

Fall 2023

To: Bishop Vasa, Bishop of Santa Rosa, CA; Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, Archbishop of San Francisco; Archbishop Jose Gomez, archbishop of Los Angeles; Pope Francis US choices for the synod: Cardinal Wilton Gregory of Washington, D.C.; Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston; Cardinal Robert McElroy of San Diego; Archbishop Paul Etienne of Seattle; the US Conference of Bishops choices for the synod: Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York; Archbishop Timothy Brogilio, president of the US bishop's conference; Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas; Bishop Robert Barron Wino-Rochester, Minnesota; Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana; Papal Nuncio to the United States: Cardinal Christophe Pierre

I love my church. The purpose of this letter is to save my church for future generations. I am 83 years old, and I grew up a cradle Catholic in the midwest. Two of my brothers were priesthood students (neither became priests). All of my four siblings are active practicing Catholics; two of our four children are practicing Catholics. None of our eight grandchildren are practicing Catholics (many are active in college student Christian ministries). Our youngest granddaughter decided not to be confirmed because of the church's teaching on sexuality (some of our close friends are not heterosexual). When I look broadly at all my parent's offspring, I am not aware of any youth actively practicing Catholicism. If we lose our youth, we will become a remnant church.

Our Bishop Vasa of the Santa Rosa diocese in California is to be commended for his very positive role in actively supporting Catholic Charities 53 million dollar recently completed Caritas Center. The former executive director, Len Marabella, stated to me, "This was a miracle." Bishop Vasa also supports an excellent Catholic High School, Cardinal Newman, and oversees an excellent youth protection process.

Following are my observations and recommendations to save my church and for my church to grow:

My church was founded on Jesus' words: "Love God and love your neighbor as yourself." This includes all people and is based on compassion and not dogma. Jesus focused on the outcasts and poor and the early church was composed of loving communities where they knew and supported each other. The Eucharist was celebrated in these communities and people shared their resources. This all changed when the Roman empire became Christian and the church and state became one, and the church became an organization of power and dogmas.

Why are some of you not supporting Vatican II and the Pope Francis synod? Many of you are following the last two popes that focused on doctrine and not growing loving, compassionate communities. Some church dogma is based on cultural practices of tribes and nomads thousands of years ago. Women are not allowed to fully participate in my church. The September issue of our North Coast Catholic newsletter quotes the National Conference of Bishops in 1994 that gives 10 reasons that only men can be priests. Jesus was a man. Only male Jews could have any role in their society. This is true of most of society until recently. There are more women with higher education than men in the United States. Women by nature are often better with social skills and relationships. These are key strengths for a successful pastor. Women should have an equal role in all church positions.

A really major issue in my church is abortion. I am personally against abortion. My observations are that the human species like all species have an innate drive to reproduce that is only partially rational in humans. I observe that only 50% of the pregnancies in the United States are planned. If states outlaw all abortions and

make it criminal, they should require the father to pay child support until the child is 18. If not able, the state should pay. I don't believe any mother becomes pregnant to want to abort her fetus. The USFDA has just announced a non-prescription "Morning After" pill. Assuming this is priced reasonably, this will provide practical tools for many women. Also, much more could be done with positive sex education to reduce unplanned pregnancies. I don't approve of society making abortion criminal and demanding jail sentences for the woman and any medical personnel that provide assistance. I believe a woman should have control of her fetus until the fetus is viable and there should be no legal punishments to her rights. An ideal world would welcome healthy children and nurture, support, and love them. I am very disappointed that many far right Christian politicians are following a course of anger and hate to push the abortion agenda. They are following leaders that only want to win and keep power and are not interested in supporting a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. They are challenging our democracy and fostering hate. Pope Francis warned about making abortion an election wedge issue.

I strongly urge you to listen to all of your flocks, especially the Pope Francis Synod, and not just institutions like the wealthy Napa Institute. The Napa Institute was founded by the Rev Robert Spitzer S.J. and Timothy R. Busch. Busch is the CEO of Pacific Hospitality Group that owns and operates 11 high level hotels. Napa Institute meets in one of his hotels. This is not the environment that Jesus challenges us to serve the least of my brethren. Following are quotes by editor Jessica Pegas from a recent book: Playing God - American Catholic Bishops and the Far Right by Mary Jo McConahay (Melville House, 2023). "In addition to the Napa Institute, she points to other conservative organizations, such as the Beckett Fund for Religious Liberty; news media like EWTN; the Busch School of Business and Economics at the Catholic University of America (founded by the U.S. bishops, it received \$10 million from billionaire Charles Koch in 2017); and Catholic influencer Leonard Leo."

"Many Catholics may not be familiar with Leo. But he controls a network of nonprofits and is best known for having quietly reshaped the Supreme Court by advancing conservative nominees and helping to quash others. According to the Washington Post, Leo raised more than \$250 million in donations between 2014 and 2017, some of which was used to derail the nomination of Merrick Garland, then President Obama's Supreme court pick in 2016, and green light the appointments of Gorsuch, Kavanaugh, and Comey Barrett. Since then, a single businessman donated all the shares of his company, worth \$1.6 billion, to Leo's Marble Freedom Trust, which was sold for cash, making Leo the ultimate banker of right-wing causes like bans on abortion and defending the right of Catholic organizations to discriminate against LGBTQ people. A key issue McConahay reveals is the "dark" money flowing through far-right Catholic networks, meaning organizations that manage these funds are not obligated to identify their sources so long as they are nonprofit."

An institution built on cultures over 2,000 years with frozen doctrines will not survive. An institution built on a compassionately loving God, loving ourselves, and our neighbor will grow and joy will be everywhere. Please be open to saving my church.

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