

Priestly Training Reform in Brief, by John C. Cahalan, Ph.D.

(“P” refers to pages at joyfulshepherdretreat.org/booklet; “E” refers ,to pages at joyfulshepherdretreat.org/evidence)

Responding to grace is up to each of us. But for us to do that adequately, the Church must teach us what we need to (1) know and (2) do, and must (3) create supportive environments.

Innocently, our self-sacrificing priests fail to learn, for either their pastoral or personal lives, how they should pastor for our full response to grace. They have the most important job, and one of the most difficult, in the world, but unjustly we don’t equip them adequately for it.

Omissions in priests’ training are no one’s fault. Historical conditions beyond anyone’s control explain them. P, cover and 1. But now priests need to listen to those outside their own culture.

Good doctrine is not enough for pastoral wisdom. We always had the same Eucharistic doctrine, but we discouraged frequent reception for centuries. Doctrine is only one part of pastoring.

The Church’s *Hierarchy of Christian Truths* (HCT) concerns doctrine *and* pastoring. The Magisterium: “On all levels . . . catechesis that neglects this hierarchy can be useless.” P, 1-2

By the HCT: “What unites Christians is greater than what divides us,” P, 3. Tridentine seminaries needed to stress the distinctively Catholic, not the HCT. Most of society still believed Jesus spoke for God; so the main pastoral problem for centuries was who interpreted Jesus rightly. P, cover and 1. Now the main problem in the advanced world, and soon elsewhere, is secularism.

The west has been steadily losing communicants and vocations for over 50 years. Still, pastors preach the “Catholic” as if they can take the appreciation of Christian basics for granted.

By the HCT: God’s greatest gift, infinitely above anything else, is *sanctifying grace*, the real presence of the Trinity in us. That is the “pearl of great price,” the “one thing necessary.” P, 3, 6-7, 10-11; E, 17-19. By evangelization adults receive it prior to baptism. (1 Co 1:17; 3:10)

The primacy of grace is more than doctrine. Scripture repeatedly says pastors should motivate already evangelized Christians mainly by their appreciation of the real presence by grace, our divinization. Christianity’s *essence* is the Trinity’s own life lived in and among human beings. P, 3, 6-7, 10-11; E, 17-19.

Scripture says that Pentecost gives us that appreciation (Jn 14:16-20), but also that pastors must reinforce it often (2 Pt 1:3-15). We need to hear more about what God does for us than we Him.

By claiming that the Eucharist is God’s greatest gift, pastoring now stifles that appreciation and so the Eucharist’s goal: loving unity in the communal body that *is* Jesus. (1 Co 10:16-7; 12:12) The Eucharist is the “summit” by being the highest of the ways we live the Trinity’s life.

Again, “What unites Christians (grace) is greater than what divides us,” as the Eucharist sadly does. “Catechesis neglecting the HCT (not stressing the greatest gift) can be useless.”

Our society creates unique obstacles to appreciating grace and so to this motivation. Pastors do not learn to counter the obstacles. Making something else the greatest gift only adds to them.

E.g., society tells us that all people are God's children. In 15 places, Scripture says that the Trinity's life makes Christians His children in a sense infinitely greater. E, 21. It mentions the other sense only once. (Ac 17: 28-9) Only Christians who appreciate their own glory, for which all people are created, can love nonChristians as they need and deserve, i.e., with Jesus' love.

E.g., we often hear that Jesus is in us subjectively, "in our hearts." We rarely hear that we are new creations, royal priests, etc., which our motivation depends on. We hear that grace starts small and grows. But the whole Trinity is in the baptized baby just as the complete human soul is in the zygote. What grows is the way the Trinity lives its life in us.

E.g., We now know that you needn't be visibly Christian to be saved. But pastors don't add that grace comes to nonChristians by the prayers, sufferings and works of Christians. P, 12-13

In 50 years, I have heard only one homily say the New Law is love between Christians. Others at the Mass didn't even hear that; I asked. Society didn't dispose them to even grasp the idea.

The New Law needs careful explaining, but pastors don't learn how to do it. Many don't even know that love between Christians is Jesus' plan for saving nonChristians. P, 4-5; E, 11-16

How This Links to the Sex, Finance and Cover-Up Scandals

Priests and future prelates leave the seminary not knowing what they and we need to know to cooperate with grace. And the distorted pastoral view of the Eucharist is a distortion of their ministerial self-image: a form of clericalism (Pope Francis' word concerning the scandals).

If the Eucharist was most important, the Church's life would revolve around the priest (clericalism), not his life around its. The Church must first be a loving community, the Eucharist's goal (1 Co 10:16-7), and a sacrament/catechesis "delivery system" only as a means to that.

A priest in mortal sin acts *in persona Christi* like any priest. But I've never heard a priest preach that those in grace are infinitely more personally united to Jesus: They share His personal worship of the Father. If seminaries even teach that, they must not stress it enough.

Many priests, though dedicated, have not had the adult conversion described in Weddell's *Forming Intentional Disciples* and referred to twice in *The Imitation of Christ*. If so, they would not lack even a "conceptual category" for personal evangelization, as Weddell shows.

The New Law, given only to our first pastors, told them to make the Church a community of love. P, 4-5 Most parish priests don't do that, so they lack the supportive environments their sanctity needs. In modern community-deficient society, they have the loneliest job (read: sex scandals). And without community, stressing specifically priestly piety enhances clericalism.

All future priests' training should warn them that, as so often in the past, it may have unintended consequences by way of the then-current clerical culture it can unknowingly communicate.