

A Catholic Manifesto

By Greg Witherow

Prelude: The Church is called to be the light of the world and a city set on a hill. Its light is to cause all mankind to give glory to God in heaven. Her preaching and example is meant to convert all the nations¹. However a compromised Church veils the gospel. Therefore Christ purifies his Bride² as scripture tells us judgment begins with the household of God³. While Christ never railed against the sins of the Romans during his earthly ministry he was very direct with shepherds of his covenant people.

Christ is gentle with the humble soul. We see this with the woman at the well. With a disciple's weakness he is more direct. Consider Peter being called "a tool of Satan."⁴ More severely with unrepentant Shepherds, Christ seethes hot. He called the Pharisees liars, murderers, sons of Satan, and children of hell⁵. He was known to turn over tables and employ a whip⁶. He called for reform not overthrow. "Zeal for thy house will consume me" was his life's motto⁷.

Christ calls us to be zealous for our Father's house. The laity is mandated to speak prophetically to the world and within the Church. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

904: Christ fulfills his prophetic office, not only by the hierarchy but also by the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with the sense of the faith [sensus fidei] and the grace of the word. To teach in order to lead others to faith is the task of every preacher and of each believer.

907: In accord with the knowledge, competence, and preeminence which they possess, [lay people] have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and they have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful, with due regard to the integrity of faith and morals and reverence toward their pastors and with the consideration for the common good and the dignity of persons.

Saint Paul commands the laity to "hold to the traditions which you were taught" and "to destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God and taking every thought captive to obey Christ."⁸ Therefore armed with apostolic exhortations, respecting the God ordained authority of the Magisterium, speaking the truth in charity, for the love of Mother Church and the salvation of souls, the following resolutions are set forth.

¹ Matthew 28:16-20

² There are some who, distorting the Church's social justice teachings, seek societal reform through a mere legal process and appeals to civil rights. In truth, though, genuine social reform cannot come through the law, but only through the gospel. Genuine social reform, therefore, must start from within the Church. Social reform minus the gospel, on the other hand, reduces the Church to a political party or social agency. The Church's work is supernatural.

³ 1 Peter 4:17

⁴ Matthew 16:23

⁵ See Matthew chapter 23 in its entirety

⁶ Luke 11:45 and Matthew 15:12-14

⁷ John 2:17; Psalm 69:9

⁸ 2 Corinthians 10:5

Resolution 1: Concerning the shortage of priests in America, young men do not reject the priesthood because it is too demanding. They reject it because it is so often presented in feminine terms and seen as irrelevant. But Saint Paul referred to priests as soldiers. And as a priest he beat his body into submission, saved souls from hell, ran the race to win, spoke of destroying arguments, taking every thought captive, crushing Satan, fighting a spiritual warfare, being willing to die, and living for Christ. *This is the priesthood!*

Therefore the following is resolved. Each diocese must re-evaluate their vocations program and make use of all the best practices available today. The appeal for priests must be presented as a “call to arms” for restoring mankind, forgiving sins, advancing the kingdom of Christ, defeating the gates of hell, employing sacerdotal medicines with a martyr’s resolve and a love for Christ. God has not ceased calling men to this service. We must find them. Unsuccessful vocations directors must be removed and competent men put in place. The work must be done with urgency, as though the future of the Church depended on it. *Because the priesthood is non-negotiable this resolution is non-negotiable.*

Resolution 2: Our society today is bombarded with confused messages concerning human sexuality, such as the false claims of the “gay rights” movement which seeks to redefine marriage and undermine long-standing social mores⁹. In the interest of reforming and strengthening the priesthood, then, and through it the whole Body of Christ, all self-professed homosexual men must be made to resign from the office of bishop, priest and deacon¹⁰. Future priestly and diaconate candidates must be examined for the purpose of preventing self-described homosexual men from entering the priesthood. All men in the seminary should be taught and challenged to live virtuously in a manly way. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

⁹ The Catechism (CCC) calls us to regard those who struggle with same-sex attraction “with respect, compassion, and sensitivity” (par. 2358). At the same time it forbids one from engaging in homosexual acts, which are “acts of grave depravity,” “intrinsically disordered” and can be approved of “under no conditions” (par. 2357).

¹⁰ Calling for resignations may sound harsh but it has precedence. Cardinal Schonborn of Austria, in dealing with 300 dissident priests, has demanded they once again conform to Church teaching or else to “travel the way no more with the Roman Catholic Church. I believe and hope, however, that this extreme case does not occur here” (“Dissident priests defy Church discipline,” The Catholic World Report, October 2011).

