

Robert Coerver Bishop of Lubbock Texas Weighs in on Sanctuary City Ordinance

Today, April 6, 2021 Bishop Robert M. Coerver released a surprising [Official Statement](#) regarding Planned Parenthood and the Lubbock Sanctuary City Ordinance. The Statement is available on the [Diocesan Website](#) and will be published in the South Plains Catholic.

It is time to take concerted action beginning with the May 1 vote on the Ordinance to ban abortions within the City of Lubbock. It is clear that the bishop cannot tell his people how to vote, but he encourages “Catholics and all citizens of Lubbock to get informed and exercise their right and duty to vote”. He concludes this surprising [Statement](#) with what might be interpreted as an *episcopal exhortation* – it is certainly an unexpected and highly unusual conclusion.

[Access the Statement here](#)

May 1 Historic Vote: Lubbock Sanctuary City Ordinance and Catholic Social Teaching

CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING is the fruit of a long line of thinking about man and society. Its roots are burrowed deeply in the natural law tradition of Aristotle and Cicero and in

the moral and judicial precepts of the Old Testament perfected by the commandment to love as God loves ([John 15:12](#)) revealed in the New. Ultimately, it is grounded in the inscrutable mystery of the individual and communal dimensions of the Holy Trinity and the corollary mystery of the human person made to the image of the Trinity, that is, the individual and communal dimensions of the human person.

Being made to the image of God implies that every human being is by nature Trinitarian; that is, every human being is by nature both individual and communal. The perfection of God consists in the individuality of the Persons united as one Substance – the Father cannot be separated from the Son or the Spirit without doing damage to the Divine Persons and to their Unitive (communal) Love which is the very essence of God ([1 John 4:8](#)). Likewise, the individual and communal dimensions of human existence cannot be separated without doing damage to both man and society. No one is perfected alone. Find one saint and you will inevitably find another (Mary and Joseph, Francis and Clare, Benedict and Scholastica, Augustine and Monica etc.) each contributing to the common good (Matt 10:28) through individual acts of love.

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Since human beings are simultaneously individual and communal beings, any society that disregards one or the other ends up working against human nature. As such, both Communism and poorly or unregulated Capitalism (to the extent that they promote the communal good to the neglect of the individual or the individual good to the detriment of the communal) are criticized by the Church as destructive partial truths rooted in a materialistic world view. Thus, when asked to compare Communism and Capitalism [Padre Pio replied](#):

“They are both indescribably evil. In the East they deny God from the head to the belly button. In the West, they

deny Him from the belly button to the feet”.

The East under Communism was guilty of “Scientific” or “Atheistic” Materialism. That is, intellectual materialism, materialism in the head, *i.e.*, the radical refusal to think about God and thus intellectually ascribe everything to a material cause. The West under Liberal Democracy has been guilty of “Hedonistic Materialism”. That is, materialism from the belly button to the feet by which Padre Pio meant the stomach and sex organs, *i.e.*, the failure to think about God because more weight is given to sex, food and material pleasures than to serious philosophical thought and spiritual progress. In other words, although apparently different, Atheistic Communism and Hedonistic Capitalism are two sides of the same coin, *viz.*, the coin of *Materialism* – Atheistic Materialism and Hedonistic Materialism.

Echoing Padre Pio, [Pope John Paul II](#) also pointed out that materialism is the destructive bond common to both Capitalism and Communism:

“While... it is true that this social model (Capitalism) shows the failure of Marxism to contribute to a humane and better society... insofar as it (Capitalism) denies an autonomous existence and value to morality, law, culture and religion, it agrees with Marxism, in the sense that it totally reduces man to the sphere of economics and the satisfaction of material needs” (materialism).^[2]

Thus, when discussing whether or not the Church’s critique of Capitalism was positive or negative, [John Paul II stated](#):

“...if by ‘capitalism’ is meant a system in which freedom in the economic sector is not circumscribed within a strong juridical framework...the core of which is ethical and religious, then the reply is certainly negative.” [\[3\]](#)

What capitalist economy that you know of is regulated by a juridical framework the core of which is “ethical” and “religious” (that is, rooted in divine and natural law)? Market economies would look much different if regulated by the natural precept of justice and the divine precept of charity. Unfortunately, none are, and that is precisely the main economic problem.

