

Further Teachings

In last week's bulletin, I wrote briefly about and gave some definitions of apostasy, heresy, and schism. This week I want to hone in a little bit more on some specifics. I mentioned that heresy requires obstinacy, or perseverance in a belief that is contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church *even after having been properly taught and/or corrected*.

This does not mean, however, that we should enjoy or encourage ignorance among the faithful. Far from it. Rather, this places a particular responsibility and a burden on bishops and priests to make sure that their people are educated in the faith. And when the people are unclear about something, they should be counseled directly. When they disagree with something, they should be corrected. These are the first three of the Spiritual Works of Mercy and something we should all strive to follow.

It is not a kindness to say nothing and let others sink into ignorance. The longer a person stays in that state, believing something that is incorrect, the harder it becomes to change that belief. You are not loving a person by staying quiet and letting them "figure it out on their own." You are only subjecting them to being lost in the chaos of our confusing times, when you could be the one who brings them the light to guide them home.

I try to take this role seriously, especially considering my role in the Church. For I know I will be judged not only on how well (or poorly) I personally have lived the commandments and teachings of the Church, but also on how I may have helped or hindered others in living those same commandments (cf. Mt. 18:6, Lk 17:2). I will do my best to instruct, counsel, and admonish when necessary, and promote opportunities for further study, but in the end it still requires your participation. I encourage you again to take advantage of those opportunities as they arise to learn more about your faith and grow deeper in your relationship with God. Even in these bulletin articles, when I make reference to Scripture or Catechism or other articles using the "cf." (meaning "confer" or "compare"), take a moment to look it up on your phone or tablet and take that next step; go a little deeper.

The Precepts of the Catholic Church (cf. CCC 2041-2043) are something that every Catholic should know. Even if you cannot necessarily recite them from memory, you should be aware of them and have a general sense of what they are. The Precepts are basically the *minimum* guidelines that we as Catholics are obliged to do.

The first of these, regarding the required attendance at Mass on Sundays and Holy of Days of Obligation, is probably pretty widely known, though, unfortunately, not necessary widely followed. You have probably heard many homilies or other reminders of this, and that willful failure to observe this obligation (when able) would constitute a mortal sin. What you might not realize, is that believing this obligation is not necessary or that in no longer applies (even after being told authoritatively that it does), would move it from simply a sin and into heresy. It would be basically denying or disbelieving some aspect of the Faith that must be observed. Even worse would be teaching others that Mass is not required, or that it is not a big deal to miss Mass on Sundays. If you are in a position of authority (as a parent or prominent community member)

and you teach heresy to others by word *or by example*, be aware of those same Bible verses I referenced above.

Again, I want to make clear that I am not condemning anyone or trying to criticize them. I am trying to fulfill my obligations to teach, counsel, and correct. I do not want anyone to say to the Lord, "No one ever told me!" I truly want what is best for you, even if it means speaking the hard truth in love. If you have questions or concerns about what this obligation means or how it is fulfilled, talk to me or another priest. We are here to help.

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