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**AN OPEN LETTER TO MY PRIESTS, DEACONS, SEMINARIANS AND
ALL THE FAITHFUL OF THE DIOCESE OF FRESNO
IN SUPPORT OF ARCHBISHOP CORDILEONE**

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Events in our lives tend to take on a life of their own and they can certainly outpace our responses too. Lord knows we have been through a lot as a nation, as a people of faith, as a Church and, simply, as humans who are hurting when others are hurting, like those moms and dads in Uvalde, Texas. So, my responses to other *events* in our lives have been a bit tardy, to say the least.

Brothers and sisters, I have been wanting to write in support of Archbishop Cordileone for several weeks now. He has taken a lot of heat, in and out of the Church, for standing up for what's right. Of course, I am referring to his recent statement prohibiting Nancy Pelosi, the current Speaker of the House in Congress, from receiving Communion, the Holy Eucharist, in the Archdiocese of San Francisco. He chose this course of action for her persistent stand in support of abortion and for her recent participation in an effort to *codify* into Federal law the right to take the life of an innocent, unborn child so as to enshrine that right in the law of the land. The Archbishop has done his due diligence and has made consistent attempts for a number of years to communicate with the Speaker about authentic Church teaching in this regard. In other words, like a good pastor, he is trying to lead her away from a very sinful situation. He is caring for her soul.

Speaking of sinfulness and care of souls, you may have heard about an entertainer who recently weighed in on this whole subject. In case you missed her statement which was aired on a show called 'The View', she took exception to the Archbishop's public announcement regarding Speaker Pelosi's prohibition from receiving Holy Communion. Here is part of what she said:

"This is not your job, dude! That is not up to you to make that decision...What is the point of Communion, right? It's for sinners. It's the reward of saints, but the bread of sinners. How dare you!"

Where do I begin? Let's begin with the Archbishop's *job*. It is his job to teach, to correct, to admonish and, if necessary, to impose sanctions. It is his job (everyone's job in fact) to point things out to and charitably correct anyone who is in a sinful situation. That is even more important to do when the person and the situation are so public, persistent, and brazen. Although it is not the Archbishop's job to make the decision for her - to receive Communion or not - it is his job to make every effort to properly form her conscience. It is Nancy's *job* to decide to refrain from taking Holy Communion until such time as she is reconciled to Church teaching about the unborn and until such time as she desists in publicly promoting and advocating the protection and expansion of abortion and abortion rights.

There is actually one thing that I agreed with when the aforementioned entertainer said, “What’s the point of Communion, right? It’s for sinners.” Precisely! Yes, Communion is not a reward for good behavior. It is not anything that we are entitled to in any way, shape, or form. Nobody is entitled to receive! That is why everyone (including the priest or presiding bishop) prays right before receiving Communion, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.” Yes, Eucharist is medicine for the sin-sick soul.

Something essential is missing in all this. The problem I have with most abortion-promoting Catholic politicians is that they do not seem to be acknowledging the sin in any of this. Even if they somehow acknowledge the sin in the depth of their soul and their conscience as they approach the Eucharist, something which only they and God can know, they cannot publicly persist in the sin. In the Sacrament of Penance, for example, there must be a component on the part of the penitent which we call the ‘firm purpose of amendment’. That component is very clear in part of the Act of Contrition which I memorized in Second Grade which declares, “I firmly resolve, with the help of Thy grace, to sin no more and to avoid the near occasion of sin.” So, returning to the matter at hand, the same principle applies. If you are going up to receive Communion and have no intention of changing your heart, mind, and actions regarding these teachings, then you should make the decision not to receive Communion. Otherwise, someone may have to impose the sanction on you. Ironic, is it not? A ‘Pro Choice’ person leaving you no choice!

You see, some Catholic politicians seem to be approaching the Eucharist as a ‘virtue signaling’ moment. Some would turn that moment into a public (“Hey, look at me!”) demonstration of their Catholic credentials and a kind of spiritual ‘photo op’. There is more than enough hypocrisy to go around these days – in my own life too – but it takes some kind of immense spiritual hubris and hypocrisy to waltz up for Communion while at the same time publicly ignoring and positively working against essential Church teaching and practice, much less promoting something that is intrinsically evil.

Again, brothers and sisters, I publicly state my support for Archbishop Cordileone for his decision and pronouncement regarding the Speaker of the House. It is personally challenging, as it should be to every bishop in this beautiful country of ours, as this encourages all of us to engage in the same kind of dialogue with Catholic politicians in our own jurisdictions about these very same issues. That takes time, effort, and courage. Please pray for me that the Spirit will bless my ministry here in the Diocese of Fresno with all of that and - dare I say - even more, that I might be a better shepherd of souls for you and with you.

In Christ,



Most Rev. Joseph V. Brennan, D.D.
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