

## ARTICLE 85

### Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family

First Published in the '*Catholic Voice*', Ireland, April 2017

John Lacken – [john@truedevotions.ie](mailto:john@truedevotions.ie)



### Reflections on Symbols and Gestures.

#### Choosing a Topic

I find that having to write a fortnightly article for the Catholic Voice is a great discipline. Often times, if I am not writing on a particular theme, I do not know exactly what I will write about from one fortnight to another. But, because I know that I have an article to write, I will be mulling things over in my head wondering if this topic or that subject matter would be suitable for an article.

Sometimes, a headline or an article in an online blog I have read during the fortnight in between issues of the newspaper, will give me a start. This last fortnight, I have been thinking about the madness that currently exists in our world whereby many people in our society and our legislators in particular, are losing their grip on reality and have come to believe that one can change one's gender, or that two people of the same sex can get married, or that divorce is a good thing and should therefore be legal.

#### Madness Caused by the Denial of Absolute Truth

This madness is caused by the denial, either implicit or explicit, of the fact that there are 'absolute Truths', which exist regardless of mankind and which do not, and cannot, change. There are also 'absolute moral norms' which determine that certain acts, such as the deliberate killing of an innocent unborn child, or the divorce of one's spouse and entering into a sexual relationship with another person, are always morally evil and therefore sinful. Such acts can never be approved under any circumstance.

#### The Cardinals and the Dubia

This matter was recently addressed by the cardinals who submitted five 'dubia' to Pope Francis due to the widespread confusion caused by the Pope's apostolic exhortation '*Amoris Laetitia*', and to the different and contradictory interpretations of that exhortation by bishops around the world. Some bishops have issued directives which make exceptions for the divorced and civilly remarried to receive Holy Communion in certain cases without a firm purpose of amendment. Other bishops have issued directives which uphold the blanket ban on those in such situations from receiving Holy Communion. Only one of these directives can be right and only one of these directives is consistent with the constant teachings of the Catholic Church. This directive is the one which forbids those in active and objectively adulterous relationships from receiving Holy Communion consistent with No 84 of Pope St John Paul II's Encyclical Letter, '*Familiaris Consortio*'. This means that the other directives are liable to lead the faithful astray and yet, for whatever reason, no clarification has been forthcoming from Pope Francis on this most serious of situations.

#### Pray for the Pope

We must pray earnestly for our Holy Father Pope Francis, that he will put an end to the confusion and that he will once again re-affirm the constant teaching of the Catholic church on marriage and family life so that the faithful can be protected from harm.

#### The Fifth Dubia

The fifth dubia submitted by the cardinals to Pope Francis asks,

“After *Amoris Laetitia* (303) does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 56, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, that excludes a creative interpretation of the role of conscience and that emphasizes that conscience can never be authorized to legitimate exceptions to absolute moral norms that prohibit intrinsically evil acts by virtue of their object?”

### **Misleading Notion of Conscience**

Those who try to get around the absolute moral norms and to permit evil acts, use a misleading notion of the role of conscience in order to justify their dangerous directives and opinions. The cardinals who submitted the *dubia* explain this as follows.

“However, conscience does not decide about good and evil. The whole idea of a “decision of conscience” is misleading. The proper act of conscience is to judge and not to decide. It says, “This is good.” “This is bad.” This goodness or badness does not depend on it (conscience). It acknowledges and recognizes the goodness or badness of an action, and for doing so, that is, for judging, conscience needs criteria; it is inherently dependent on truth.”

### **Faith Slowly Undermined**

Whilst pondering these matters in my mind, I realised that we have not arrived at this situation in the Church overnight. There has been a slow and steady process, which deliberately or otherwise, has been undermining the faith of ordinary Catholics for decades. Catechesis, and the methods used to teach the faith in Catholic schools have been changed with disastrous results for the faith of at least two generations of Catholics in Ireland.

