

J.M.J.

Problems in the Church

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The reason that I put my name at the beginning of this pamphlet is because on our last mail-out, a cardinal from Rome asked why the author's name was not on the pamphlet. He seemed reluctant to make a judgement concerning the material, probably because he did not want to commit one way or the other without knowing whom he would be critiquing. For my part I, am not really concerned with whom is doing the writing; my judgement will be based on the accuracy of what is written. The reader probably has already sensed that one of the problems I see in the Church is a reluctance to tell and stand up for the truth for fear of possible confrontation. So, let us start with fear.

Fear

The biggest problem with fear is, it tends to have a paralyzing effect on the person it takes over. It can make one doubt himself and cause him to conjure up all sorts of horrible and repulsive possibilities. One may even convince himself that it will not do any good to speak up, or take action; in fact, to do anything could actually create more problems with extensive negative consequences. So we end up with silence, and because of this silence nothing positive gets done. The fear of being looked upon as weird or, even worse, being looked upon as cruel or rigid often causes us to forget these awesome warnings from Scripture that goes basically like this: ***If your brother sins and you do not tell him, the sin is yours.***

Fearful people are also extremely sensitive to being looked upon as being radical or extreme. They are so obsessed with the fear of such criticism that they will actually reproach associates with whom they basically agree when the worldly label them as radicals. This insecurity and weakness of character which exists in most good men will cause them to go against their own conscience. Heartache, remorse, and a disgust with self will soon follow. The result of all of this is: They must lie to themselves to justify their weakness.

Now I ask the reader: Has fear ever done this to you? Have you been keeping silent when questionable things happen in your parish or dioceses, home, or workplace? Do you find yourself criticizing others for standing up to situations that compromise the faith, yet wishing that you had the courage to do the same? Do you feel less of a man for not being more assertive in defending the truth?

My answer for fear comes from this quotation by St. Teresa of Avila: ***People who do not love much are weak minded and cowardly; they are filled with a thousand fears and scruples arising from human prudence.*** One can see that as more and more bishops, priests, and fathers lose their capacity for love, such fear and distorted forms of prudence will increase.

One could say, surely our bishops, priests, and fathers of families all love those whom God placed in their charge. The reality is that many do not. In fact, they possibly do not even know what it is to love. This may be hard for you to believe, but just ask yourself the question, "What is love?" What does it really mean to love God and to love our spouse, our children, our neighbor? If you would, stop for a moment and jot down on a piece of paper what you believe it means to love. Now don't go and get a dictionary. If you need a dictionary, it proves my point to a certain degree. For how can one say they love, or that someone else loves, if they have to look it up in a dictionary? Now I realize that one can love and love deeply without knowing the dictionary definition of love. Nevertheless, it does illustrate that most people never consider what it is that really constitutes the meaning of love, let alone Christian love.

Christian Love

Christian love is that love that drives one to heroic degrees of service. It is possessed by people from all walks of life as well as from all races and cultures. Christian love is shown when one performs his God-given duties with zeal and dedication, with little concern for human recognition, be it positive or negative. Though they are sensitive to the feelings of others, their sensitivity never causes them to neglect the truth. The truth must always be told. It should be told boldly, accurately, and as simply as possible. This is the everyday practice of those who truly love.

Let us consider the love aspect of what St. Teresa had to say. If St. Teresa is right, then one may assume that those who love much will be stronger and more fearless. They are the ones that stand firm in their beliefs. Their sincere love of God drives them to a deep desire for the truth. Only sincere love will drive a person to seek knowledge that could show that they themselves are in error. They may even have to do things that will make them unpopular with friends, family, and parishioners. Protestant ministers who became Catholic can testify to that. This is frightening to the saintly person and nearly impossible for those who do not possess this Christlike love. The love for souls drives one to sacrifice fame, fortune, and reputation to bring the sinner back to the life of grace that God intends for them to possess. For those who truly love, sin is something with which they can never compromise; for they know that sin is the essence of all evil, and those who love God can never tolerate evil.

The Normalization of Mortal Sin

As love decreases, so does the abhorrence of sin decrease. The desire to be accepted and respected by the world gradually becomes an obsession. To justify our silence in the face of what we know the Church teaches is a very serious sin (traditionally called mortal sin), we try to normalize the evil of the sin. In other words, we try to make sin respectable.

This is done by being more open to discussing sinful matters in public, with a sympathetic slant toward the person doing the evil, which puts us in a seemingly compassionate position toward the sinner's plight. The biggest problem with this is that it is telling everyone, who might be aware of the sinful situation, that it is okay—God understands. It is really those who are hardhearted and judgmental who are out of step with God. We might even quote a little Scripture to prove our point. We all can remember, "Judge not." This makes it almost impossible to get the poor sinner back in conformity to right living. Consequently, the sinner is in the position of possibly never knowing that they are living in mortal sin and never realizing that the suffering that they are encountering is just the natural consequence of one living in the state of mortal sin.

This, in my opinion, is a leading problem in the Church and if you think about it, a truly disastrous one. For how are we to change a sinful society if those in the position of authority have allowed sin, supposedly the most dreadful thing possible for a Christian, to become an acceptable way of life? We are now to the point that even the most faithful of the laity are fearful of being reproached if they tried to correct this travesty which has developed. This has all taken place under the not-so-watchful eyes of those who are supposed to see to it that the purity of the Faith is preserved and passed on to the faithful. Sad to say, most of the faithful are no longer faithful; for they have, for the most part, abandoned Holy Mother Church. They had to leave the Church in search of the guidance that their shepherds were either too occupied or too fearful to give them.

It is truly disheartening to see supposedly orthodox leaders actually justifying illicit and destructive practices that they know in their hearts are wrong. This is the reason many of these leaders become very critical of those trying to uphold the authentic faith and sound family practices. They do this because of their fear of worldly criticism. These poor fearful people must surely suffer tremendously with their conscience. They are fearful because they did not truly love God and His people sufficiently. St. Teresa's words ring out the sad truth extremely well.

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