



Throwing Open the Windows-Again

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Who remembers Leander Perez? Probably not many people, because his fifteen minutes on the national stage were played out long ago, in the 1950s and early '60s. He was a Louisiana state judge and the undisputed political boss of Plaquemines Parish in Louisiana. He was also a hard-core racist. In 1965 he provided this helpful summary of his racial views: "Animals right out of the jungle. Passion. Welfare. Easy life. That's the Negro." But Perez went beyond offering opinions; he put them to work by preventing the county's large black population from voting, getting decent housing, attending schools or using any public facilities with whites. And he used his powerful influence to keep the Catholic schools all-white. This put him on a collision course with New Orleans Archbishop Joseph F. Rummel. In 1953 the Archbishop began gingerly moving toward integrating the parish's Catholic schools. He made the case for it in a pastoral letter, "Blessed Are the Peacemakers," which he ordered to be read at all the archdiocese's churches. The next year, after the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, he went further, predicting that the Church would integrate its schools before the public schools did, and in 1956, in still another pastoral letter, he flatly declared that "racial segregation is morally wrong and sinful" and ordered integration to begin.

Perez and his followers exploded in wrath. Challenging his right to speak in the name of the Church and insisting that the Bible permitted segregation, they picketed the archbishop's residence and organized boycotts to cut off donations. A cross was burned on his lawn. One of the Catholic schools was torched, and at another school someone drained the fluid of the schoolbus's brakes. Undeterred, Archbishop Rummel stepped up the pressure at his own end, threatening to excommunicate Perez and two other Catholics who were active in resisting his orders. When they persisted, he finally followed through, excommunicating them shortly before Easter of 1962.

In what many now call "the liberal press" but in those days was just called the press, Archbishop Rummel was hailed as a hero. *Time* and *Newsweek* portrayed him as a courageous man of the cloth defending basic Church doctrines against challenge by powerful politicians. Under the headline, "The Archbishop Stands Firm," *Time* said: "It is unmistakable church doctrine that segregation, in schools and church, is against the law of God." CBS gave Dan Rather a full hour to narrate a program entitled, "The Priest and the Politician," which left no doubt as to who was in the right.

Recently, in what appeared to be a quibbling attempt to minimize the valor of Archbishop Rummel, the aptly named *Times-Picayune* of New Orleans reported that he came to his decision "reluctantly," because he "was worried that he might overplay his hand and split the church." But this only underscores his bravery and depth of character. He did not enter rashly into this emotional confrontation. He knew that he was confronting not just Perez and the two others but the majority sentiment of whites in Plaquemines Parish, including, probably, the majority of Catholics-and a substantial portion of his own clergy. It was a confrontation which he earnestly wished to avoid. In the end, rightly or wrongly, he concluded that there was no alternative to this most extreme form of discipline.

Rummel's dilemma bears some obvious parallels to the one facing America's Catholic bishops today. The vast majority of Catholic Democratic officeholders, and a minority of Catholic Republicans, regularly support abortion, euthanasia, and the killing of human embryos for research. To say that their actions directly violate Church doctrine seems almost beside the point. Yes, the Church is pretty much against killing innocent people; you can find that in the Catechism. You can also find it in the Declaration of Independence, the U.N.'s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in the hearts and minds of civilized people everywhere. Until recently in this nation's history, American officials of all religions embraced the principle without qualification: it was applied to the healthy and the sick, to newborn babies and to children yawning in the womb, to young people and to old people suffering from dementia. Now, for many politicians and judges, the principle no longer applies across the board. Certain categories of people can be killed at the will of others. These exemptions have resulted in the death of at least 45 million since 1973.

For reasons which they may have to explain some day, a number of Catholic lawmakers now openly flout the warnings of their Church against complicity in the killing. The bishops of the Church are supposed to take care of their flocks, instruct them and, when necessary, discipline them. What are they supposed to do at this point? Are these the only alternatives: stand back and do nothing while professed Catholics participate in gross violations of human rights, or impose a penalty which, as Archbishop Rummel realized more than forty years ago, may risk overplaying their hand and splitting the church?

