



Broken Stained-Glass Windows The Dangers of Catholic Apathy

In his 1995 novel, *The Last Coyote*, Michael Connolly's battered and disillusioned detective Harry Bosch compared the public's pervasive indifference to *little crimes*, like prostitution and gambling, to the broken windows in an abandoned building. *When we look the other way*, he said, *it weakens us all*. While this principle has been primarily applied to cities, it also fits the Catholic Church.

CLOSET CATHOLICS

In March of 1982 theorists James Q. Wilson and George Kelling published their *Broken Windows* theory in an article that appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*. The theory states that if the first broken window in a building is not repaired, then people who like breaking windows will assume that no one cares about the building and more and more windows will be broken. Soon the building will have no functioning windows.

The authors directed their research at some of the largest urban centers in the country, such as New York and Los Angeles. Nowhere in America were the broken windows more prominent than New York City. When he first became mayor, Rudy Guiliani embraced the windows theory. He cleaned the prostitutes off the major streets, swept the homeless into shelters, stopped the panhandlers from harassing pedestrians and discouraged the notorious *squeegee men* from their extortive attempts to *spit-shine* motorists' windshields. By the end of his first term in 1998, New York had become a friendlier and safer place to live.

Philosophy professor and one of the most powerful advocates of life in North America, Donald DeMarco, wrote that the *dominant sin of our time is sloth or spiritual laziness*. (See list of highly recommended books by DeMarco on Page 4.) Sloth often generates indifference, leading to more serious figurative cracks in the stained-glass windows of the Church. Since the early 1960s, most Catholics have not been that well versed in their faith. The average Catholic betrays a lack of interest in the salient issues of his Church and its relation to secular society. Challenge them on abortion, euthanasia, and stem cell research. Many Catholic laymen dissent from Rome and tend to be well versed in the critical arguments against the Church's teachings, in place of the rudiments of their faith.

Consequently, the Catholic in the pew has failed to recognize that his Church has been under attack for a half century. As

St. Louis University History Professor James Hitchcock revealed in a radio interview for *The Dangers of Apathy*, *Christianity is being assaulted from two different directions*. It is being assaulted horizontally by those who say that there are many religions in the world and *Christianity is only one* of many religious choices, such as Buddhism and Hinduism. The vertical attack tells Catholics that they *do not even have a true knowledge of their own religion*.

The opponents of Christianity argue that *they understand Christianity better than Christians do*. This is evidenced in books like Dan Brown's *The DaVinci Code*, which has created a cottage industry of books attacking the Church, including Stephen Berry's *the Templar Legacy* and Raymond Khoury's *The Last Templar*.

STICKS AND STONES

While the adage about sticks and stones may serve the playground well, in the arena of ideas, it can be self-destructive. The stones of the Church's enemies have been primarily of an historical nature. Since most American students have little understanding and perception of their history, it is not surprising that too many Catholics exude a virtual ignorance about the breadth and depth of the Catholic Church's 2000-year history.

A convenient stone used to smash the Church's beautiful stained-glass windows, has been the Crusades, which were a series of military pilgrimages (1075-1271). Their main purpose was to recapture the Holy Land from Muslim cultural imperialism. Unlike Jesus, Muhammad was a warrior whose religion used violence to advance its religious teachings. Enlightened historians, who despise the religious nature of Western Civilization, have egregiously inverted history to portray the Muslims as the innocent victims of an imperial West, motivated by the greed and religious bigotry of the Catholic Church. What they have failed to teach is the fact that the Crusades were a defensive reaction to the Muslim invasion of Europe, taking nearly seven hundred years to repel.

The Inquisition is also another favorite of the Church's enemies. Burning religious dissenters at the stake is an extreme punishment that strikes at the very heart of the American doctrines of free speech and so-called separation of Church and State. Given its historical context, when heresy and rebellion in Europe threatened the Church's existence, the guilty were turned

over to civil government and sometimes executed. In the 14th-15th centuries, more emphasis was placed on the dangers of losing one's immortal soul. When dissenters and heretics started spreading false teachings that denied the essential truths of the Church, the death penalty for those who would not recant was decided by the civil government as a way of protecting the faithful from eternal damnation.

The Galileo affair is another example of a historical distortion that is used against the Church. As a previous Mindszenty Report (November 2005) pointed out, Galileo agreed to teach the Copernican system as a hypothesis, only to recant much later. He arrogantly stepped over the line with his accusation that the Biblical texts that contradicted his scientific data had to be reinterpreted in light of his findings. It was his stubborn insistence on the unproven truth of his positions that caused his conflict with the papacy, not his scientific theories.

