



### **From the desk of the pastor.....**

The Church, throughout her history, has always wrestled with the tension between fidelity to the truth handed down by Christ and the apostles, and the pressure to accommodate the prevailing winds of culture and politics. In every age, there have been moments when the leaders of the Church have had to decide whether to stand firmly upon the unchanging deposit of faith or to adjust their witness to gain acceptance from the world. In our present moment, the confusion felt by many of the faithful is not so much coming from secular opposition, but from within the Church herself, particularly when prominent leaders present messages that blur the line between tradition and popular opinion. This confusion is intensified when political grandstanding becomes entangled with pastoral leadership, creating the impression that the Church is endorsing certain ideologies rather than remaining a prophetic witness above political partisanship.

Recent examples have brought this into sharp focus. Following the untimely death of political commentator Charlie Kirk in the United States, Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York referred to him as a “modern St. Paul.” Around the same time, Bishop Robert Barron praised Kirk’s influence, particularly his ability to inspire young people, framing his message as a positive cultural force. Whatever one may think of Kirk’s political positions, the Church’s leaders are called to exercise careful discernment when bestowing spiritual titles or praise, especially in ways that carry profound theological weight. To liken a contemporary political figure to St. Paul, an apostle who was martyred for the Gospel and whose life was entirely given over to proclaiming Christ crucified is to risk confusing the faithful about what constitutes true holiness and apostolic witness.

When the laity, priests, bishops and cardinals appear to conflate political success or cultural influence with sanctity, they unintentionally create a new standard of Christian greatness based on popularity and media presence rather than discipleship and fidelity to Christ. This sends a troubling message to young Catholics in particular: that the heroes of the faith are not the saints who gave their lives for the

Church, but modern political voices who happen to resonate with a certain audience. Instead of pointing clearly to Christ, the Church risks appearing to endorse political platforms, and in doing so, alienates large portions of the faithful who see the Church as bending to partisan winds.

This problem is compounded by a generational gap within the clergy. Many younger priests, zealous and well-intentioned, sometimes appear out of step with the broader life of the Church. Their enthusiasm for “restoring” older forms of worship or critiquing post-Vatican II developments in architecture, liturgy, and church teaching can be disorienting for parishioners. Rather than building unity, such positions can foster division within parishes, where some feel dismissed or looked down upon for appreciating contemporary expressions of faith. On the other hand, older clergy and bishops may be tempted to go too far in accommodating secular culture, speaking in terms that sound more like political rhetoric than Gospel proclamation. The result is that the average Catholic in the pew finds him or herself caught between two conflicting signals, one urging a return to rigid forms of the past, the other aligning too comfortably with the political debates of the present.

What the Church urgently needs is clarity. The faithful long for shepherds who will speak the truth with charity, neither watering down the Gospel to win worldly approval, nor idolizing a particular cultural or political moment as though it were the fullness of Christian revelation. The saints remind us that holiness is not about influence, power, or popularity, but about radical conformity to Christ. To compare a modern political voice to St. Paul is to misunderstand not only Paul’s life, but the entire nature of Christian discipleship.

At a time when society is more polarized than ever, the Church has a sacred responsibility to transcend these divisions, not to mirror them. When leaders elevate cultural figures to the status of apostles or hold up political influence as a form of evangelization, they confuse the mission of the Church. Our laity, clergy and our bishops, must remember that the task of the Church is not to reflect the culture back to itself, but to proclaim Christ crucified and risen, whether convenient or inconvenient. Only in that fidelity will the Church remain a light that cuts through the fog of confusion.