Before we can even consider these questions, we have to ask this question: Why are we just starting to talk about this *now*? Catholic politicians have been doing this for decades. It was in the 1970s that Senator Kennedy changed from saying that abortion "is not a legitimate or acceptable response to any problem of society," as he did as late as 1976, to actively supporting it. The same was true of the late Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who has been credited with inventing the "personally opposed" line that Governor Mario Cuomo later made famous in a speech at Notre Dame University. Abortion was debated at the Democrats' 1976 presidential nominating convention, but the party sponsored a plank backing *Roe v. Wade*. By 1980 the debate was all but over: the Democratic party platform that year backed the public funding of abortion. The Democrats had become the abortion party, and few Democratic Catholic politicians cared, or dared, to dissent.

As early as 1976, then, some 28 years ago, the Catholic bishops could have begun a campaign of unequivocally condemning abortion-and not just condemning, but explaining that abortion is wrong, that it is a killing process visited upon the most vulnerable and defenseless human beings. They could have talked about the humanity of the unborn child, the beating heart, the brainwaves, the child in the womb sucking her thumb. All of this was known at the time; ultrasound was making it visible even to resisting eyes. The bishops could have begun a long-term public education campaign on abortion. And, in fairness to them, it must be acknowledged that they did speak out-at first. But in the face of an enraged reaction by pro-abortion Democrats, they flinched.

One of the first to speak out was Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, who was president of the United States Catholic Conference (USCC) from 1974 to 1977. He roundly

condemned abortion and urged Catholic politicians to take a public stand against it. But he was unprepared for the reaction. The late '70s marked the high-water point of radical feminism, and his remarks unleashed a torrent of abuse against the Catholic clergy: What right did these celibate males have to talk about women's reproductive rights? What did they know about bearing children? What did they even know about sex? Mixed with these taunts was what appeared to be a resurrection of the old nineteenth-century nativist charge that the Vatican was trying to "meddle" in American politics.

Cardinal Bernardin was literally dumbstruck, as were most of his brother bishops. For two or three years they said nothing, or next to nothing, about abortion, and when they finally started talking again, it was in a new, softer, language. Of this, more later. The intriguing question is why they retreated in the face of a transparent campaign of intimidation. These men were not cowards. One can easily imagine them standing beside Archbishop Rummel, fearlessly defying the racial bigots and thugs in Plaquemines Parish. So why, less than twenty years later, did they retreat in the face of anti-Catholic bigotry?

To understand the reason, we can't focus only on the bishops. We need a larger canvas and a broader brush. We have to look at the Catholic clergy as a whole, the priests and the nuns, and also the activists in the Catholic laity. And we must do so in the context of a certain time frame.

The best time to start is the year 1962, the year Archbishop Rummel excommunicated Leander Perez. In 1962 the curtain was going up on "the sixties." John Kennedy was in the White House and John XXIII was Pope. Vatican II began in the fall of that year. Civil Rights marches and sit-ins were breaking out all over the South, and they were being met with police dogs, fire hoses, not to mention TV cameras and sympathetic reporters from New York City. Where did that leave Catholics? Well, if they were attentive Catholics they would have marked what the Pope said when he convened the new Council: "I want to throw open the windows of the Church so that we can see out and the people can see in." Even then, three years before *Gaudium et Spes* made it official, the most earnest and serious Catholics wanted to bring the Church into the modern world, to engage it in dialogue, to teach it and to learn from it.

Over the next five years it seemed clear to these same earnest and serious Catholics that the people whose views were the most compatible with the teachings of the Church were those fighting for civil rights and peace. It didn't matter that many of them were not Christian in any sense, either in belief or in their lifestyle. What mattered was that they were moving America toward goals that were essentially Christian, so it was not the business of Catholics to make pharisaical judgments about their religious views or their personal behavior. They were doing the Lord's work, and that was enough. So they all marched together, including the priests and the nuns and earnest, sensitive lay people-people who hadn't marched in anything before except religious processions. They were helping to throw open the windows of the Church so that they could be seen in the company of their new friends. Their friends were liberals.

