

And so it begins. Our Church is sliding into a schism mirroring the dysfunctional politics of our nation. I am writing in reference to Shannon Scott's letter in the April 5th Sooner Catholic and to the Archbishop's column from March 22 issue.

Ms. Scott states that the purpose of her letter is to defend the Church from Dr. Pedulla's letter in the February 22 Sooner Catholic. Having read his letter numerous times I fail to see anything from which the Church needs to be defended. His complaint was plainly not with the Church, but rather with "social justice" activism, and those whom the bishops have naively trusted to minister social justice activities for them. Attacking him, and like-minded individuals (such as myself) as "living a life of luxury," "egoism," sitting "in our American spaces when a child from a third world country dies from starvation and curable diseases," "the sin of starvation", and "cannot see past our judgments and glutton living" creates deep divisions in the Church. She cannot possibly know our faith, thoughts, or motivations. America is one of the most charitable countries in the world. Poverty and wealth are not a zero-sum game where if we have something others don't. I believe that the problems in this world are not due to a lack of wealth or an unequal distribution of wealth, but rather due to corruption and the lack of freedom, which has denied opportunity to millions of people.

JustFaith is not "the Church," although all the people I personally know who are JustFaith members are deeply committed, faithful Catholics. I truly believe that this would hold true of most JustFaith members as individuals. However, JustFaith as an organization, and their "partners" at Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), Catholic Charities, and Catholic Relief Services (CRS), have a shared agenda based on their interpretation of Catholic teaching. A perusal of *JustFaith Voices*, the JustFaith Ministries Newsletter (<http://www.justfaith.org/JF16.html>), clearly demonstrates support for a politically left wing approach, focused on government oriented solutions, with support for groups like ACORN, etc.

So how does this tie in with the Archbishop's column on the IAF? To cut to the chase, the shared focus of these groups is organizing politically to secure state funding for their programs. While I suppose that may be true of all modern politics given the penchant for both political parties to reward their constituents with pork-barrel projects and earmarks, where does that leave Catholics with regard to charity? As St. Paul said:

If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:3)

Using the vast power of the government to force citizens to support "social justice," in ways they may disagree with, will not transmit this love to the poor and marginalized. Rather, it strips us of the spiritual benefits of charity, and I fear sets us on the road that Europe has followed where the churches stand almost empty in the midst of the social welfare state.

Perhaps an example of a better approach to charity for Catholics was given by Fr. Nieli at the recent Catholic Men's Conference. He cited Saint Jude's Children's Research

Hospital in Memphis as a hospital where "universal health care" has been practiced for years. All with private charitable contributions.

I agree with Ms. Scott and the Archbishop that we need to pray for each other and for guidance in discerning God's Will. I am delighted that the Archbishop has called on all of us to study *Deus Caritas Est*. I believe that this will shine light in the darkness, exposing the truth. Also, I am in agreement with Ms. Scott that "Each member is a part of the body of Christ. The parts are not greater, one part completes the other," which has been the Church's teaching since St. Paul (1Cor. 12). Perhaps with His help we all, as parts of the body with different callings, will be able to serve Christ, through the poor and in other ways, without division and rancor.

Yours in Christ,

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