his attitude towards the foibles of mankind and the nature of the human condition.” There is no need to sally forth, for it remains true that those things which make us human are, curiously enough, always close at hand. Resolve then, that on this very ground, with small flags waving and tinny blast on tiny trumpets, we shall meet the enemy, and not only may he be ours, but he may be us.

Perhaps the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has finally realized that the enemy is the bishops themselves. After decades of the bishops supporting liberal social policies, they must now realize who the real enemy is. During the last election, Catholics voted for Obama by 54 percent. The bishops promoted this by (1) their support of the health care law which is now resulting in mandates requiring religious employers to pay insurance coverage of birth control and abortifacients; (2) ignoring canon 915; and, (3) issuing a ridiculous, incorrect, and totally useless document titled, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*.

## When did this all begin?

The Second Vatican Council (also known as Vatican II) addressed relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. It opened under Pope John XXIII in 1962 and closed under Pope Paul VI in 1965. No one can really state that Vatican II caused the decline of the Catholic Church; however, the fifty years since the end of Vatican II have been a disaster for the Church. The number of priests has greatly declined even as the population has increased. The religious women have had an even greater decrease in numbers and those who are left have drifted so far from Church teaching they are now not even recognizable as nuns - especially those who sport business suits and mannish haircuts. Catholic schools have closed by the hundreds, and many parents refuse to send their children to those that remain open. Only a handful of Catholic colleges can really be classified as Catholic. After Notre Dame awarded an honorary law degree to Barack Obama it was renamed “Notre Shame” by true Catholics and even some Protestants. There are currently Pro-Homosexual (Pride) Clubs at 107 Catholic Colleges. Bankruptcies have occurred in eight dioceses due to the sexual abuse scandal. And the list goes on and on and on.



## How did it happen?

The term “The Spirit of Vatican II” was used to promote the teachings and intentions attributed to the Second Vatican Council in ways not limited to literal readings of its documents, but not in contradiction to the “letter” of the Council. “The spirit of Vatican II” was invoked for a great variety of ideas and attitudes. Writer Michael Novak described it as a spirit that “. . .sometimes soared far beyond the actual, hard-won documents and decisions of Vatican II. It was as though the history of the Church were now to be divided into only two periods, pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II. Everything ‘pre’ was then pretty much dismissed, so far as its authority mattered. For the most extreme, to be a Catholic now meant to believe more or less anything one wished to believe, or at least in the sense in which one personally interpreted it. One could be a Catholic ‘in spirit’. One could take Catholic to mean the ‘culture’ in which one was born, rather than to mean a creed making objective and rigorous demands. One could imagine Rome as a distant and irrelevant anachronism, embarrassment, even adversary.”

In 1972 Pope Paul VI said, “Satan’s smoke has made its way into the temple of God through some crack.” It is not hard to determine what is meant by the ‘crack.’

As stated in a recent issue of the *New Oxford Review*, Tom Bethell states, “John Paul II’s evident lack of interest in governing the Church didn’t help. He deserves to be called ‘the Great’ for his role in ending the cold war, but he seemed inattentive to the laxity of the world’s bishops (bishops he himself appointed) and the lack of moral and doctrinal discipline that plagued the Church.” When the clerical sexual abuse began in 1992, John Paul II did next to nothing. He made mistakes in his appointments such as Cardinal Law in Boston and many others. He made mistakes in tolerating and even supporting errant clergy such as Cardinal Sodano.

The story of Cardinal Bernardin and his “Seamless Garment” is especially sad. Cardinal Bernardin promoted a project entitled “Catholic Common Ground Project” which was to host a series of conferences designed to stimulate “a new kind of dialogue” to help define the future course of the Catholic Church in America. Bernardin’s promotion of the Common Ground Project raised red flags among orthodox Catholics who recognized that this project, if successful, could drive a wedge between the United States and Rome and precipitate a schism. Even Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston distanced himself from the Bernardin initiative. He stated, “Dissent from revealed truth or the authoritative teaching of the Church cannot be ‘dialogued’ away.” He then very sharply pointed out the dangers of Bernardin’s approach. Cardinal Law cautioned that popularity—even among bishops—is no guarantee of orthodoxy. He reminded the faithful that during the time of King Henry VIII, all but one of the bishops of England had broken away from Rome. The name Archbishop Remberth Weakland only needs to be mentioned to invoke horrible abuses by a ‘Catholic’ bishop during this time.

Views of the Second Vatican Council in the form “The spirit of Vatican II” were condemned by the Church’s hierarchy, and the works of theologians who were active in the Council or who closely adhered to the Council’s aspect of reform (such as Hans Küng) have often been criticized by the Church for espousing a belief system that is radical and misguided. However, discipline of the clergy was sorely lacking.