My father's generation were taught their catechism in secondary school using what was popularly known as 'Sheehan's apologetics'. This consisted of two books titled 'Apologetics and Catholic Doctrine' part I and part II respectively, which were written by Archbishop Michael Sheehan (1870 - 1945). The first volume dealt with 'apologetics' whilst the second volume dealt with Catholic doctrine. These books were dropped from the Irish curriculum around 1962 to 1963. Coincidentally or not, this was also around the time when our government signed up to UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation and in time our government would accept generous grants from UNESCO to help to finance our educational system. As with all UN money, these grants came with certain strings attached, but I do not want to digress into that now.

### **Sheehan's Apologetics**

If we look at Sheehan's first volume you will find the following heading “The False Christian Churches” wherein the second paragraph states.

“The Protestant Church is not the true Church: (1) It is notoriously not one in faith or worship; every shade of opinion is represented among its members, some of whom, and among them Protestant Bishops, reject miracles and deny the Divinity of Christ. From the doctrinal standpoint, Protestantism can be described as a chaos rather than a religion. Nor is it one in government, for it is divided into a great number of independent sects. (2) not one of these sects claims infallibility.”

### **False Ecumenism Denies Catholic Truths**

In our modern age of false ecumenism, whereby we are supposed to speak kindly of every religion and to suppress the truth if anyone might be offended by it, because 'do not cause offence' has now become a greater command than, 'speak the truth with charity', you will never hear the above being taught in Catholic schools and yet, everything that was written above about the Protestant Church is as true today as it has always been. Why is it that children in Irish Catholic schools are being denied these truths? Is it any wonder that so many are falling away when what they are being taught is not really Catholicism but a doctrine of social justice based on a false understanding of humanity?

The sad and undeniably disastrous results of this false teaching, which denies absolute truth and absolute moral norms, became clear to me during a conversation with some of my younger children around our kitchen table. They related how a girl they know, who has recently finished her 'Catholic' primary school education here in Ireland and has entered secondary school, has decided that she may be transgender and has begun using a male first name on her social media. She has cut off her long hair and now has it styled in a masculine way. I would not be surprised to learn that her parents, who have fallen away from the practice of their Catholic faith, actually support their daughter in her mistaken views about her own identity. I also wouldn't be surprised to learn that she now goes to a Catholic secondary school and that this school will also affirm her in her mistaken ideas.

### **Denial of Truth Leads to Confusion**

When the truth is constantly denied, do not be surprised to find that people will become confused about their identity and that some will lose their identity and their hold on reality. Our identity as human beings is rooted in the Truth and in the sure Knowledge of the Catholic Faith. When that faith is badly taught or is compromised, as has happened in Irish 'catholic' schools, because no one wants to cause offence to anyone else, mark my words, there will be serious casualties, and many of these serious casualties will be innocent children who will be robbed of their baptismal faith.

### **The Power of Symbols and Gestures**

Another example of this denial of truth has happened around our Liturgical practices since the second Vatican council. We should never underestimate the power of symbols and gestures. Take for example Good Friday and Holy Saturday. On these days Jesus Christ is no longer physically present in our tabernacles and when one enters the Church the tabernacle door is wide open. On these days it is customary to bow before the crucifix. There is no need to genuflect because Christ is not present in the tabernacle. Many people still genuflect out of habit and so it would seem that they are not quite fully conscious that the genuflection before the tabernacle is an acknowledgement of the real presence of Christ there.

For myself, it always feels weird just making a bow. I have trained myself and I remember being taught as an altar boy, that one always genuflects whenever one passes the tabernacle and I have passed on the same discipline to my children. Believe me when I tell you that people notice these things. I am not boasting when I tell you that I have been approached many times with compliments on the reverence of my children in Church. Genuflecting in front of the tabernacle is bearing witness to the Catholic faith.

### **Protestants do not Genuflect**

For me I imagine what it must be like being a Protestant when I only have to bow before the empty tabernacle, and in a vague way, I get a deeper understanding of the great treasure we have in the Eucharistic presence of Christ.