In November 2005 the Congregation for Catholic Education published an instruction entitled, “Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with Regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in View of Their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders”. It states in the light of such teaching, this dicastery, in accord with the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, believes it necessary to state clearly that the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question, cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practice homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called “gay culture.” Such persons, in fact, find themselves in a situation that gravely hinders them from relating correctly to men and women. One must in no way overlook the negative consequences that can derive from the ordination of persons with deep-seated homosexual tendencies. Different, however, would be the case in which one were dealing with homosexual tendencies that were only the expression of a transitory problem - for example, that of an adolescence not yet superseded. Nevertheless, such tendencies must be clearly overcome at least three years before ordination to the diaconate.”

The 2005 instruction merely expanded on existing Church policy. The instruction Religiosorum Institutio dated February 2, 1961 stated the following. “Advantage to religious vows and ordination should be barred to those who are afflicted with evil tendencies to homosexuality or pederasty, since for them the common life and the priestly ministry would constitute serious dangers.”

Resolution 3: No Catholic parish should be permitted to sponsor or participate in “gay pride” events. Any bishop, priest or deacon who participates in such events is called to repent. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

Resolution 4: All bishops, priests and deacons must acknowledge that “there is salvation in no one else [other than Jesus Christ], for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”¹¹ Any bishop, priest or deacon who cannot acknowledge this fact should resign from his office. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

Resolution 5: All bishops, priests and deacons must acknowledge that all mankind is called to repent of their sins, join the one true Catholic Church, and obey all of her teachings. This fulfills Christ’s command to convert all the nations. The call for conversion extends to all people in every nations and religious faith, including Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and other religions, with no exceptions. Indifferentism is to be rejected¹². A bishop, priest or deacon who cannot acknowledge this statement of faith should resign from his office. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

Resolution 6: In 1920 Pope Benedict XV authored the encyclical *Spiritus Paraclitus*, in which he wrote, “[the chair of Saint Peter] also teaches that divine inspiration extends to every part of the Bible without the slightest exception, and that no error can occur in the inspired text. It would be wholly impious to limit inspiration to only certain of Scripture or to concede that the sacred authors themselves could have erred”. The inspiration and infallibility of Sacred Scripture is a firmly established Catholic dogma. Nor is inspiration limited only to certain parts of Scripture¹³. Any bishop, priest or deacon who cannot acknowledge the inspiration and infallibility of all Scripture should resign from his office. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

Resolution 7: Adam and Eve were real people; and the human race descended from them and inherited original sin. This doctrine is stated clearly in paragraph 390 of the Catechism and its supporting footnotes¹⁴. Our common ancestry with Adam and Eve is foundational to the dogma of

¹¹ CCC 432 and Acts 4:12

¹² Indifferentism was summarily rejected by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in *Dominus Iesus* (2000). Concerning The Great Commission, CCC 849 states: “The missionary mandate. Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be the universal sacrament of salvation, the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the gospel to all men: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age.’”

¹³ Paragraph 105 of the CCC states, “[Holy Mother Church] accepts as canonical the books of the Old and the New Testaments, whole and entire, with all their parts, on the grounds that written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed down as such to the Church herself.” The papal encyclical *Divino Afflate Spiritu* (1943) rejects the assertion of those who “ventured to restrict the truth of sacred scripture solely to matters of faith and morals.” Likewise *Providentissimus Deus* (1893) states, “it is absolutely wrong and forbidden, either to narrow the inspiration to certain parts only of Holy Scripture or to admit the sacred writer has erred.” To deny these truths is an act of defiance that cannot be tolerated.

¹⁴ Paragraph 390 of the CCC states, “The account of the fall in Genesis 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place at the beginning of the history of man. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents.”

This paragraph in the Catechism is footnoted with three sources. The first source is a text from the Council of Trent, Canon 3 [DS 1513] which states, “Original sin is transmitted by propagation and not by imitation”. In other words, each person inherits original sin from a common biological parent (Adam).

Original Sin. Despite this fact, Catholic theologians, including bishops, priests, deacons and numerous Catholic institutions teach the opposite. A bishop, priest or deacon who cannot acknowledge that Adam and Eve were real people of history and that all mankind descended from them should resign from his office. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

Resolution 8: The miracles recorded in the Old and New Testament are historical facts. In the Old Testament the dead were raised, the sick were healed, and the waters parted. In the New Testament Christ raised the dead, healed the sick, fed five thousand with five loaves and two fish and on the third day physically rose from the grave. To reject the miracles of Christ is to reject his divinity,¹⁵ the Eucharist,¹⁶ and reasons to believe what Christ said were true¹⁷. To reject the miracles of Christ means our faith is in vain, we are still in our sins and we are to be the most pitied of all people¹⁸. It is to reject Christianity¹⁹. A bishop, priest or deacon who cannot acknowledge these facts should resign from his office. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

Resolution 9: There are 244 Catholic universities in the United States today. Yet most of these institutions are Catholic in name only, secular schools in sheep's clothing. Most Catholic high schools are in the same condition. As a result, thousands of Catholic young people attending these institutions are losing their faith.