The fourth and largest stone in the anti-Catholic quarry has been the clerical sexual abuse scandal that is arguably the worst affliction to hit the Church in 500 years. While no one should attempt to defend the indefensible, much can be said to put the situation in its proper context. There is serious doubt that this scandal, unsurprising in a sexually charged culture, had anything to do with pedophilia or was related to the Church's celibacy discipline. About 90% of the verifiable cases involved male adolescents. The mainstream media and the American hierarchy seem to have used pedophilia as a code word to mask the reality of homosexuality in the priesthood.

THE BACK OF THE CHURCH

In the 19th and early 20th century, Catholics of Irish, Italian, and Polish descent fought hard for acceptance into American society. By the time cultural Marxism made its inroads into American society after World War II, the Catholic in the pew reflected more the indifference to morality of his adopted culture, than he did Church teachings. He found golf at the club or a family picnic more attractive than Sunday Mass.

After Vatican II, Church teachings on Heaven, Hell and judgment started to fade to the back of the Church. Notions of universal salvation spewed from the pulpits. Over 100 years ago the Church identified this heresy as *religious indifferentism*.

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia, an absolute indifference to religion is common to all atheistic and materialistic societies. What has emerged in the West is what the Catholic Encyclopedia calls *restricted indifference*, another of the pernicious outgrowths of the French Enlightenment. These advocates, such as Jean Jacques Rousseau, hold that since all religions were essentially the same, God looked only into the sincerity of one's heart. To say that the contradictions, errors, half-truths and falsehoods, protected under the mantle of *religion*, please God, is an egregious thought that is dangerous in practice.

STARCHED HABITS

In searching for the origins of Catholic indifference, one should look no further than the Catholic school classroom. Like spiritual mothers who rocked the student cradle with their

starched habits of love and discipline, the sisters stood watch over generations of Catholic moral development. Armed with a ruler in one hand and a catechism in the other, there was no way the Church's teachings would be ignored.

Things changed during the turbulent 1960s with Vatican II and a radical feminist movement which introduced moral confusion and doubt into America's convents. Ann Carey's intriguing 1997 book, *Sisters in Crisis: The Tragic Unraveling of Women's Religious Communities*, details the dynamics at work. She quotes psychologist Dr. William Coulson, who along with Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, formed an *engine of destruction* that changed the convent and Catholic schools forever. For women religious they conducted hundreds of obligatory sensitivity training seminars, once known as *encounter groups*. These insidious sessions, under the name Educational Innovation Project, undermined the fundamental bases for faith and devotion in the religious orders from coast-to-coast and affected thousands of nuns, starting with the sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in California.

Dr. Coulson, who much later realized the errors of his ideas, said that he *freed* these women from the constraints of the Catholic faith. But what really happened was to leave them adrift on an ocean of doubt without the sturdy oars of faith, convent community life, and the guiding star of the Church. The methodology was cultural Marxism applied to the convent. In the 1960s there were 186,000 sisters across the United States. When they finished the *engine of destruction*, that number had seriously declined. Thanks to their psychological therapy, the teaching sisters declined to fewer than 7,400 and currently there are fewer than 75,000 sisters overall with a median age of 69. The 1985 *Ratzinger Report* warned of *a future without sisters*. The lay teachers who replaced the nuns have strived to duplicate the spiritual and moral development expertise. Also, the new textbooks from the 1960's on the teaching of the Catholic faith failed to teach the whole faith, they omitted important doctrines of the faith, and obscured others. Nevertheless, the laity continues to support their Catholic schools through money and sacrifice.

The magnitude of the destruction wreaked upon the Orders of Sisters and the Catholic schools awakened Dr. Coulson who has recanted his previous position and determined to tell the truth of these tragic mistakes by speaking in public forums.

THE UNSPOKEN ISSUE

On the hierarchical level, the situation is perilous. The one issue that separates Catholics from the secular society is the Church's persistent opposition to abortion. It is the linchpin of the Marxist feminism that has inculcated itself into the American mainstream. Conservative columnist Patrick Buchanan identified it as the fuel that stoked the fire in Supreme Court Justice Samuel Alito's confirmation hearings. Buchanan raised what he called the *unspoken issue*. While Justice Alito is a Catholic, his nomination met with strong opposition from fellow Catholics on the Senate Judiciary Committee. Four Democratic Catholic Senators—Patrick Leahy, Ted Kennedy, Dick Durbin and Joe Biden—shown with his forehead blackened cross on national television on Ash Wednesday—did their level best to embarrass,

humiliate and disavow Judge Alito so as to prevent him from jeopardizing the infamous *Roe v. Wade* decision.