**The Holy Family by Ambrogio Lorenzetti, c. 1345**

*The Virgin is shown knitting a garment, thought to represent the seamless garment worn by Christ (John 19:23).*

### Canon 915

The number of bishops and cardinals who ignored canon 915 is mind-boggling. Some canonists argue that the rule of canon 915 which forbids administering Holy Communion to those who obstinately persevere in manifest grave sin applies to the giving of Holy Communion to legislators who persistently support a legal status for what the Catholic Church de-

clares to be a grave sin, namely, abortion, a matter on which there may be no legitimate diversity of opinion among Catholics. This is the view expressed by the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, in a letter sent in early June 2004 to Cardinal Theodore McCarrick. Cardinal McCarrick refused to disclose this letter, even to his parishioners.

Others have cast doubt on this interpretation, and Cardinal Donald Wuerl of Washington has declared his view, which he attributes also to the great majority of bishops in the United States and elsewhere, that canon 915 “was never intended to be used this way.”

Examples of cardinals ignoring canon 915 have been numerous. On January 2, 2011, Governor of New York Andrew M. Cuomo, a Roman Catholic, received Holy Communion although he was living with the well-known television personality Sandra Lee, to whom he was not married. Canon lawyer and professor Edward N. Peters described his reception of Communion as objectively sacrilegious and that in view of the public character of the two people involved and the widespread knowledge of their cohabiting, Communion should in accordance with canon 915 be withheld from Cuomo. It was not.

Why aren’t “Catholics” like Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley, who introduced a gay “Marriage” bill, excommunicated, denied Holy Communion, or at least publicly reprimanded? With the Church “leadership” providing this kind of example, no wonder a majority of so-called “Catholics” support same-sex “marriage”.

Exclusion by canon law from access to Communion is not limited to the cases mentioned in canon 915. For



instance, canon 842 §1 declares: “A person who has not received baptism cannot be admitted validly to the other sacraments.” Cardinal Wuerl, who ignores canon 915, recently disciplined a priest, Father Guarnizo, a devoted traditional Catholic priest who tried to uphold the sanctity of the Holy Eucharist, the actual Body of Our Savior Jesus Christ, from sacrilegious receipt by a self-confessed lesbian. His actions make many wonder if he really believes in the Real Presence, and he sets a terrible example for fellow Catholics.

Thanks to God we have some priests and bishops who refuse to make a sacrilege of the Eucharist. Cardinal Burke has stated. “If the lack of right disposition is serious and public, and the person, nevertheless, approaches to receive the Sacrament, then he is to be admonished and denied Holy Communion. In other words, the Church cannot remain silent and indifferent to a public offense against the Body and Blood of Christ.”

## Catholic Universities

Education is integral to the mission of the Church to proclaim the Good News. First and foremost every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth. (Pope Benedict XVI, Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., Thursday, April 17, 2008)

Why have the bishops allowed Notre Dame to honor the most pro-abortion president in history with an honoree degree in law? The university locked up 88 protestors, including two priests and several pastors, and it still retains its status as a “Catholic” university, thanks to the inaction of the USCCB. One of the incarcerated priests, eighty-year-old Father Norman Weslin, recently passed away. He is a hero to many of us in the pro-life movement. See a video of the arrest at [www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2884849/posts](http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2884849/posts). The USCCB sat by and did nothing but express mild disapproval.

Georgetown University has been allowed to host Kathleen Sebelius, the author of the anti-religious, conscience-denying clause in the Obama “health care” law, as a commencement speaker. Sebelius, Director of HHS, is now subverting the freedom of religion guaranteed by the US Constitution. Again, Cardinal Wuerl, who has the power to do something such as withhold the designation of “Catholic” from the university, has done nothing more than offer a public chastisement of Georgetown University – a literal slap on the wrist.

Georgetown University alumni, students and others are preparing a canon lawsuit to be filed with the Archdiocese of Washington and the Vatican, seeking remedies including the removal or suspension of Georgetown’s right to call itself Catholic in its fundraising and representation to applicants. It is very sad when you must sue the bishops in order to require them to perform their duties.

As noted by the Cardinal Newman Society, eleven scandalous commencement speakers at Catholic colleges and universities are scheduled for this year.



## Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

It is incomprehensible why the USCCB issued a 40 page document instructing Catholics on the why and how to vote without clearly naming the five intrinsic evils. Did they expect the average parish to provide this huge document to each parishioner? Did they expect anyone to really read it?