The "L" word. The word has become so naughty that liberals don't want to be called that anymore. (They're "progressives" now.) But "liberal" wasn't an unpopular label

back in the early '60s. It was associated with the New Deal, which was very popular. Not everyone in the liberal movement was Catholic but the movement as a whole was philo-Catholic. No sane liberal politician would ever accuse the Catholic Church of "meddling" in American politics. Republicans of old sometimes talked like that, and so did the Klan, but not Northern liberal Democrats. Sometimes they even welcomed a little Catholic meddling, especially when they came looking for support for their economic programs. To serious, devout Catholics, then, it made sense both morally and politically to align themselves with liberals in the 1960s. What they were unprepared for were the changes that came over liberalism during the decade. Abortion was never even mentioned in the first edition of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, but by 1968 it was one of the key items on the agenda of Friedan's National Organization of Women. In the next few years the normalization of homosexuality was added to the list of liberal causes (it was seen as a new civil rights movement). Finally, a distinctly anti-Christian streak was starting to appear in liberalism-evident, for example, in the use of courts to oversee the removal of all Christian references and symbols from the public square. The Catholic Church was often singled out for especially unfriendly notice, partly because, of all the major Christian denominations, its teachings were the most sharply opposed to the new liberal agenda, and partly because, well, it was the Church. It was a hierarchical organization based on authority, tradition, and revelation, and it seemed to rank obedience and self-restraint higher than autonomy and self-expression. It was the antithesis of everything the new liberals stood for, and they were not shy about identifying the Church as one of their chief enemies. In just five years, liberalism had gone from Catholiphilic to Catholiphobic.

The Catholics who had allied themselves with the liberals were uncomfortable with these new developments. But they were always assured that *they* were fine, it was just that their Church needed to change with the times. Hadn't their own Vatican II said as much? Couldn't they work within their Church to make it more understanding-get a little dialogue going? All we ask is that . . . By successive stages, "all we ask" escalated, and each time the impression was left that this was absolutely the last demand, that if the Catholics could bring their Church in line with *this*, it would finally be in a position to address the modern world. And so the liberal Catholics would comply. They would go back to their church halls and their Catholic journals and try to convince their confreres that these new demands were really in line with "the spirit of Vatican II." But then, a year or two later, the bar would be raised a little higher. There would be new demands.

We need to understand the plight of liberal Catholics. Many of them probably suspected that they were being rolled-but what else could they do? Where else could they go in the late '60s and the early '70s? To Richard Nixon? To George Wallace? There was nothing left, then, but to cling to the horse they had mounted in the early '60s, even though the horse had somehow mutated, and seemed to be racing out of control. So they stayed on through the '70s, demonstrating their support for all the new causes, from feminism to environmentalism, while leaving much of the heavy lifting on abortion protests to the laypeople who came out to the "March for Life" in Washington every January. The Democrats' official endorsement of abortion finally moved the bishops into public criticism of pro-abortion politicians. But then there came that furious reaction.

What struck them dumb, what silenced them for three years and then caused them to water down their message, was the fact that the fury was coming from their *friends*. These were the people who, literally or figuratively, they had marched with for twenty years. Most of the bishops were cradle Democrats to begin with, and their party ties had grown even firmer during the civil rights and antiwar years. Now their friends were reacting with the most shrill, coarse, bigoted language, sneering at their celibacy, calling them male chauvinists, telling them to get their rosaries off their ovaries. What have we done to deserve this?, they asked their friends. And their friends told them: What you have done is to side with the Republicans and Ronald Reagan. The same year, 1980, that the Democrats endorsed taxpayer-funded abortions, the Republicans went so far as to propose a Constitutional amendment banning them. It had become a party issue.

The bishops, then, needed to put the abortion issue into some context that could more even-handedly hold politicians to account. And in 1983 they came up with it: the seamless garment. In 1983, at a lecture at Fordham University in New York, Cardinal Bernardin linked the Church's pro-life stand with its opposition to nuclear war and the death penalty, in what he called a "consistent ethic of life." Then he went further, linking the "right to life" with the "quality of life." "Those who defend the right to life of the weakest among us must be equally visible in support of the quality of life of the powerless among us. . . . Such a quality of life posture translates into specific political and economic positions on tax policy, employment generation, welfare policy, nutrition and feeding programs, and health care."

At a stroke, it appeared, Cardinal Bernardin had put his fellow Catholics back into the good graces of liberal Democrats. Now a politician who had voted for abortion could say, "but look at my whole shopping cart: look at my votes against cutting welfare, against tax cuts for the rich; and for a nuclear freeze. And look over here! I voted for national health insurance and for raising the minimum wage." Then he might point his finger at his opponent's shopping cart, noting he had voted "wrong" on all these other "life" issues. Therefore, the pro-abortion politician could conclude, "if you're looking for the most consistent right-to-lifer, I'm your candidate. I'm not perfect, but I'm closer than my opponent."