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Contrary to free-market ideologues who would have everyone believe that the market is regulated by its own laws (as if God made economic laws just as He made laws of nature such as gravity), the truth is: No such laws exist. The market is *not* a living organism; it cannot regulate itself. Like everything else entrusted to human ingenuity, the economy is a human construct, the creation of redeemed but fallen human beings who are too often dominated by concupiscence and self-love. If the economy is not regulated by just laws drafted to serve the common good, it will end up serving the individual good of a few contrary to the Trinitarian communal dimension of human existence (the common good). Thus,

“It is the task of the State to provide for the defence and preservation of common goods... which cannot be safeguarded simply by market forces...The State and all of society have the duty of defending those collective goods”. [\[4\]](#)

The Church, however, looks favorably on market economies when they are *properly* regulated, that is, when they are circumscribed by laws derived from the precepts of justice and charity and therefore serve both the individual and common good. However, this is rarely the case. Because market

economies are too often regulated by laws created by politicians who profit from the market they are supposed to be regulating, the free market as it now exists is proscribed by the Church. A market economy unregulated by the Divine and Natural Law can be “indescribably evil”.

This fact is difficult to accept because most of us have been educated and formed to believe that Capitalism is somehow sacrosanct – few of us have been taught the truth that the Church teaches otherwise. The truth remains hidden for many reasons including the fact that we have a two party system in which we must choose between one of only two political alternatives. The problem is that each contains significant error such that voting in America has become a choice between the lesser of two evils resulting in partial evil no matter which side is chosen.

Because many Catholics place their politics on par with their religion, the church has been rent by political polarization. Most of us find ourselves on one side or the other identifying as Republicans or Democrats and thus divided against our Catholic brothers and sisters when we should be working together to make Lubbock and the world a better place.

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Neither political party is blest with the fullness of Catholic truth – each contains partial half truths. The Republican Party rightly promotes Christian family values, limited government and the dangers of a welfare-state killing individual initiative and impeding the action of intermediary institutions that should act as major players in the realm of social reform. Unfortunately, it also promotes fundamental Christian errors because its basic economic premises are rooted in the promotion of rugged individualism and

enlightened self-interest rather than the genuine disinterested service of others, because it mistakes legality for morality (laws rooted in natural and divine law), ignores the precepts of economic justice and of charity mandated by Christ, and fails to recognize the Church as the new Israel.

The Democratic Party promotes social justice, a fair wage, fair lending practices and environmental stewardship, but incorrectly advances illicit ideas about sexuality and the family. In short, it tends to over-stress the social dimensions of human existence to the detriment of individual human initiative thereby creating over-dependence on the state.

Unlike either the Democratic or Republican parties, the Church does not teach partial truths about man and society; she teaches the total truth that is divided between the two parties while avoiding all of their respective errors. These truths rest on seven integrated pillars all included in Catholic Social Teaching: Financial Justice; Economic Justice; Environmental Stewardship; War and International Relations; Abortion and Related Life Issues; Sexuality, Marriage and the Family; Immigration and Racism.

Each party advances some of the above seven while at the same time erring on some of the others, which is one of the primary reasons that the Church refrains from politics: As it now stands, neither party is fully endorsable; both promote some moral good and some moral evil. The problem is that most of us do not get our ideas about politics, economics and the common good from the Church. Instead, we often give more time to Sean Hannity, Rachel Maddow, CNN and Fox News. In the process, we end up becoming mouth pieces for a political platform that is at odds with what the Church teaches while believing ourselves to be fully professing Christians. As a consequence, some of us try to reform the Church according to our political beliefs rather than correct our political ideas based upon what the Church actually teaches.