To put it bluntly, this USCCB document has played a decisive role in empowering Catholic supporters of abortion by providing the escape clauses needed to convince Catholics they could in good conscience vote for a pro-abortion candidate. There are two major loopholes in the document. First, it states that Catholics are allowed to vote for a supporter of abortion rights so long as 1) the voter does not intend to support that position, or 2) there are offsetting “morally grave reasons.” The document never explains what constitutes “morally grave reasons,” leaving it to the reader to make his own determination which, lacking explanation or direction, could be quite erroneous.

Common sense indicates the bishops must have been aware this document allowed voting for pro-abortion politicians as long as these politicians supported the progressive ideas sponsored by certain bishops and in some cases, provide the money they sought for their own causes. Many writers have contended that money has been the major influence for this document and the socialist agenda of the USCCB. It is hard to deny this.

Although several bishops have spoken out forcefully, saying the document is being abused, it was never changed or clarified by the USCCB.

What is needed is a simple, two-page document stating: (1) the need for Catholics to vote; (2) the need to investigate the candidates, and (3) the five non-negotiable principles. This document should be published repeatedly in every church bulletin months before the election and supported by an applicable homily..

Homilies need to stress that intrinsically evil actions are those actions that fundamentally conflict with the moral law and can never be performed under any circumstances. It is a serious sin to deliberately endorse or promote any of these actions, and no person who really wants to advance the common good will support any action contrary to the non-negotiable principles involved in these issues. These issues are (1) Abortion, (2) Euthanasia, (3) Embryonic Stem Cell Research, (4) Human Cloning, and (5) Homosexual "Marriage". Obama, who the majority of bishops and 54 percent of Catholics voted for, supports all five of these evils. .



### The Future

Will the bishops wake up? The current administration has taken the bishops for a ride, and the bishops finally appear to be awakening to the fact they have been lied to. If the Supreme Court does not abolish the unconstitutional health care law, the bishops will soon have to close Catholic hospitals and schools. This will most certainly be true if the current administration is voted in again. We cannot have 54 percent of Catholics voting against our own principles. The Evangelical Christians may be the ones to save us from our own bishops.

The bishops should hang their heads in shame knowing that by their actions they helped elect the most pro-abortion president in history. They should hang their heads in shame realizing they were duped, and most of them took it in as gullible, naive men lacking basic common sense.

We must pray to God that the bishops realize the harm their lack of decisive actions have caused and will assume the leadership demanded by their position in the Church. ☞

*Jim Fritz is treasurer of the Catholic Media Coalition and executive director of the West Virginia Defenders of the Faith.*

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## Why Are So Many Churches Silent about Gender Selective Abortion?

By Jeff Walton

As the United States House of Representatives votes on legislation to ban sex-selective abortions, the Institute on Religion and Democracy is asking why so many church groups have been silent about the practice. HR 3541, The Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act (PRENDA), has received support from the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and Roman Catholic groups including Priests for Life and Human Life International, but most other church lobbies and ecumenical groups are silent. PRENDA failed to pass on a 246-168 vote (a two-thirds majority was required to pass under suspension of the rules).

The 2008 General Conference of The United Methodist Church voted to "strongly condemn" sex-selective abortion "as a particularly lamentable and violent expression of sexism." The denomination's policy calls on "religious, government, and community leaders to proactively pursue humane means for stopping the practice of sex-selective abortion." But the denomination's liberal Capitol Hill lobby is silent.

The U.S. Congress has already condemned gender selective abortion in China, but PRENDA is the first nationwide attempt to address the practice, which is already banned in Arizona, Illinois, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania.

Widespread sex-selective abortion has resulted in lopsided gender ratios in parts of China and especially India. Studies in India reveal that those families in higher income brackets and with greater access to education are the most likely to practice gender selective abortion. ☞

*The Institute on Religion & Democracy ([www.TheIRD.org](http://www.TheIRD.org)) serves to promote the thought of traditionally-minded Christians in public life.*

# A Review of Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist

By Tom McBride

In my last article (“Are You Interested in the Bible?” May 2012), I introduced Dr. Brant Pitre, one of the new crop of orthodox, cradle-Catholic biblical scholars who has appeared on the scene in the last several years. My initial installment was limited to Dr. Pitre’s audio and video Bible studies. What I did not mention was his most recent book, which is called *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist*.

As I mentioned, Dr. Pitre’s area of concentration for his Ph.D. was in Christianity and Judaism in antiquity. His new book follows up on that concentration by exploring the roots of the Eucharist in first century Judaism. He explores both the Old Testament and Jewish extra-biblical tradition in order to explain the significance of what Jesus did at the Last Supper.

