

“...when you hear Me say anything, you shall warn them for me. If I tell the wicked man that he shall surely die, and you do not speak out to dissuade the wicked man from his way, he shall die for his guilt, but I will hold you responsible for his death. But if you warn the wicked man, trying to turn him from his way, and he refuses to turn from his way, he shall die for his guilt, but you shall save yourself” (Ezekiel 33:7-9).

The Pontifical Council clearly stated that: “The phrase ‘and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin’ is clear and must be understood in a manner that does not distort its sense so as to render the norm inapplicable. The three required conditions are:

a) grave sin, understood objectively, being that the minister of communion would not be able to judge from subjective imputability;

b) obstinate persistence, which means the existence of an objective situation of sin that endures in time and which the will of the individual member of the faithful does not bring to an end, no other requirements (attitude of defiance, prior warning, etc.) being necessary to establish the fundamental gravity of the situation in the Church.

c) The manifest character of the situation of grave habitual sin.”

There can be no doubting that most of the major political figures who are on record publicly as favoring abortion-on-demand, euthanasia, cloning or fetal experimentation qualify under those three conditions for censure. They qualify for being denied Holy Communion because they have a direct impact on the moral or immoral structure of a government, inasmuch as they are the direct agents in matters pertaining to legislation

which forms a structure of sin, or a structure of goodness.

It is true that the Pontifical Council stated that: “Naturally, pastoral prudence would strongly suggest the avoidance of instances of public denial of Holy Communion.” Those who seize upon this statement to justify their refusal to act under the provisions of Canon 915 relativize the Canon and rob it of all its force. Note that the Pontifical Council used the word suggest rather than the word demand.

Prudence as defined by Aristotle is the virtue which deals with contingency and gray areas (cf., Nicomachean Ethics 1144a-1145a). What prudence strongly suggests in one contingent scenario might be totally different from another contingent scenario. In an ideal world, we would always avoid confrontational instances. We are obviously not in an ideal world.

There is no need for public denial of Holy Communion. There is no need to reduce the need for public denial of Holy Communion to the worst case scenario: the minister of Holy Communion loudly refusing to give the Host to a loudly protesting pro-abortion politician in front of a church full of people. The implementation of Canon 915 can be carried out in complete privacy and confidentiality.

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Pamphlet 482

Politicians and Holy Communion

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“So you wish to stray and be lost? How much better I do not also wish this. Certainly, I dare say, I am unwelcome. But I listen to the

Apostle who says:

‘Preach the word; insist upon it, welcome and unwelcome.’

Welcome to whom? Unwelcome to whom? By all means welcome to those who desire it; unwelcome to those who do not.

However unwelcome, I dare to say: ‘You wish to stray, you wish to be lost; but I do not want this’ For the One whom I fear does not wish this.

And should I wish it, consider His words of reproach:

‘The straying sheep you have not recalled; the lost sheep you have not sought.’

Shall I fear you rather than Him?

‘Remember we must all present ourselves before the judgment seat of Christ’

I shall recall the straying; I shall seek the lost.

Whether they wish it or not, I shall do it.”
(St. Augustine, Sermo 46, 1-2: CCL 41, 529-530)

The controversy over denying Holy Communion to pro-abortion politicians has generated a lot of heat and very little light. Sacred Scripture and the Magisterium of the Church have spoken clearly on the subject, but some either do not understand what has been said, or worse, have chosen to ignore it.

Saint Paul said: “This means that whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord

unworthily sins against the body and blood of the Lord. A Man should examine himself first, only then should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup. He who eats and drinks without recognizing the body eats and drinks a judgment on himself.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-29) The prohibition found in the declarations of the Magisterium is based on this divine revelation. The Church is not free to enact positive ecclesiastical laws which would oppose this revealed doctrine.

“Therefore it is the shepherd’s task not to keep silent, and it is your task, even if we the shepherds are silent, to hear the words of The Shepherd from the Scriptures.” (St. Augustine, *Sermo* 46, 20-21)

The Magisterium repeats the injunction of Saint Paul in Canon 916 of the Code of Canon Law: “A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or to receive the Body of the Lord without prior sacramental confession unless a grave reason is present and there is no opportunity to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible.” The Code of Canon Law of the Eastern Churches has a parallel canon: “Those who are publicly unworthy are forbidden from receiving the Divine Eucharist” (can. 712).

According to the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts in that Council’s June 24, 2000 Declaration on the question: “Should a priest deny Communion to a Catholic who is an obstinate public sinner?” The answer is “yes.” The reason cited by the Pontifical Council is: “In effect, the reception of the body of Christ when one is publicly unworthy constitutes an objective harm to the ecclesial communion: it is a behavior that affects the rights of the Church and of all the faithful to

live in accord with the exigencies of that communion” (No. 1).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Code of Canon Law clearly states that “Those upon whom the penalty of excommunication or interdict has been imposed or declared, and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin, are not to be admitted to Holy Communion” (can. 915). Significantly, in the light of the current controversy in the United States, the Pontifical Council further stated:

Any interpretation of can. 915 that would set itself against the canon’s substantial content, as declared uninterruptedly by the Magisterium and by the discipline of the Church throughout the centuries, are clearly misleading. One cannot confuse respect for the wording of the law (cfr. Can. 17) with the improper use of the very same wording as an instrument for relativizing the precepts or emptying them of their substance.

Relativism is a philosophical term describing a theory that conceptions of truth and moral values are not based on objectivity and the absolute, but instead are baseless and grounded on that which is relative and subjective to the persons or groups holding them.

I suggest that those who maintain that they cannot support the refusing of Holy Communion to pro-abortion politicians because the time of the distribution of Holy Communion is a time of unity in the Body of Christ are indeed relativizers of the objectively established precepts. Further, their belief that it would therefore be wrong to make it a time of confrontation and discord by refusing Holy Communion to anyone is indeed relativizing the precepts, but moreover, emptying them of their substance as well.

Those who relativize the belief that it would be wrong to make the time of receiving Holy Communion a time of confrontation and discord are guilty of relativizing the objectively based precepts, which are based on Ultimate Truth Himself. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. To relativize or compromise the objectively based precepts is to directly relativize Truth Himself!

The position of those who are opposed to the implementation of Canon 915 for the reasons just cited is untenable. First, because most priests have had to refuse Holy Communion to someone at one time or another for reasons having nothing to do with that person’s beliefs. No priest, upon seeing a person standing before him whom he recognizes as having profaned the host on another occasion would give the host to that person again.

Similarly, most priests, on recognizing that the person standing before him is not a Christian, would not give that person Holy Communion but would simply give the person a blessing and ask the person to see him after Mass. To do otherwise in either case would gravely scandalize the congregation.

Some have indicated their unwillingness to act under the provisions of Canon 915 because they say that they are not in a position to judge another person’s thinking or conscience on the subject of abortion, euthanasia and fetal experimentation. This is another example of relativizing the precepts or emptying them of their substance. This is another example of attacking the Truth Himself, Who is the objective foundation for these precepts, and Who IS the Holy Communion being attacked!