

Wyoming Catholic Register

Clergy can find strength in social
justice ministry

Dear Editor:

I have read and re-read your article entitled, Love of Jesus Christ key to the Church's future in the August, 2003 issue of the Wyoming Catholic Register. Not having attended the retreat, I can only respond to what you report to be the facts in your story.

Father Pacwa, according to your article believes, "as Catholic clergy began to be involved in the racial anti-war movements of the 1960s, it brought politics into the Church. It resulted in a shift where the emphasis was on political activity, not on the graces of the Holy Mass." Sweeping generalities are not an effective means of persuasion.

I have known countless clergy throughout the years who have been motivated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ to fulfill his mandate "in the world" while not being a part of the world. Likewise these men, since Father Pacwa speaks of Catholic clergy only, have found the source of their ministry and the strength for their ministry within the celebration of the Eucharist. Father Pacwa appears to believe these priests have opted for politics instead of the Eucharist.

Father Pacwa goes on to say this was an effect of Vatican II. Unlike Father Pacwa, who decries this effect, I say, "yes!" Thank God the Church finally saw the mandate of the Gospel and the challenge offered to us through Social Justice Encyclicals; the first written in the late 1800s, well before Vatican II, when the pope saw the need to support labor unions. One of the great gifts following Vatican II was the realization on the part of many that the celebration of Eucharist was intimately connected to the rest of the week; family, work, and yes, politics.

It is my judgement, after reading your article, that Father Pacwa would prefer the Catholic Church return to a fortress mentality, ignoring the gifts the human sciences can bring to the discussion and solution of human problems. The command of Jesus Christ can only be met through engagement, not isolation.

I agree with Father Pacwa's encouragement to the retreat participants, "seek holiness." Let us remember that holiness cannot be received, encouraged, promoted or lived in a vacuum of isolation. The mandate of the Gospel calls us all, lay and clergy, to ministry; an active engagement with our society and culture.

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