The flaw in this reasoning, as a number of critics have pointed out, is that it equates prudential questions with questions directly concerning human life. Welfare limits, for example, do not necessarily reduce people's quality of life. They may actually increase it by nudging people out of dependency and into productive work. Similarly, tax cuts may provide more jobs for poor people, while minimum wage laws may actually decrease employment. Or, they may not. The point here is not to take one side or the other in these prudential arguments but merely to insist that they have to be *argued*, not pronounced upon in advance. Abortion is different. No one can argue that an abortion could, by some means, actually preserve the life of the child. It kills the child. No counterweight, no adding-together of the other groceries in one's shopping-cart, can justify it, for by that logic a killer could offer as a defense the large number of times he contributed to the American Cancer Society.

The bishops now seem to realize where the "seamless garment" has taken them. The vast majority of Catholic Democrats in Congress, and a few Catholic Republicans, consistently vote for abortion, and so does John Kerry, the first Catholic Democrat

since John Kennedy to run for President. The same is true of some Catholic governors and mayors. They have become quite open about it, insisting that their support for the environment, peace, and social welfare makes them, on balance, more pro- than anti-life. Liberal Catholics who have gone along with this sophistry now discover that the bar has been raised again. Now they have to accept partial-birth abortion, which was too much even for the late Senator Moynihan, author of the "personally opposed" sophism. And abortion itself has metastasized into areas that no one had even thought of before: assisted suicide, extracting stem cells from embryos, cloning them for research purposes. Catholics will have to jump still higher if they want to remain in the liberal fold.

A few bishops have had enough. Archbishop Charles Chaput of Denver, Colorado is one of those who thinks the time has come to ask whether it is appropriate for pro-abortion Catholic politicians to receive Communion. "We've come a long way from John F. Kennedy," he wrote in a column in his diocesan newspaper, "who merely locked his faith in the closet. Now we have Catholic senators who take pride in arguing for legislation that threatens and destroys life-and who then also take Communion." In 2003 Bishop William K. Weigand of Sacramento, California, called on pro-choice Catholic politicians like then-Governor Gray Davis to refrain from taking Communion. Archbishop Raymond Burke of St. Louis, Missouri, went further, saying that he would refuse Communion to pro-abortion politicians. The following year, Bishop Michel Saltarelli of Wilmington, Delaware and Bishop Bernard Harrington of Winona, Minnesota, took Bishop Weigand's position that pro-abortion politicians should voluntarily refrain. Most bishops, however, seemed unwilling to go even that far.

Because of these divisions, the bishops appointed a task force headed by Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of Washington, D.C., an outspoken opponent of denying Communion to pro-abortion politicians. McCarrick worried that it would entangle them in "partisan" contests and be "counterproductive." McCarrick's comments in the task force's "interim report," which was presented at the June, 2004 meeting of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), show that he had still not entirely broken with "seamless garment" thinking. While agreeing that "all issues are clearly not of equal moral worth-human life comes first," McCarrick went on to say that "those things which make life truly human-faith and family, education and work, housing and health care-demand our attention and action as well." Well, all right, and maybe the bishops were also right to put items like the U.S.-Central American Free Trade Agreement and Low-Power Radio Legislation on their agenda for discussion. But there are only so many hours in the day, and one can only hope that McCarrick was serious about the need to put human life first.

After debating the task force's interim report behind closed doors, the bishops' conference issued a statement leaving the decisions about Communion to the individual bishops. The rest of their joint statement contained little more substance, though it did bullet these five points:

- We need to continue to **teach** clearly on our unequivocal commitment to the legal protection of human life. . . .
- We need to do more to **persuade** all people that human life is precious and human dignity must be defended. . . .

- Catholics need to **act** in support of these principles and policies in public life.
- The Catholic community and Catholic institutions should **not honor** those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles.
- We commit ourselves to **maintain communication** with public officials who make decisions every day that touch issues of human life and dignity. [All emphases in the original.]

The most edgy point is the one about not honoring public figures "who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles." The bishops added: "They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions." While that would seem screamingly obvious, we all know of numerous cases where Catholic universities have invited pro-abortion speakers and given them awards. It will be interesting to see what effect, if any, this has on places like Georgetown and Fordham. It would practically bar them from inviting liberal Democrats or "moderate" Republicans, and what other kinds of politicians have been showing up at their commencements?

