

Communism and Christianity Cannot Coexist

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By Michael P. Orsi

NAPLES, Fla.—One of the most frequently heard clichés is: Don’t talk religion and politics. And with nerves so raw over pandemic restrictions, increasing civil unrest, and an upcoming election, that old saying would seem to embody a certain wisdom.

Everybody’s walking on eggs these days. You can say something which you think is perfectly innocent, but that touches on a point you didn’t know was hypersensitive. Suddenly someone’s feeling affronted. Who wants to risk making people mad?

But is avoiding discussion really an option right now?

The fate of our nation—of our entire way of life—will turn on developments of the next few weeks. It all has to do with politics, that is to say with government and our relationship to it.

- We need a resolution of the coronavirus lockdowns that crippled what had been the most robust economy in our history.
- We need peace and order restored in the streets of our cities.
- And we need to know who will serve the next presidential term and, accordingly, what will be the focus of government action during that administration.

These concerns have special added significance for people of faith. Our ability to worship has been severely curtailed. Churches, church-affiliated organizations, and individual believers have come under attack. And we have reason to fear imposition of significant limits to religious freedom.

Central issue is socialism

The central issue of this moment is socialism, which at various times in our history has emerged as a potent movement, and at present is being aggressively promoted.

The lockdown orders by which state and local officials have closed our churches are expressions of centralized power, which is the key feature of the socialist vision.

Antifa, Black Lives Matter, and other radical groups proudly trumpet both their socialist credentials and their hostility to Christianity.

The Democratic Party has veered farthest to the left out of any time in its existence, desperately trying to ignore the radical violence, and expunging any support for traditional religious and moral values from its platform.

Politics and religion are inseparable. Any statement made about the Church—from one viewpoint or another—suggests some particular understanding of the First Amendment. To express a preference for either candidate automatically raises assumptions about the role of faith in one's life.

Certainly, all of this complicates our efforts at evangelization. It's hard enough for Catholics to reach out to brothers and sisters in spiritual need. That's a job we've traditionally left to priests and nuns.

Truth about socialism

But more than ever, we're called upon to speak the truth, not only about the Kingdom of God, but about the threat which socialism poses to faithful people and the nonreligious alike.

That truth is this: Wherever socialism has been tried, invariably it has turned into communism. And because communism is atheistic, the end result has always been tyranny, suffering, and death.

Some 100 million people have been killed over the course of communism's march through Russia, Eastern Europe, China, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and other parts of the world.

Why such a toll in blood? Because communism recognizes no higher moral principle than raw power.

Utopian society without God

Without God to limit human action, any action considered necessary to achieving ideological goals is acceptable.

Human beings become nothing more than expendable pieces to be used in pursuing the utopian society which communism promises to create.

Attempted case for communism

There have always been efforts to reconcile communism and Christianity. Last year, the Jesuit magazine, *America*, published an essay, "The Catholic Case for Communism," by Dean Dettloff of the Institute for Christian Studies, which tried to show parallels between communism and Catholic social teaching.

"For communists," Dettloff wrote, "global inequality and the abuse of workers at highly profitable corporations are not the result only of unkind employers or unfair labor regulations. They are symptoms of a specific way of organizing wealth, one that did not exist at the creation of the world and one that represents part of a 'culture of death,' to borrow a familiar phrase."

“Although the Catholic Church officially teaches that private property is a natural right, this teaching also comes with the proviso that private property is always subordinate to the common good.”

Condemning communism

But from the beginning, the Catholic Church has condemned communism.

As author-historian Paul Kengor has noted:

■ “In 1846, Pope Pius IX released *Qui pluribus*, affirming that communism is ‘absolutely contrary to the natural law itself’ and if adopted would ‘utterly destroy the rights, property, and possessions of all men, and even society itself.’ In 1849, one year after the [Communist] Manifesto was published, Pius IX issued the encyclical, *Nostis Et Nobiscum*, which referred to both socialism and communism as ‘wicked theories,’ ‘perverted theories,’ and ‘pernicious fictions.’ ”

The Church has maintained its resistance to communism consistently through a long series of pronouncements.

An unpublished document of the Second Vatican Council, “On the Care of Souls With Regard to Christians Infected With Communism,” observed that some people educated in Catholic doctrine support the communist cause not necessarily out of ideological commitment, but for pragmatic reasons:

■ “They regard it as an effective way to bring about the perfect establishment of social justice, and, in fact, for obtaining a better salary or wage for less work, for receiving an equal part of the division and distribution of wealth and material goods, and for living a more comfortable and easier life.”

The document warned, however, that even “those who favor communism only for economic convenience are mistaken.”

Strong influence in higher education

Kengor points out that the authors of this document foresaw a need for special action to counter the influence of communist thought “in universities and in other institutions of higher education of the sciences and arts.”

■ They recommended that “particular groups or associations be instituted for professors or students to ensure that they may not only give a public and clear testimony regarding the Christian faith by their truly Christian beliefs and manner of life, but also so they might expressly and efficaciously act to frustrate, or at least restrain, the nefarious work that is carried out hotly and bitterly in the aforementioned schools by so-called communist cells.”

The hoards of young people creating havoc in our streets just now show how we’ve failed in that area.

Communism cannot live side-by-side with religion, because it cannot abide any rules and principles other than those set by communist leaders. It must dominate all of society and all of society’s institutions.

Will Christians take a stand?

And so, difficult as it may be, committed Christians must take a stand against this mounting threat to our Faith and our freedom.

How to proceed?

1. Know the facts. Know what the Bible says. Know what the candidates stand for.
2. Speak with other people. Despite the limitations imposed on us by social distancing and other coronavirus restrictions, we need to share our knowledge with people who are less informed. Use the phone. Use Skype, Zoom, Facebook, all the means which technology has placed at our disposal.
3. In humble and considerate ways, invite people into conversation. Engage respectfully in healthy debate with friends and relatives who hold other points of view. Introducing new ideas, opening people's minds to different perspectives, educating them—these are good things. These are things on which the future of our nation depends.

Let's get to it.