In 1967, a formal breach between Catholic universities and the Magisterium took place with the Land O'Lakes Statement. Signed by many educators of Catholic higher education, including presidents of Notre Dame, Boston College, Georgetown University and others, the document was a declaration of independence from Catholic teaching. In their silence the bishops condoned the statement. Hence today, as documented by the Cardinal Newman Society, there are fewer than twenty universities in America that are authentically Catholic.

The bishops of the Church are armed with Canon law to act. Canon law 810 states:

“It is the responsibility of the authority who is competent in accord with the statutes to provide for the appointment of teachers to Catholic universities who besides their scientific and pedagogical suitability are also outstanding in their integrity of doctrine and probity of life; when those requisite qualities are lacking they are to be removed from their positions in accord with the procedure set forth in the statutes.

The second source is Pope Pius XII's *Humani Generis* (1950), which states, “When there is a question of another conjectural opinion, namely, of polygenism so-called, then the sons of the Church in no way enjoy such freedom. For the faithful in Christ cannot accept this view, which holds that either after Adam there existed men on this earth, who did not receive their origin by natural generation from him, the first parent of all; or that Adam signifies some kind of multitude of first parents; for it is by no means apparent how such an opinion can be reconciled with what the sources of revealed truth and the acts of the Magisterium of the Church teaches about original sin, which proceeds from a sin truly committed by one Adam, and which is transmitted to all by generation, and exists in each one as his own” (3897).

The third source is from a document produced by Pope Paul VI (AAS 58, 1966). Here the Pontiff says, among other things, “The theory of evolution does not seem acceptable” (p. 654, as sourced in the Catechism). This statement goes beyond the pale of Resolution 7 above, which simply reaffirms Adam existed. But it is noteworthy in that it is a post-Vatican II document that affirms Adam's existence. Its quotation in the Catechism gives it further weight.

¹⁵ CCC 515, 547

¹⁶ CCC 515, 547

¹⁷ CCC 156

¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

¹⁹ If one denies miracles, one cannot recite the Nicene Creed as it lists miracles in the text (Virgin Birth and Resurrection).

“The conference of bishops and the diocesan bishops concerned have the duty and the right of being vigilant that in these universities the principles of Catholic doctrine are faithfully observed.”

Canon 812 states:

“It is necessary that those who teach theological disciplines in any institute of higher studies have a mandate from the competent ecclesiastical authority.”

Any Catholic university or high school not conforming to Church dogma must be de-certified and prohibited from using the name Catholic by the presiding bishop. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

Resolution 10: Many Catholics do not partake of the Eucharist because their marital state does not permit it. Yet pro-abortion Catholic politicians openly partake of the Sacrament. Consider the depth of this scandal. The elites who aid and abet in mass murder maintain their full sacramental privileges while a lay person involved (or victimized) in a broken marriage is excluded.

Public scandals require public remedies. The Catechism states, “Formal cooperation in an abortion constitutes a grave offense.”²⁰ Additionally canon law 915 states, “[Those] who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion.”

All Catholic politicians who persist in publicly defending and supporting through votes the mass murder of unborn babies must not to be admitted to Holy Communion. *This resolution is non-negotiable.*

Conclusion: This essay is not written in the spirit of Wittenberg²¹, nor is it meant to serve as a means for schism, division, rebellion or disobedience. Instead it is meant to give a voice to the great number of laity who are deeply scandalized and wounded by the issues described above. It is meant to press our hierarchy for greater accountability and action on these matters²².

²⁰ CCC 2272

²¹ Luther nailed his ninety five theses on the door of a church in Wittenberg, Germany in 1517, sparking the Reformation.

²² Our forefathers often demonstrated boldness in maintaining the faith, being willing at times literally to fight for the truth. Describing the atmosphere surrounding the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431), which addressed the Nestorian controversy and debated whether Mary should be called Theotokos (“Mother of God”), Phillip Schaff, a Lutheran historian, writes, “The very war upon the favorite shibboleth of orthodoxy [Theotokos] provoked bitterest opposition of the people and of the monks, whose sympathies [were for the title Theotokos]. They insulted [Nestorius, who opposed the title,] in the pulpit and insulted him in the street” (History of the Christian Church, p. 720). There was an “encouragement of, if not an appeal to, the violence of the populace [against the Nestorians]” (n. p. 723). Nestorius had to travel to Ephesus “with an armed escort, as if he was going into battle” (p. 723). This essay does not call for rioting, but does claim precedence for a zealous laity demanding orthodoxy from the bishops.