The bishops' joint decision to leave the Communion question up to individual bishops avoided a divisive debate and a possible deadlock, but it leaves unanswered the question of what the individual bishops *should* do. My own view is that Cardinal McCarrick is probably right to advise against denying Communion, though not, as he contends, because it would look "partisan." The bishops never worried about "partisanship" in the '80s, when they opposed President Reagan's defense policies. If it is the job of bishops to teach, persuade, and act in support of their principles, then let the chips fall where they may. If a disproportionate amount of blame goes to the Democrats, that's the Democrats' problem, not the bishops'. The reason Cardinal McCarrick is right is not because denying Communion may hurt the tender feelings of liberal Democratic politicians but because ordinary Catholics still have not been educated on the abortion issue. It seems strange to say that, more than thirty years after *Roe v. Wade*, but it is true. A few years ago my wife and I stood outside our local church gathering signatures for postcards urging our state legislators to support a ban on partial-birth abortion. We were astounded to find that a large number of congregants in this middle-class, educated parish had no idea what partial-birth abortion is. I remember one in particular asking loudly, almost shouting, "They do *what*?" Poll after poll show that a majority of Catholics, along with other Americans, do not know what the Supreme Court decided in *Roe* and other major abortion cases, do not know that it permits abortions for all nine months, do not know that the Court's definition of women's "health" (as in, for example, "health exceptions" for bans on partial-birth abortion) includes women's "social" or "emotional" health-which means that their doctor, who could be the abortionist, can simply write a note saying that she would be upset if she didn't get an abortion. Americans know nothing of these things, because they have been kept ignorant and misinformed by the press, which does all it can not even to use the term "partial-birth abortion." Many good, church-going Catholics have also begun to repeat the phrases they hear every day in the media, saying that they are "personally opposed" but worried about "imposing" their views on non-Catholics. Some even think that the Catholic clergy shouldn't weigh in on the issue, citing as their reason the "separation of church and state."

Back in 1962 it was not easy for Archbishop Rummel to make the final decision to excommunicate Leander Perez. He had to deal with physical threats against himself

and against the schoolchildren, and he worried that the parish would become even more bitterly divided by his decision. But the archbishop had one asset which, over the long run, helped his cause to triumph: a supportive national press. The TV networks, the big-city papers, the national newsweeklies, all movingly recounted his battle against bigotry and hate, and they acclaimed his decision to excommunicate Perez and his allies. But today the major media regard even the threat of denying Communion to proabortion politicians as clerical interference in the democratic process.

How could the same media that swallowed the camel of excommunication gag on the gnat of denying Communion? The answer, of course, is that this time the bishops are fighting what the press supports.

Since 1984, studies of major media reporters have shown them to be overwhelmingly pro-abortion. The percentages are astounding: they started out in the low 90s and they are now close to 100 percent. And the reporters tend to carry their biases into their reporting. Studies by the press itself, by the *Los Angeles Times* for example, have shown numerous examples of this, and more recently the *New York Times'* own ombudsman has conceded that on all the hot-button "social issues," including abortion, his paper has become a cheerleader for the left.

In the face of a hostile press, then, it should have been the mission of America's Catholic clergy to do what the bishops' conference in 2004 said they should do: inform, teach and persuade their Catholic flocks. They should have been doing that even before *Roe v. Wade*, and they certainly should have been doing it afterwards, month by month, year by year. Had they spoken out, continuously and unambiguously, they might have been able to match the momentum of the pro-abortion feminist movement and prevent its takeover of the Democratic Party. They failed to do so, I believe, because they couldn't bear to destroy their long friendship with liberals, which, stretching back to the early days of the civil rights movement, was so full of shared memories and hopes.

