



Boston Catholic Journal

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"People immediately recognized Him."
St. Mark 6.54

KIDS without CHRIST **and the Negligence of our Catholic Bishops**

There was a time when Catholics knew and recognized Jesus Christ.

That it is *no longer so* is deeply revealing. It reveals a spiritual malaise that is the result of a lack of example, and a systemic failure so deep, so broad, and so prevalent, that our children no longer see God ... and neither do we.

What will suffice for proof? Perhaps a casual glance in the direction of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is a pretty good indication. How many people walk past God (Jesus Christ, really and truly present in the Tabernacle, Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity) without so much as a nod, let alone a genuflection? Indeed, how many even *know* that He is there? How many *recognize* Him?

Few. Very few, indeed. Why is this? Why do so many people identify themselves as Catholics without knowing *where* God is, and, in fact, *Who* God is?

Who will dispute it? Ask a dozen Catholics leaving Mass the following *elementary* questions about what is most fundamental and *central* to Catholic belief as uniquely distinguishable --- that is to say, simple tenets that distinguish Catholicism from other and incompatible religions:

- **Who** is God? Is He:

1. the Father?
2. the Son (Jesus)?
3. the Holy Ghost?
4. All three?

- **Where** is God?

1. In Heaven?
2. In the Eucharist?
3. In the Tabernacle?
4. In all three

- **What** happens at Mass?

1. We are present at the Crucifixion of Christ on Calvary
2. We gather at the Table of the Lord.
3. We eat Jesus flesh and drink His blood, literally.
4. We primarily engage in a Communal Meal.
5. All of the above.
6. None of the above.
7. Just two of the above.

(If you , too, are really uncertain, go to the bottom of the page)

The answers that you most likely will receive will range from stunning ignorance to patent heresy (and yes, the notion of *heresy* still obtains, ecumenism notwithstanding, not only in Catholicism but in Judaism.) Those whom you had asked had just left Mass --- some, after many, many years --- and had no clue about the most basic features of their faith. Why is this? How can this be?

The answer is surprisingly simple: it has been a failure in Catechesis, a *catastrophic failure* in teaching the most fundamental doctrines of our faith as Catholics to our children --- just as *they* failed who had taught *us*! That is to say, it is the result of not one, but two entire generations that have failed --- and failed miserably --- in handing on, transmitting to future generations, the Faith of our fathers, the authentic teachings of Holy Mother Church.

The Buck Stops Here

President Harry S. Truman kept a sign on his desk for which he is famous, and it was a daily reminder to him that, as President of the American people and as the representative of "their" interests apart from the conflict of interests that plagued and continue to plague the House and the Senate ... the responsibility was ultimately his. The buck was always passed from the special interest groups to the Representatives who passed the responsibility off to the Senate which in turn passed the buck on to Truman. He alone took the responsibility, and with it he took the heat. Perhaps that is provenance of his other famous quotation, "If you can't stand the heat, keep out of the kitchen."

Truman was from Missouri, and if you are an American, you understand what this means. "I'm from Missouri" is synonymous with, "Show it! I am skeptical ...prove it!" None of the Cardinals of the Archdiocese of Boston were from Missouri ... O'Malley is from Ohio, Law was from Mexico, and Medeiros from the Azores. That stubborn practicality and low tolerance for equivocation, together with the keen sense of responsibility to his office and to the American people ... to make the decisions that no one else was willing to make, and to accept their consequences ---- largely characterized the person and the Presidency of Truman ... much in the way that the absence of these qualities and attributes have notoriously characterized the Episcopacy of Boston. Not one of them, in any manner of speaking, were *from Missouri* ...

The point of this brief digression is that Catechesis has failed miserably largely because ***our Bishops*** have defaulted on their primary responsibility as Teachers of the Faith. They are largely involved in more pressing *functionary* issues: things administrative, social, legal (especially here in Boston, and elsewhere ...) public relations, photo ops, etc., and appear to have no time, or simply lack the dedication or the inclination to bring us, or failing that, ensuring that we are brought, the authentic Faith of our Fathers ... and are unwilling to accept their responsibility for it. There are, after all, numberless "committees" to deal with such "lesser" things ... many and many an eager committee to relegate this tiresome responsibility to.

Is it really any wonder that so many Priest have adopted as their model of pastoral leadership the role of *Master of Ceremonies* at Mass, and mere *advisors* to the *lay leadership* in their parishes --- rather than that of the preacher, pastor and prophet? From whom did they learn such irresponsible behavior? They have taken their cue from their Bishops, whose poor example they sadly but brilliantly emulate. Make no decisions "*ex meru motu*"*, but form committees to make the decisions for you --- and if they do not pan out, no one can lay the responsibility at your doorstep. In fact, you were, in a Trumanesque sense, out of the kitchen at the time ... so to speak.

