

Holy Name of Jesus Church

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A Pastoral Reflection on Our Time

When I graduated from high school in 1970 the Baccalaureate speaker was a gentleman who fled Hungary in the wake of the 1956 uprising against the communist government imposed by the Soviet Union after the Second World War. Russian tanks eventually crushed the Hungarians and restored the puppet regime until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The speaker's appreciation for the freedoms we enjoy in our country was profound. With both a grandfather and a father who served in the armed forces of our country during wartime I am conscious of what it cost to keep our freedoms, including the right to practice our faith. As a student of history I am aware of how our way of life and religious freedom is protected by our Constitution. I am disturbed at the currents presently at play in our country that would dismiss both our history and our governmental structures. While there are times in our past that did not always reflect our best nature, to pretend that evil is all there is does a great disservice to the truth and to our people. For example, slavery was an evil present for a long time, but think of the countless people who died in the civil war to bring an end to it and to unite our country.

What I sense is an undercurrent of philosophy that is in stark contrast to our democracy and Christian ideals. Marxist symbols, slogans and ideas seem to be openly expressed by some politicians and are present in some of the violent demonstrations in our cities. The idea of promoting class warfare or envy is essential to Marxism, as is the demonization of success. The first amendment right to protest does not include violence in any form. Our country rightly honors Dr. Martin Luther King for his steadfast adherence to the concept of peaceful protest. The mobs today who take it upon themselves to tear down statutes and monuments they dislike have moved from confederate leaders to our founding fathers and even religious figures like St. Junipero Serra. Statutes of the Lord and Mary have also been desecrated. I am reminded of Karl Marx's oft quoted opinion that "religion is the opium of the people". We too soon have forgotten just how Marxism is openly hostile to faith. It is merely the natural conclusion of making the state the central focus of culture as opposed to the rights of the individual or even considering a place for God. Marxism inevitably leads to a totalitarian state that dominates its citizenry. This has happened in every place it has been introduced. Have you noticed even now how the free speech of others is so readily denied by the left? Just try and publically hold a pro-life view point on many college campuses today and see how far toleration extends. You are likely to be shouted down by other students and even professors, while the administrators wring their hands and do not want to offend anyone, fearing to challenge the intolerance.

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In recent years we have heard prominent people saying that fundamental Christian teachings on Marriage or the human person are “bigoted or discriminatory” and that the state should force churches to change their teaching to suit the current civil orthodoxy. Some have even said that a Catholic is not fit for public office due to the Church’s teaching and that groups such as the Knights of Columbus are suspect organizations. What a sad commentary on our time that even the Little Sisters of the Poor along with many other religious entities had to file suit to stop the Affordable Care Act from imposing inherently immoral provisions to their health care. This is a long way from a time when virtually all public figures embraced the right to conscience. Remember, the first amendment also guarantees the freedom of religion.

I believe that we are blessed in our country to be able to practice our faith in freedom and in peace. While not perfect, our basic governmental documents have created and sustained this climate, while at the same time having the tools needed to address our lapses. We undoubtedly have areas to improve to bring about a more just society for all of our citizens and will always find things to rectify. The Constitution and associated documents I think are the path forward, as they have been in the past, not Karl Marx or his fellow philosophical travelers.

Fr. Edward J. Quinlan