



# Boston Catholic Journal

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## CALLING A SPADE

—“Be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive.”” (Ephesians 4.14-15)



*Saint Paul pulls no punches* – and it is little wonder that others literally pulled no punches with Saint Paul. However constantly beaten, he *could not* hold his tongue and never hesitated to call a spade a spade. This rare and *holy candor* is seldom encountered today. Christ told us plainly, “*Blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me.*”<sup>1</sup> And yet we are! Deeply. Consider *how carefully* we couch the words of Christ, the teachings of Holy Mother Church --- *lest they give offense!*

Saint Paul, however, had no problem with this. He even rebuked Saint Peter himself for equivocating on doctrine in Jerusalem in order to accommodate the sensitivities of others!<sup>2</sup>

In truth, we've become much too delicate for Saint Paul. It is not that we have become “childlike” in our Faith ... but rather, childish, infantile, clamoring like choleric babies for what pleases us most or hurts us least, however detrimental it may be to our souls.

It is extremely likely, in fact, that were Saint Paul to preach the Gospel — *the one he received from Jesus Christ Himself*, Who, in the giving, *commanded* him to preach it “*in season and out of season*” — in any of our Catholic Churches today, Saint Paul would – yet again – be thrown out and set upon – by bishop, clergy and congregation alike.

And St. Paul thought Philippi, Iconium, and Ephesus were rough! Here, in Boston — the epicenter of everything that went wrong with the Church following the Second Vatican Council — Saint Paul would confront a hostile audience indeed. *Especially in our churches.*

## A Man for Our Times

For one thing, Saint Paul knew all about shifting winds of popular teaching, human trickery, theological cunning, and corporate scheming — both within the Church and outside of it. He is, in short, a man for our times ... but not for our tastes.

We want fuzzy. We want warm. *We want our way and God had better anoint it as His own* --- and if *He* will not, then our priests, deacons, religious educators and theologians *will*. Indeed, they have *already* stepped in, taken matters into their own hands and set things straight and much more to our liking!

*Immortal* souls, salvation, damnation, Hell, sin, evil, modesty, chastity, Mortal Sins, Venial Sins, "the Narrow Way" (which Christ assures us that few take and fewer enter <sup>4</sup>), "hoping" for salvation rather than taking it for granted (unlike St. Paul <sup>3</sup>), the Day of Judgment, Penance, Holy Confession, guilt, mercy, justice, death, the devil himself!. *What have these things to do with us?*

## The Opiate of the "Masses"

After all, we have been taught --- and we all have come to believe --- that despite our sins, our greed, our unbridled and perverse sensuality, our impenitence, our obduracy, even our atrocities, "*We are His people and He is our God*", as the ditty goes. It is quite that simple. We will speak of other things; you know, social issues, sensitivity, "empowerment", baseball, and bottom lines — *anything* ... except what verges upon authenticity in Christ. *And we love it!*

We do not go to *Confession* anymore to unburden ourselves of our guilt and to be absolved of our sins. We go to *Mass* when the guilt of our sins can no longer be repressed so that we may have our weekly "fix" of grace through crooning about our being God's children, a holy people, the light of the world, until the pitch of the ghastly singing drowns out the clamor of the conscience that convicts us, assuring us that we have no need of Confession for we have perfect immunity from sin as befits "God's children", and in any event will be "borne up on eagle's wings" to Heaven when death fetches us off, after which God (corrected to our sensitivities) will wink at our sins and tell us what little devils we are ... ;-)

***I think Saint Paul knew a spade when he saw one ... and he knew a Joker.*** This makes us squirm. ***We*** want to deal the cards, and if it requires a little “sleight of hand”, some pandering to the popular pundits, or pulling one from the bottom, well, the end (our end) justifies the means ... right? After all, even dogs go to Heaven.

Saint Paul was no gambler. He knew the House had all the odds. And He knew the Dealer. He also knew that a time comes when, whatever hand you've dealt yourself by deceit, sooner or later you'll have to fold.

***The problem is*** that you've put your soul in the kitty, and when you lose, you won't get it back.

Saint Paul knew the cards. He was, after all, close to the King ... and, for that matter, to the Queen.

Editor

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<sup>1</sup> *Matthew 11:6*

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 2:11-14

<sup>3</sup> "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, (as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but much more now in my absence,) with fear and trembling work out your salvation." (Philippians 2.12)

<sup>4</sup> "Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it! Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." (St. Matthew 7.13-15)