Now they have to play catch-up. More than thirty years of hesitation and false starts have gone by. What is encouraging is the new note of commitment and determination, evident in the bishops' reaction to the interim report of their task force. Teaching, persuading, acting, telling Catholic institutions not to give out any more humanitarian awards to people who facilitate partial-birth abortion-all of this is very good. But their final commitment, "to maintain communication with public officials who make decisions every day that touch issues of human life and dignity," gives one pause. Yes, there is some value in it, especially when it comes to persuading the wavering and praising those-especially pro-life Democrats-who have put themselves on the line in support of life. But for the others, those Catholic lawmakers who regularly support abortion, maintaining "communication" with them seems at best useless. These officials have calculated that they have more to gain than to lose from being pro-abortion. They know that their voting constituencies either want them to vote that way, or, more likely, don't even know about their pro-abortion votes, and if they stopped voting pro-abortion, their donations would dry up and they might have a tough challenger in the next primary election. So, again, since there are only so many hours in the day, the bishops would be better off ignoring the politicians-better off going over their heads and talking to ordinary Catholics, to the people in the pews. Over the past thirty years it does not appear that they have done much of that. Weekly Mass-

goers hear all kinds of cheerful, uplifting, and innocuous messages, but they hear very little about abortion. When they do, it is usually so brief and cryptic that the meaning fades before it gets deciphered. For a variety of reasons, most pastors like it that way. The common denominator is that it saves them from controversy, but, in addition, some pastors intensely dislike pro-life activists and are not particularly pro-life themselves, having bought into the "seamless garment" argument.

Archbishop Rummel faced a similar situation in Plaquemines Parish in the early '60s. Many of those attending Masses, and not a few of those who were saying them, were unenthusiastic about the prospect of racial integration. But Archbishop Rummel spoke to them directly, through pastoral letters that he *ordered* to be read at all the churches. The Catholic bishops today could do worse than to follow his example. If they really believe in teaching, persuading, and acting in support of their principles, let them do it. They don't have to excommunicate anyone or bar them from Communion. But let them talk to faithful Catholics in language that they can understand. (They might want to avoid words like "catechesis" and "the magisterium," because, thanks to modern Catholic religious education, nobody knows what those words mean anymore.) They don't have to go into gruesome detail about what an abortion does. But they can talk about the child in the womb, they can talk about alternatives to abortion, about crisis pregnancy centers and how to reach and help them. They can also, without in the least jeopardizing the Church's tax-exempt status, talk about how to reach their elected representatives and how to get information on their votes. If the bishops ordered these pastoral letters to be read, it would give cover to pastors who are pro-life but afraid to say so at length, and it would pressure the others into some sort of compliance. Inevitably, a few people in some of the churches would walk out during the readings. But in Christianity that has always been the cost of doing business. People walked out in the '60s when racial justice was first preached from the pulpit. But it had to be done, and eventually the message sank in.

More important than "communication with public officials," then, is communication with ordinary Catholics. This will be a challenge for the bishops, for there has been a hardening of pastoral arteries over the past thirty years. During the 1980s the USCCB became increasingly dependent on its staff for drafting its pastoral letters. Its letters on nuclear defense policy and economic justice were so recondite in places that, when asked, some of the bishops themselves couldn't explain them. In recent years they have shown more independence, but they still need to get away from their scribes and out into the Catholic street.

The first priority, then, is better communication with the people who come to mass every Sunday-ordinary Catholic churchgoers, not just the activists. Let them know what their Church teaches on abortion, and why she teaches it. If the bishops don't have those people on their side, they've lost the whole ballgame. Then they need to reach beyond them to the more tepid Catholics who may have been suckered by some of the abortion clichés circulating in the mass media. Finally, they need to reach out to the rest of America. The times may be ripe for this. Americans of all religious persuasions seem to be moving closer to traditional Catholic teachings on cultural issues. More people today seem to understand that divorce has undesirable, and long-term, effects on children. Grass-roots anger at the availability of Internet pornography has led Congress into making serious efforts to keep it away from the nation's children-the pornographers have had to turn to a small judicial minority for protection.

There is a widespread yearning for the public acknowledgement of religion-and, once again, only a handful of judges stand in the way. The vast majority of Americans want to stop courts from overturning a definition of marriage that has been sacred since the dawn of civilization. Finally, and more directly to the point, the majority of Americans, who have never supported the idea of abortion on demand, have been rejecting it by even larger percentages over the last five years.

There are some indications, then, that the Church in America may be entering an era congenial to a new give-and-take with the world. This time, though, the American Church may be able to present its teachings more determinedly, having had forty years to see how the world has gotten along without them. Sobered by that experience, the world actually seems ready to listen. It remains to be seen whether the bishops seize the moment-but one can hope that, in a new, confident spirit, they "throw open the windows of the Church," as John XXIII put it, so that they can see out and the people can see in.

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