Scott Hahn wrote the preface to the book. In the preface, Dr. Hahn makes the interesting point that no first century Jew would have viewed the crucifixion as a *sacrifice*. Among other things, for a Jew, sacrifice could only be offered in the Temple, and only by a Levitical priest. The crucifixion took place outside Jerusalem, and Jesus was not a Levitical priest. The only way that a connection could have been made for a first century Jew between Temple sacrifices and the crucifixion was through the Passover, and specifically, through the Passover meal that was the Last Supper.

The main question which Dr. Pitre sets out to answer in his book is how Jesus could have told his disciples to eat his flesh and drink his blood. This question is especially acute in light of the Old Testament prohibition against eating blood. Additionally, although there is no explicit prohibition in the Old Testament, first century Jews would undoubtedly have been revolted at the suggestion that they eat someone’s flesh. This was exactly the reaction the Jews had to Jesus’ suggestion that they should eat his flesh and drink his blood in the sixth chapter of John’s Gospel.

Dr. Pitre begins his book by explaining that at the time of Jesus there was an expectation of a Messiah who would be a new Moses, and who would lead all twelve tribes of Israel on a new Exodus. Today, a lot of people tend to think that the Jewish expectation of the Messiah at the time of Jesus was of a military ruler who would expel the Romans from the land of Israel and who would then reign as king. There certainly were people who had this expectation, principally the Zealots, but there was the other strand of messianic expectation just mentioned, too.

Dr. Pitre continues by explaining the similarities and the differences between the first Passover and how the Passover was celebrated in the first century. He also explains the differences between the Passover as Jesus would have known it and the Passover as celebrated by Jews today.

If there were to be a new Moses and a new Exodus, one would expect it to be initiated by a new Passover, and a new paschal lamb. Dr. Pitre connects the expectation of a new Moses and a new Exodus, with the Jewish tradition that the new Moses would provide a new manna. He also brings in something from the Old Testament which is probably unfamiliar to most lay Catholics, that is, the bread of the Presence. He explains that the bread of the Presence was a sacrifice consisting of bread and wine which was kept on a special table in the Temple. Every Sabbath day the priests would replace the bread and wine which had been set out the previous week with fresh bread and wine. They would then consume the bread and wine previously set out on the table. Only priests could partake of the bread of the Presence.

Dr. Pitre then combines all the elements of his analysis of the expectation of a Messiah who would be the new Moses and who would lead all Israel on a new Exodus to a new Promised Land to answer the question with which he started, that is, how Jesus could have told his disciples to eat his flesh and drink his blood.

I do not want to steal Dr. Pitre’s thunder by revealing the solution to the problem which he sets out to solve. I merely want to recommend that everyone who wants to understand the Eucharist better should get and read, and then re-read, Dr. Pitre’s book. ☞



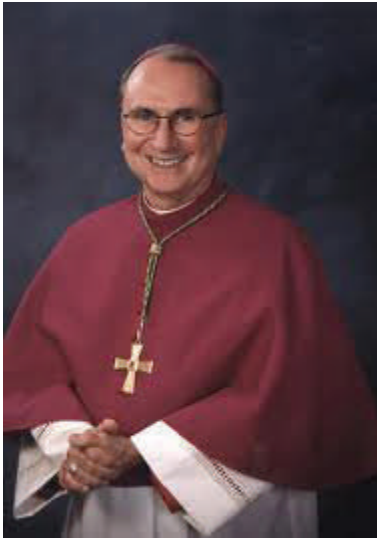
*The Last Supper* by Carducci Bartolome (1554-1608[?])



# Bishop Blaire, the HHS Mandate, and the Common Good

By Dr. Jeff Mirus

Bishop Stephen Blaire of Stockton, California would have preferred a wider consultation on the USCCB's opposition to the HHS mandate. He is distressed by the number of individuals and organizations filing lawsuits in the fight against the mandate, and he would have liked to have seen two things from the USCCB: (1) Greater clarity concerning the primary episcopal focus in opposing the mandate; and (2) Greater control by the bishops of the overall strategic Catholic opposition to the mandate.



**Bishop Stephen Blaire, Ordinary of Stockton, California**

On the question of clarity, Bishop Blaire notes that for some bishops the key issue is the HHS mandate's interference with the Church's institutional right to carry on its own mission in accordance with its own principles. But for others the key issue is the violation of the religious freedom and/or conscience rights of individuals. In reality, of course, both of these are important issues, but Bishop Blaire is considering things from a strategic perspective. In other words, which argument is more likely to succeed?

