Do you remember our Lord's final command to the Apostles, right before the Ascension? It was: go out and *teach* all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach and sanctify – this is *the* mission of the Church, and it's the *only* mission of the Church. This is so fundamental that even the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is laid out in this way: the Liturgy of the Word (teaching) and the Liturgy of the Eucharist (sacrifice, sanctification). How well is this done in the human dimension of the Church today? Is this mission even held in first place, is it sacrosanct and inviolable; or, is it rather easily shoved aside?

Our Lord did not say: go out and make a nice human community; I have given you the truth about Me, about God, about getting to Heaven but listen, don't make too much of them; be willing to negotiate and compromise on what I have told you; as long as people come, that's all that matters; so go out and make people feel good so they come; and whatever you do, make sure you play nice with the loud and threatening voices of the day, that's the way to get ahead. Our Lord never said anything even remotely close to that. In fact, He taught the exact opposite in both word and deed: If the world hated Me, it will hate you as well. When He said: unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood you can have no life in Me – people left Him in droves and He did not say: oh wait, please, I'll take it back; I didn't realize that would be displeasing to you. Of course His crucifixion stands out as the premier contradiction to this mentality. Is the human dimension of the Church really following the command and example of our Lord today? Are we faithful to Him? If not, then we should take down the 'Catholic' signs and replace them with signs that say: come and join us, we are worshippers of our own desires.

Fr Jerry Pokorsky is a priest for the Diocese of Arlington, VA. He writes a regular article for CatholicCulture.org, one of which was on this very topic. He describes quite well what frequently and so easily happens to the mission of teaching in the Church today. Here is his article…

Church leaders frequently stress the need for vigorous evangelization. But recent results are disappointing. How might we attract more souls to the Church?

The rhetoric of persuasion has its place in all walks of life. Kindliness and compromise are cornerstones of human relations. Politicians craft political platforms with as many planks as necessary to appeal to the most voters. But there are limits to the language of persuasion, even among the experts. Good politicians stand by their principles but negotiate prudential judgments on the edges. Bad politicians are like Groucho Marx, who said, "Those are my principles, and if you don't like them... well, I have others."

Many Church authorities carefully avoid cultural controversies. Absent the motivation for the salvation of souls, few ask why "bigger is better" in Church. Young priests usually overestimate the power of their persuasive abilities. They soon discover that some people protest their homilies when the remarks touch upon the hot-button topics of the day, such as heaven and hell, mortal sin, purgatory, the indissolubility of marriage, abortion, and same-sex unions.

Unnerved by the objections and realizing that most of us are unmoved in our comfort zones, priests often avoid controversies to keep the peace. Catholics struggling to live upright lives suffer neglect for the sake of the Sacraments, and cafeteria Catholics (to borrow an old term) retain comfortable religiosity. Crisis averted. Contributions remain steady.

The "don't offend, don't defend" persuasion strategy gains traction and causes long-term shifts in Christian practice. The priest risks his soul by failing to defend his sheep from the wolves. Believing Catholics become discouraged. Other Catholics gravitate to large Protestant evangelical congregations with vibrant old-time-religion preachers. But the mega-churches quickly crumble after the charismatic preacher dies or otherwise moves on.

Many Catholics haven't studied the Faith since Confirmation. Real or imagined hostile memories replace the splendor of the Church. Who hasn't heard stories about irascible priests in the confessional or nuns rapping the knuckles of naughty kids? For those trying to explain their distance from the Church, the nuclear option—

mention of clerical child abuse—always remains in the polemical arsenal. Add cultural prejudices to stunted religious practice, and the Catholic Church becomes a prototype of a staid, judgmental, and hateful religion.

It isn't uncommon for Catholics to exaggerate their grasp of the Faith. Despite CCD indoctrination, many (if not most) Catholics cannot list the Sacraments and Commandments. Basic morality suffers. Alas, shoplifting is at epidemic levels.

"Indoctrination" has implications that violate the rhetoric of friendly persuasion. Too bad. Every school system indoctrinates children. Benign indoctrination imparts the principles of reading, writing, and arithmetic. The indoctrination—however painful—bears fruit. Academic skills accommodate satisfying interests, mature as employment opportunities, and help pay bills.

As we abandon our religion because we fail to see its value, memories from our religious indoctrination become barren. The pain suffered in developing academic skills pays off in the marketplace. The discomfort of Christian formation that promises personal integrity provokes cultural wrath. When we ditch our religion to follow our dreams without Jesus, we resent the Ten Commandments as "hateful" restraints rather than precepts of virtue that set us free.

Morality abhors a vacuum. As the culture and the educational establishment suppress the Ten Commandments, another code of ethics replaces these Godly precepts. The diversity, equity, and inclusion ideologies—incompatible with the Commandments—become a competing rule of life.

Need evidence? How would most government school officials treat any teacher or student who said there are only two genders? The authorities would label the teacher or child a religious fanatic. Doctors deny their medical training when insurance companies force them to ask patients, "What is your sex assigned at birth?" Shoplifters promote equity.

Many lapsed Catholics demonize the Church for the distant and undeveloped teachings that remain dormant in their memories. The Church imposes morality, they argue. Yet walking away from the Church poses no threat to reputation and livelihood. Former Catholics approvingly look upon the apostasy of Church leaders without intending to return to the fold. Who needs a Church to provide what the culture already supplies? Still, they cannot tolerate disagreement.

Jesus is not a politician, and He did not use the rhetoric of political persuasion. His encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well was friendly and honest (cf. Lk. 15:1-32). He promised her—and us—the "living waters" of the Sacraments. The truth and grace of His words transform the woman, and she becomes an Apostle to the Samaritans.

Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God. During His Sermon on the Mount, He reveals the beatitudes. After the multiplication of the loaves, Jesus discloses in the Eucharistic Discourse that "unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." (Jn. 6:53) Without any hint of the language of persuasion, He doubles down and loses His entire congregation, except for the Twelve. As a politician, Jesus is an abject failure, losing His life ignominiously on the Cross.

The truth of Jesus, not the rhetoric of persuasion, is the foundation of all evangelization. The indivisible truths of Jesus guide us to salvation. No shortcuts. Either we accept His entire platform of truth, or we reject it. We cannot regard Church teaching as piecemeal if we want to retain our integrity in Jesus. The ugly politics of persuasion promising diversity, equity, and inclusion will fail because the precepts deny science and always exclude the teachings of Jesus.

Thoughtful Catholics imitate Jesus and proclaim the Kingdom. There is (or should be) no rhetorical manipulation. There is no heartfelt pleading for conversion. We respect intelligence. We honor freedom. We merely proclaim the truth of Jesus. His words intimidate or console. Unlike the tyranny of our secular culture, the Church proposes but does not impose. Take it or leave it. Souls in heaven are better than souls in hell. In our hearts with Jesus, we hope to share our Christian joy now and forever. *God bless you, Fr Kuhn*