For a scandalously preponderant number of bishops, here and abroad, the Episcopacy appears to be more a matter of the promotion of their personality, and good copy for the press ... rather than enacting their *primary role* as "Teacher of the Faith" and in ensuring the proper teaching of the Faith; the dignity and responsibility for their office is so often reduced to a perfunctory stamp of approval on some issue or other with which they are only remotely acquainted, but which is, for the moment, highly visible and publicly in favor. In a word, it redounds to their notability and good name ... both of which, deservedly, have taken a rather bad drubbing of late.

Instead of delegating what are essentially peripheral issues to other ecclesiastics and enacting the primary role in which they are presumably most competent, they have relinquished the greater for the lesser. We could charitably attribute it to mere indolence, or even incompetence, did it not verge on culpable neglect in their having *entrusted it to those unworthy of it*, to so many who manipulate, distort and often entirely expunge the genuine teachings of the Church to conform to their own largely social agenda.

They, in turn, pass this distorted doctrine on to *our* children --- with the Bishop's rubber stamp of approval which they hold, and which came with the job. After all, were they not "hired" by him? Surely, then, he knows what they are teaching.

Or does he? It is frightening either way. If he does, then he is complicit in the fraud. If he does not, he is guilty of inexcusable neglect. His "job title", after all, is "Teacher of the Faith."

Everyone Wins but the Kids

How often a job not to our liking is palmed off to someone else, and washing our hands of it, we gladly forget the unsavory matter. If it prospers we take the praise, and if it fails we plead ignorance. It is a *win-win* situation.

Except for the children.

For them it is a *no-win* situation. They never come to know Christ.

So what do we walk away with?

Parents, be very clear about this: if you do not bring Christ to your children, it is extremely unlikely that anyone will.

We are too quick to surrender this responsibility, which is really a blessed gift ... *the gift of Faith* that will carry our children through so many difficulties in life ... long after we are gone. It is a patrimony to generations beyond us, a sacred trust that we *cannot* entrust

to another: not your son's or your daughter's CCD teacher (who probably knows far less than you do), not your parish priest through his cute and irrelevant homilies punctuated by jokes and laughter, and not, sadly to say, to your bishop. In fact, if you write your bishop in your growing concern about the laxity in your parish, you will, in all likelihood, receive no reply ... or a "Document Template" from Microsoft Word with the blank spaces appropriately filled in. Been there, done that.

In all fairness, of the two scenarios offered, it is very likely that your bishop is *clueless* of what is being taught under his auspices --- and it is as equally likely that he really does not *wish* to know more, and could not appear to care less. This, of course, is the best scenario. The worst is that he does know.

Most parents are familiar with the scenario: pay CCD (the Religious Education Office in your parish) to pass out books that are never opened, solicit "teachers" who are as ill-informed as their students, hire a Director of Religious Education (DRE) irrespective of a genuine commitment to authentic Catholic Doctrine – and it is a *fait accompli*! The Gospel is preached! The ignorant are enlightened. The children are taught. Process them through to Confirmation regardless of their complete ignorance of the Faith, kiss them off, and tell yourself that you have done a magnificent job! Just look at the Confirmation lines! "What a testimony", the auxiliary bishop who comes to Confirm them will tell you, "to the vibrancy of your *faith community*", as the Church is most often called in these times of doctrinal indifference and ecumenical correctitude. Indeed ...

Do not, however, look at the dwindling numbers: in the pews, in the Priesthood, in Religious life, in successful marriages, in chaste lives free from the misdirection of a perverse and increasingly homocentric society.

And do not tabulate the divorce rate, or the number of abortions that verge on exceeding the number of baptisms. Pretend that the sexual abuse of our children has no correlation with the number of homosexual priests knowingly ordained, and that their predatory pederasty has nothing at all to do with their being homosexual – that it is just a coincidence that the abused have been, with few exceptions, boys. Just a disturbing and terribly repetitive coincidence ... right?

The effects of the longstanding negligence of our bishops have been far-reaching ... to even the smallest among us.

The frightening question, really, is this: not, "Who will teach our children better?" – but this:

"Who will teach our Bishops better?"

Indeed ... who?

We have great hope in Pope Benedict XVI ---who calls to account the Pastors who have fled the flock ... or preyed upon them. This is, we believe, the face of responsibility that we been longing for, the voice seeking accountability and demanding correction.

It is a voice from Missouri ... with a gentle German accent ...

May it reverberate throughout Boston!

**Of one's own accord*

Answers:

- Who is God? All Three.
- Where is God? In all three.
- What happens at Mass? 1, 2 & 3.



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