The question is not trivial. The two arguments go something like this: (1) The Church is an independent institution with her own purposes and scope of legitimate action, which is recognized in American law by the principle of the separation of Church and State. Therefore, laws which require the Church, in the course of her institutional life, to violate her own principles, are unjust. Or (2) Contraception, sterilization and abortion are significant moral acts in which many people cannot in conscience participate. Laws which force people to act against their personal religious beliefs and consciences are unjust.

Bishop Blaire himself seems to be convinced that the first argument has a greater chance of success in the United States, where there is still some recognition of the institutional independence of churches but little sympathy for opposition to sexual liberties such as contraception: "I am concerned that in addressing the HHS mandate that it be clear that what we are dealing with is a matter of religious liberty and the intrusion of government into the Church and that it not be perceived as a woman's issue or a contraceptive issue." At the level of strategy, this is not an unfair distinction. Indeed, nearly everyone recognized the strategic wisdom of the USCCB when it initially framed the issue in terms of the legitimate freedom of ecclesiastical institutions rather than in terms of the immorality of the procedures in question.

But what Bishop Blaire seems not to recognize is that framing the issue in this way gives the "institutional" Church a better chance of success only at the expense of permitting the moral coercion of individual Catholics who may not happen to work for the institutional Church—that is, the overwhelming majority of her members (along with anyone else with similar moral convictions). Though important, it is not enough that the institutional Church should be exempt from immoral insurance requirements. *Nobody* should be forced to financially support immoral practices. As the implications have unfolded, the laity and the USCCB alike have realized this battle must be fought on more than just the institutional front.

Bishop Blaire is afraid that wider support will be lost if the fight seems to be "political". For Bishop Blaire, it is apparently not political if the Church is merely asserting her institutional independence, emphasizing her own institutional religious liberty under the principle of separation of Church and state. But apparently it becomes political for Bishop Blaire if "different groups" attempt "to co-opt this and make it into a political issue", that is, "a woman's issue or a contraceptive issue," using it as a sort of Republican excuse to mount "an anti-Obama campaign". He is certainly correct that there is more national sympathy for religious rights than there is for moral opposition to contraception. But he is completely wrong to think that any of these issues, as they are brought to a head by the HHS mandate, can escape being political.

Moreover, a broader emphasis on the religious liberty or conscience rights of all citizens does not at all transform the fight into a campaign to eliminate the freedom of people to purchase their own contraceptives. That is not what the lawsuits are about. It is disingenuous to suggest that these lawsuits turn the battle into "a woman's issue

or a contraceptive issue.”

But it is a political issue, and even Bishop Blaire’s own assessment is irretrievably political. He believes that the Obama Administration is anxious to resolve its problem with the Church, so that negotiations will bear far more fruit than lawsuits. This is precisely a *political* judgment (and a rather typically naïve political judgment of the kind that led Timothy Cardinal Dolan to be surprised that President Obama does not keep his moral promises). In any case, for the bishops to fight the government for their own institutional independence is just as much a political issue as for the laity to fight the government for their personal religious liberty and freedom of conscience. Whenever the direction of government, law and regulation must be changed, the issue is by definition political.

This brings us, of course, to Bishop Blaire’s second concern, that the USCCB should be exercising greater control over the Catholic response to the HHS Mandate to preserve the kind of clear institutional focus he and some other bishops would prefer. But even if we suppose that it would be moral for the bishops to orchestrate that response in such a way as to ignore everyone who doesn’t have a “Church job” (or who is not a “Church employer”), and even if we suppose that the USCCB could actually succeed in doing this, we must ask an even more fundamental question: Should the bishops be in charge of this fight?

It is not the proper role of bishops to orchestrate political battles. Insofar as institutional Church issues are at stake, they must necessarily provide significant leadership. But the bishops are not the whole Church, and it belongs to the laity to orchestrate the full battle between religious, moral citizens and an irreligious and immoral State. Because institutions which bishops must manage are at stake does not imply that nothing else is at stake, or that there is no political conflict in which the laity are called to engage, or indeed that the laity are not to lead the way in stopping and redressing attacks on the institutional Church.

Worse still, Bishop Blaire has run the grave risk of dismissing personal opposition based on moral principles as somehow merely or negatively “political”. Democrats may dismiss personal opposition to contraception as a Republican “excuse” to “get Obama”. Indeed, we hear this nonsense all the time at CatholicCulture.org. But this is simply an excuse to demonize those with Christian moral principles. Politicians must take responsibility for their policy agendas, and stand or fall accordingly. What Bishop Blaire has done here is to confuse “political” with “partisan”. These words are not synonyms, and they do not suddenly become synonyms when moral principles unrecognized by the dominant culture are brought to the fore.

