

Conservative or Liberal Catholic?

by Sebastian R Fama

I have never been comfortable using the terms liberal or conservative in relation to one's Catholic faith. I have always thought of them as human approaches to human problems. Generally speaking, human beings are equals. We can all learn from one another. But when it comes to the Church, it's very different. On one side you have God. And on the other you have people. They are not equals. Whenever God says something, it is the final word. If you agree and your actions are consistent with that belief, you are obedient. If you disagree and your actions are consistent with that belief, you are disobedient.

When we say that someone is a conservative or liberal Catholic, it makes it seem like we have options on what to believe. And of course that could never be true. When we do that, we make ourselves God's equal. God is all knowing (Romans 11:33). We are not. As we read in Romans 11:34, who among us can give God advice? And no, Church teachings cannot change as "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Jesus left us with a simple directive; we are to observe all that He commanded (Matthew 28:19-20). His plan is the only one that can work. He said: "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32). He never said: "Live your truth and be free." Lucifer had his own version of the truth and it didn't end well. Adam and Eve had their own version of the truth and it didn't end well. The Pharisees had their own version of the truth, and you guessed it, it didn't end well.

Jesus speaks very clearly through His one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. Remember what He said to His apostles: "He who hears you hears me" (Luke 10:16). That leaves no room for anyone's personal theology. Unfortunately, we have ignored the truth for so long that many couldn't even imagine returning to it. But with God's grace anything is possible (Philippians 4:13).

Here are some examples of where we have gone astray. Divorce and remarriage without a decree of nullity – disobedient not liberal (Mark 10:10-12). Cohabitation – disobedient not liberal (Mark 7:21-23). Receiving the Eucharist unworthily – disobedient not liberal (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). Supporting abortion – disobedient not liberal (Exodus 20:13). Promoting LGBTQ lifestyles – disobedient not liberal (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Using contraception – disobedient not liberal (Genesis 38:9-10). I realize this might be a shock to some. But don't despair. Investigate why those teachings are true. Then pray for understanding and God's grace (Hebrews 4:16). If you are open, He will grant it.

Disobedience is rebellion. Rebellion is sin (1 Samuel 15:19-23). Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:2). If you want to go to heaven, you need to be forgiven (Luke 1:77). There can be no forgiveness without repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Being active in the Church does not replace repentance. Jesus made that clear when He said: "Not everyone who cries 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father" (Matthew 7:21-23). Right and wrong are not matters of fashion or personal preference. They are matters of immutable law. And it is through His Church that God rules on such matters.