Buchanan questioned why the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops had been so *deathly silent* in this internecine war of Catholics. He questioned *where are the Catholic echoes of John Paul II's condemnation of the Culture of Death?* Buchanan blamed His Eminence Theodore Cardinal McCarrick of Washington for his spineless failure to address the moral obligations of these recalcitrant Catholic politicians. When Democratic Presidential Candidate John Kerry ignored Catholic teachings in 2004, Cardinal McCarrick refused to order priests to deny him Communion. Suddenly pro-abortion Kerry was seen at the altar rail and won half the Catholic vote. With logic that only a Jesuit could fathom, Cardinal McCarrick said that he did not want to trivialize the *sacred nature of the Eucharist*, by turning the sacrament into a *partisan political battleground*.

LITTLE PLATOONS

With leadership like this, it is not surprising that apathy has held such a stranglehold on the Catholic imagination. Forty years of dissent and doctrinal unrest is enough. It is time that Catholics turned the tables on the liberals who have been defining and controlling the parameters of the *Culture of Death*. What the Church needs now is a good defense. It needs more apologists, Catholic leaders, lay and clerical who are willing to defend the Church in the light of a secularism that wishes slowly to choke it to death. The Church needs dedicated *platoons* of defenders in the stature of Tertullian, Justin the Martyr, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. It needs fearless Catholics, who are not afraid to explain their Catholic faith, so as to dispel the overwhelming barrage of false information and distortion that lies at the root of Catholic apathy.

For the Catholic lay person to rise to the challenge and publicly defend the Church, he must first know his faith. He must fervently study Church history, the life issues and lend a compassionate ear to the victims of cleric sexual abuse, without condemning the Church at large for what is more a societal and philosophical problem and not intrinsic to the nature of the Church or religion. He must do everything in his power to ascertain that the message of truth is not distorted through the prism of a secular media that strive for the Church's disappearance. Apologists must refuse to allow unfair criticism of the Church to filter into their conversations and public discourses.

The Internet, the local library and a good Catholic bookstore are the places to begin. The salient arguments of the 19th-20th century Catholic apologists, such as G. K. Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, C. S. Lewis (a pro-Catholic Anglican writer) and the cogent writings of English convert, John Cardinal Newman still ring true today.

William A. Borst, Ph.D., Feature Editor, is the author of Liberalism: Fatal Consequences and The Scorpion and the Frog: A Natural Conspiracy available from the author at PO Box 16271, St. Louis, MO 63105.

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News & Notes

DALLAS, TX—The 22nd annual CMF Conference in Dallas took place February 25th in the historic Pavilion at the Belo Mansion in the heart of Dallas' Arts District. The Pavilion has voluminous space, magnificent architecture and total comfort for the 425 persons present, plus space for the Divine Mercy books and artful religious goods.

Chrm. Carmen S. Glenn and Hon. Chrm. Susan Stanzel welcomed five VIP priests to open the Conference by reciting the Rosary.

Speakers: **Humberto Fontova** author of **Fidel**, native of Cuba and survivor of Katrina, gave dramatic information on past and present conditions for Cubans. **Richard Thompson** outlined the Catholic answer to the American Civil Liberties Union which strives and usually succeeds in removing God from our daily lives. **Keynoter Archbishop Raymond L. Burke** lifted up our minds and hearts to a deeper understanding of Our Lady of Guadalupe's important message to all Americans. **Bill Gertz** headlined documentation on the China threat to the U.S. from major directions: defense, intelligence, security.

These masterful talks are available on cassette/CD at \$8 each or a set for \$32 from ACTS, 11139 S. Towne Square, St. Louis, MO 63123, or call 1-800-642-2287.

The Motherhood Award was given to Mrs. Theresa C. Martter and the Freedom Award to Salem F. McLean.

The Program fittingly concluded with Archbishop Burke celebrating Mass at the nearby beautiful Guadalupe Cathedral with music from the Collegium Cantorum, University of Dallas.

May God bless everyone who participated and who was present!



*Chrm. Carmen Glenn, Pres. Eleanor Schlafly,
Bishop Charles Victor Grabmann, Hon. Chrm. Susan Stanzel*



*Committee Members:
Tiffany Stanzel, Colleen Parro, Michael Stanzel*



*Freedom Awardee,
Salem F. McLean*



Archbishop of St. Louis, Raymond L. Burke



*Motherhood Awardee,
Theresa Martter*

The Mindszenty Report is published monthly by the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation, 7800 Bonhomme Ave., P.O. Box 11321, St. Louis, MO 63105
314-727-6279, Fax 314-727-5897.

Subscription rate: \$20.00/year, \$36.00/two years. Outside the U.S.A. \$28.00

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Contributions to the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation are tax deductible as allowed by law.

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