For all these reasons, it is evidence of the worst sort of clericalism for Bishop Blaire to even hint that the USCCB should or even could have orchestrated the entire strategy in some sort of sanitized, advantageous institutional context. The bishops are not to view themselves as “players” who negotiate deals with the politically powerful to ensure the maintenance of their own personal comfort zones. Where, in Bishop Blaire’s remarks, do we see a proper episcopal concern for the common good?↵

Author Dr. Jeff Mirus is the founder and president of Trinity Communications (1985), as well as a co-founder of Christendom College (1977). His commentary can be read at [www.catholicculture.org](http://www.catholicculture.org).



## Teaching “Another Religion”

*A recent Vatican assessment of the controversial Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) — motivated by concerns that addresses at annual LCWR Assemblies were contradictory to teachings of the Catholic Church and other evidence that the LCWR collectively held positions on sexuality and radical feminism that are incompatible with the Catholic faith — has generated a massive secular media spin effort to “support the nuns.” Only certain women religious are under scrutiny, however.*

By Arlene Sawicki



***There are Sisters...***

als, shocking many who are concerned about or responsible for the religious welfare of others.

The feminist revolutionaries, who have penetrated not only Catholic but all mainline Christian institutions, advocate not for the development of Christianity but the displacement of Christianity by a new liberationist “revelation.”

Encountering no effective resistance to these achievements, the feminists’ objective of radical destruction of “oppressive patriarchal” religion has now accelerated into an all-out attack on the Scriptures and on the core beliefs it incorporates which are common to both Christianity and Judaism—essential beliefs about the nature of God, of the nature of mankind’s “imaging” of God, of the meaning of human sexuality and of the relationship of men and women with one another and with God.

So far there has been sparse and ineffective resistance to the relentless undermining of the worship of God. I welcome and applaud the Vatican’s announcement of a doctrinal crackdown on the leadership organization LCWR representing most of the 57,000 nuns in the U.S. After all the harm that has been done, the real question should be, “What took them so long?”

*Arlene Sawicki is secretary of Catholic Citizens of Illinois ([www.CatholicCitizens.org](http://www.CatholicCitizens.org)).*

Having been instructed for 12 years in Catholic schools by dedicated nuns, I have experienced first hand and am profoundly grateful for the fruit of their solemn vows, dedicating themselves totally and faithfully to their religion. The keyword here is “faithfully” because what has happened in the past three decades in some women’s religious orders is a smoldering, rage-filled revolt against all spiritual authority and a movement of dissent against official episcopal teaching, resulting in disastrous effects on lay Catholics. In her book *Ungodly Rage: The Hidden Face of Catholic Feminism*, journalist and teacher Donna Steichen, exposes—through zealous research, countless interviews and attendance at feminist gatherings—that many religious orders are actually practicing “another religion.” The book provides detailed information on Catholic “salaried” feminist theologians, organizers, the movement’s defense of abortion, its connection with witchcraft and the New Age rituals,



***...and then, there are Sisters.***

The Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred  
Doctrine

is pleased to announce  
the publication this summer of

**St. Thomas'**  
*Commentaries on  
the Letters of Paul*

*This publication brings all the great Pauline commentaries together for the first time in a uniform hardcover bilingual edition, with Latin and English in parallel columns.*

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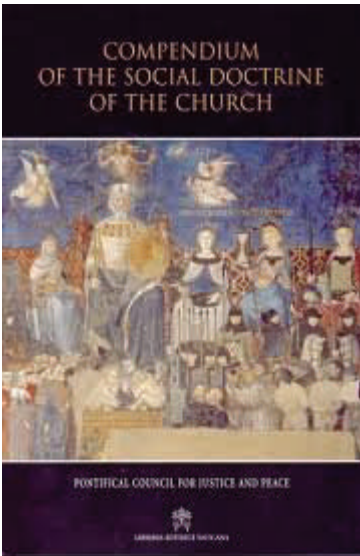
# JustFaith Graduates

By Stephanie Block

As the JustFaith social justice education program comes to a close, some, if not most, of its participants are primed to move into activism. They have already given 30 weeks to formation in preparation for this next step.

What has happened to these “graduates?” Many say they have been “transformed” and insist that the JustFaith experience isn’t about having a particular political agenda but about recognizing one’s God-given gifts and “giving back.” It is easy to understand why it’s attractive to bishops and priests – the materials are well organized, consistent, and require no particular training to administer. In exchange for an investment of time and money, participants are energized, positive, and ready to “do good.” That seems like a “good buy,” and it *would* be, too, if the program were fostering deeper love of Church and a desire for broader study about the Faith.