The truth about man and society articulated by the Church is, like the Divine Persons of the Trinity, one, whole and undivided. Each part is integrally related to every other part; if any part is missing both society and the individual human beings (that together constitute the social body), will suffer. If the individual body is to function properly, every organ and part are needed. Likewise, for the social body to function correctly, the complete truth about man and society must be articulated and applied.

Regarding the body and the way its various parts work together as one, I have had an eye-opening experience serving as a strength and conditioning coach for two national championship football teams: The University of Florida and the University of Notre Dame. At Notre Dame and Florida we produced championship teams (social dimension) because we first produced champion caliber athletes (individual dimension). As experienced athletes and strength and conditioning coaches, we knew the importance of identifying and training all seven physical components of the body (strength, power, muscle endurance, cardiovascular endurance, agility, speed and flexibility).

Although one or two of these physical components are dominant in each sport – regardless of the sport – to produce champions all seven must be trained. A team is only as strong as its weakest link. You can almost always tell an inferior team by the way their athletes are conditioned; some get winded easily; others lack muscle and or cardiovascular endurance, which shows in the fourth quarter; some lack flexibility and are plagued by too many injuries; some are very strong but too slow etc. Rather than making the all too common mistake of over emphasizing one component, such as strength, to the detriment of the other six, we focused simultaneously on all seven and in the proper balance; we produced champions.

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Likewise, no program of social renewal will be successful if it over emphasizes any one of the seven pillars of human life and development while neglecting or damaging the others. An integral Catholic political platform does *not* weaponize one moral issue, such as protection of the unborn, in order to advance *other* immoral economic and financial issues that work to the benefit of a few while acting as a detriment to the common good. Catholic Social teaching alone provides a platform that unites all seven pillars. If we continue to let politics divide us, we will fail to accomplish the *solidarity* necessary to advance a comprehensive Catholic world view, a view that truly benefits the common good while simultaneously benefiting the individual good from which the common good is derived. When Catholics (and Protestants) finally overcome political polarization and join hands in solidarity, we will be the strongest force for good (both individual and common) in Lubbock and in America.

Sanctuary City for the Unborn

On May 1, the City of Lubbock will hold an historic vote to make Lubbock a Sanctuary City for the unborn by outlawing abortion within city limits. This is *not* a partisan election; moreover, only one life issue is being voted on – the other six are not in play. Because abortion is the only issue being voted on, because this is a non-partisan vote and because the vote is so critical – murder is taking place in Lubbock – we must focus our current efforts on ending abortion.

The Sanctuary City initiative provide us with an unprecedented opportunity to overcome political polarization and work together as one body in Christ to make Lubbock a more Christian city. To do so will require self-scrutiny followed by honest and concerted efforts to erase city lines and political barriers that have polarized us, weakened our voice

and nullified our efforts for too long.

The time has come for Lubbock to rise as a Champion of Christ, which requires mending and strengthening His broken and divided body. To be successful in the long-run we must broaden our limited social and political perspectives in light of Catholic Social Teaching. Nonetheless, we must first learn to cooperate; then after we learn to work together to end abortion in Lubbock, we can proceed to the other six life issues. Viewing our politics through the broad lens of Catholic Social Teaching will have a revolutionary effect on Lubbock. The process begins by working together and voting for the Ordinance on May 1, 2021. Then, we can proceed to strengthening and conditioning the rest of the body necessary to build a champion.

NOTES:

[\[1\]](#)

<https://newera.news/intelligence-report-fatima-tradition-family-property-error-on-the-right/>

[\[2\]](#)

http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_01051991_centesimus-annus.html

[\[3\]](#) John Paul II also stated: ““The Church...recognizes the positive value of the market and of enterprise, but which at the same time points out that these need to be oriented towards the common good”.

Pope John Paul II Centessimus Annus para 42-43

[\[4\]](#) Centessimus Annus para 40.