### **Many Catholic Priests no Longer Genuflect before the Lord**

But what of the now all too common practice, even among Catholic priests who are not disabled in any way, of bowing before the tabernacle even when Christ is truly present, body, blood, soul and divinity? These people make no distinction between Christ present in the tabernacle, and the empty tabernacle of Good Friday and Holy Saturday! Their bodies express a lack of faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and this too is noticed by people and it delivers a subtle but succinct message which states that there really is no difference between the tabernacle with the open door, and the tabernacle with the door closed and the sanctuary lamp lit.

I was praying in a church not too long ago, when a first Holy Communion class entered to prepare for their first confession. I noticed that none of the children were genuflecting before the tabernacle. Then one little girl did a very brief curtsy. The teacher came in, and she did not genuflect or acknowledge Christ's presence in the tabernacle. Finally the priest came in, he did not genuflect before the tabernacle and in fact he stood with his back to the tabernacle and began instructing the

children on the sacrament of confession in a cheerful and upbeat manner. This priest was teaching children about Christ forgiving them their sins in the sacrament of confession, but the Master of the sacrament, who was truly present body, blood, soul and divinity, just behind the priest, was not even acknowledged and neither were the children encouraged or taught to acknowledge their Divine Master who paid so dearly just so that their sins could be forgiven in this great sacrament and so He could remain close to them throughout their lives with His real presence in the tabernacle.

### **Children are Denied the Truth**

The children are not at fault here! They are being denied the truth and they are losing their Catholic identities because false teachers are permitted to remain at large in Christ's Catholic church and are also permitted to teach innocent children.

Before I was married, I would often come home late at night and see the light still lit in our sitting room. I would open the door and there would be my father, kneeling at one of his favourite armchairs saying his prayers before bed. I would say 'goodnight Dad', and in my mind's eye I can still see him turning his grey head and saying, 'goodnight John', before I wandered upstairs to bed. The armchairs were a wedding present to my father and mother and shortly after I got married he gave them to me and I am quite sentimental about them.

### **Irish 'Catholic' Schools Undermining the Faith of Children**

After my own return to the faith, I remember once asking my father what his thoughts were about the fact that my five remaining siblings had all fallen away from their faith. He told me that at times he could almost feel a palpable presence working against him, an evil force whose source he could not identify. Then one day, one of my brothers came home from secondary school and told my father that the religion teacher had told the class that he could not tell them that they had to go to Holy Mass every Sunday, because he did not go every Sunday himself. Finally, my father had identified the source of the evil. He told me that he always sincerely believed that we were being taught the faith in the same way that he had been taught it and as the faith had always been taught in Catholic schools. He said that he realised too late, that the Catholic school that he had sent us to, instead of upholding and teaching us the Catholic faith, that great treasure which would help us to attain Heaven, was instead undermining that very foundation of his own children's salvation.

### **Home Schooling our Children**

Things have gotten much worse since that time, and this is why my wife and I made the difficult decision to take our children out of the Irish school system altogether, because the Irish 'catholic' school system corrupts the faith of children. I am not saying that everyone should home school their children, but as parents, and particularly those of us who are fathers, we have a duty before God, for which we will have to answer one day at our particular judgement (a frightening thought), to ensure that nothing is allowed to taint the precious souls of our children. If your children get most of their formation and education at school, and they are losing interest in their Catholic faith, then it should be obvious that the school is not doing its job. You need to take immediate action or your children may be lost forever. It's that serious.

For anyone interested in considering home schooling, my wife and I are always glad to welcome families to our home to speak with us and to see a 'live' home school in action. You can e-mail me [john@truedevotions.ie](mailto:john@truedevotions.ie) or call 085 1208779

May God bless you this Easter time.

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Author: John Lacken  
Founder: Legio Sanctae Familiae – The Legion of the Holy Family  
E-Mail: [john@truedevotions.ie](mailto:john@truedevotions.ie)  
Website: [www.truedevotions.ie](http://www.truedevotions.ie)