Contrast the JustFaith program to an ideal *Catholic* program. It would differ from JustFaith in at least six critical points:



1. A *Catholic* social justice formation program educates Catholics in *Catholic* social teaching.

JustFaith used one solidly Catholic book, the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, which is organized topically, something like a catechism. Only a few sections are actually read and discussed, however, often in the context of *other* materials. There are additional references to Church teaching scattered throughout the materials but they are passing, minimal, and generally read through an ideological lens.

This is a tremendous shame. The Church has an amazingly rich, consistent body of thought, honed over centuries of experience, in this domain. Plumbing those depths could be a delightful and rewarding experience for interested groups.

This defect has consequences. A *Catholic* social justice formation program provides its participants an authentic Catholic formation from which to engage in authentic Catholic Action. Any other perspective ideologically distorts the perspective and, despite the best of intentions, spawns actions that cause more damage than good.

JustFaith presents very little *Catholic* social teaching.

2. A *Catholic* social justice formation program uses *Catholic* examples of organizations engaged in ministerial work.

With its emphasis on *praxis* – on experiential formation rather than intellectual formation – an enormous amount of JustFaith’s “teaching” is accomplished within the circle of emotional relationship. That circle begins with individual JustFaith groups and expands over the weeks to include the other organizations participants study, including JustFaith partners and the other activist organizations that JustFaith studies.

Not all activism is equal – obviously. JustFaith has made particular choices in its emphasis on studying the work of Alinskyian organizing networks or the Call to Action-related Pax Christi and other liberationist-oriented groups. Many of these groups do some good; they are not good models for Catholic Action, however.

A *Catholic* social justice formation program would use, instead, *Catholic* examples of organizations engaged in ministerial work – not tucked in among secular examples but as integral to its vision.

This distinction between *Catholic* Action and other “doing good” isn’t a matter of parochial chauvinism but of a very different way of understanding the human person and, therefore, of understanding human development. Because the two perspectives are so *fundamentally* distinct, it isn’t enough to take a secularly-oriented organization like the Campaign for Human Development (CHD) and tack the word “Catholic” in front of it. The CHD was never conceived as a Catholic entity, nor has it ever functioned as such, except in so far as it uses Catholic resources.

JustFaith uses very few *Catholic* examples of organizations engaged in ministerial work.



3. *Catholic* social justice teachings embrace the spectrum of the human condition. A *Catholic* social justice formation program reflects that spectrum.

In leafing through the *Compendium*, one is struck by how much broader the scope of Catholic social teaching is than the JustFaith program suggests. JustFaith never mentions, except as one of seven (flawed) themes, any of life issues that are so pressing in contemporary society nor does it address any of the problems of the family, which the Church calls “the first natural society” or of marriage, which is the foundation of the family.

Furthermore, a *Catholic* social justice formation program would explain, as the *Compendium* does, that authentic human development is intimately and necessarily tied to the mission of the Church – which isn’t to create perfect social, economic, and/or political structures but to bring the good news of God’s salvific action among men.

JustFaith addresses too narrow a portion of social concerns.

4. A *Catholic* social justice formation program is clear about the distinction between Catholic social justice principles and the prudential applications of those principles.

When the goal is to move people into a desired action, there is a temptation to confuse the desired action with the principles behind it. To take a concrete example, in principle there is a limited “right to work.” People need the means to earn a living and the dignity of being productive. However, all sorts of conditions circumscribe this “right.” A penniless parent can’t put his offspring into indentured servitude to pay the rent. The child’s “right to work” is trumped by his “right to be educated” . . . presuming, of course, that his “right to eat” has been met. It’s a complicated world, out there.

Public programs to foster the “right to work” may also be complicated, taking in account certain factors and not others. Well intentioned people, agreeing that in principle there is a “right to work” may nevertheless differ quite radically about how, in application, this is best accomplished.

The Church’s teaching explains principles for ethical action; it rarely mandates applications, with the few exceptions where principle and application are the same.

JustFaith (and its partners) confuse pet projects with moral principles.

5. A *Catholic* social justice formation program flows from *Catholic* spirituality.

Presumably, one of the attractions of the JustFaith program is that it includes a spirituality component. But that component isn’t *Catholic*.

If it *were* Catholic, participants might attend Mass together, say a Rosary or novena together, do communal holy hours before the Blessed Sacrament, go on pilgrimages, recite the Office, or engage in a dozen other traditional spiritual practices that have, as their object, the worship of God.

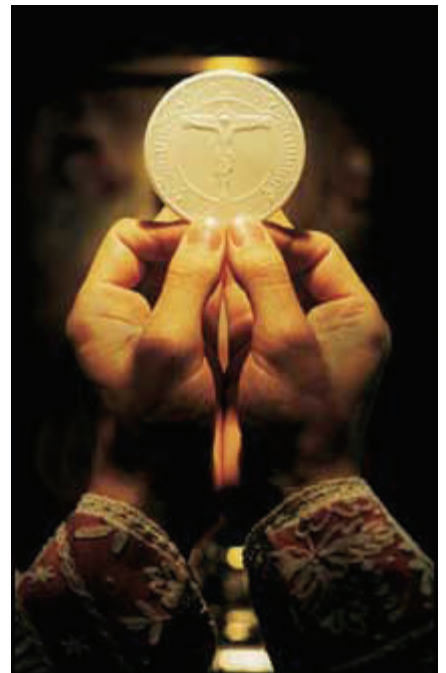
Instead, JustFaith participants are introduced to a *different* kind of spirituality: one that suits the purposes of the program by introducing rituals and “prayers” that hammer home the themes of the moment, placing participants in a communally reflective “space.” The focus isn’t God but the selves participating in a formative journey. “God” is used to rubberstamp the trip. This is a big problem.

JustFaith’s spirituality isn’t Catholic (or Judeo-Christian, for that matter).

6. A *Catholic* social justice formation program operates within the Church – not the “church” imagined or desired but the Church founded by Christ and embodied institutionally.

Fellowship is natural to any band of pilgrims, whether the journey is literal or metaphorical. Shared experiences bond people together. Such small groups, in an ideal formation, provide individual members with a supportive “home base” from which to participate more openly with and within the larger Church.

A formation that operates *outside* of the Church, fostering subtle tensions with the full body of Church



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teaching, does just the opposite. It creates an insulated group that shields its members from teachings that challenge its prejudices in any way. JustFaith encouragement of participants to form “intentional” small communities that are aligned with the Alinskyian organizing networks or Pax Christi places them outside of the Church and into the roiling waters of liberationism and dissent.

JustFaith fosters liberationism.

JustFaith is designed with the six above-mentioned elements because it is *not* a Catholic social justice formation program. Participants who graduate from the program and want to explore certain issues in greater depth can purchase study “modules.” The module on immigration includes liberationist theological reflections. Participants in this study module read a chapter from *A Promised Land, A Perilous Journey: Theological Perspectives on Migration* – a book of essays by some of the most prominent liberationist thinkers. Emotional stories of immigrants are discussed as “parallels between the early Christian communities being persecuted and scattered and today’s migrant communities that form in new “homelands” because of economic, political, or other types of oppression that force them to leave their country of origin.” There is no complimentary discussion of the rights and duties of sovereign nations to protect their borders – despite the fact that one finds such complex discussions in Catholic documents about immigration.

JustFaith graduates are given access to a number of other resources, as well. GradNet, a twice-monthly e-letter about events for the “JustFaith Ministries Graduate Community,” and JustFaith’s *Voices* Newsletter, with articles from the JustFaith partners and others, keep graduates networked with the world of progressive activism.

JustFaith is effective at accomplishing what its supporters intend...it just isn’t accomplishing anything very *Catholic*. ☞

The complete 18-part critique of JustFaith can be read at [www.catholicmediacoalition.org](http://www.catholicmediacoalition.org).

## July Calendar

**Los Pequeños Monthly Meeting**  
July 20, 2012  
Call (505) 293-8006 for information.

**Pro-life Prayer:**  
Planned Parenthood Abortuary  
701 San Mateo Blvd.  
Holy Innocents Chapel:  
(505) 266-4100  
Times: Daily 8 AM – 3 PM

**Helpers of God’s Precious Infants**  
Planned Parenthood Abortuary  
701 San Mateo Blvd.  
Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays: 8 AM – 11:30 AM  
Wednesdays: 12 Noon – 3:00 PM  
For more information, call Phil Leahy:  
(505) 440-3040

**Mass at the Holy Innocents Chapel**  
Tuesdays, Thursdays: noon  
Fridays—Extraordinary Form of the Mass: 9:30 AM  
For more information, call  
(505) 266-4100



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Check out *Project Defending Life’s* radio show, **Lifetalk**, which airs on 1050 AM KTBL every Saturday at 2:00 pm till 3:00 pm.

*“I must say that, among educated people, politics occupies far too great a proportion of time. . . . In truth, questions of higher spirit cannot even be compared to the sort of blinking frivolity of politics. The ultimate problems of life and death show the colossal nature of this difference even more. Modern mankind is characterized precisely by the loss of the ability to answer the principal problems of life and death. People are prepared to stuff their heads with anything, and to talk of any subject, but only to block off the contemplation of this subject. This is the reason for the increasing pettiness of our society, the concentration on the small and irrelevant.”*

- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

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