



Good News

November/December 2017

Bringing the Light of Christ to Missouri



CAN THE CENTER HOLD?

By Mike Hoey

Right now we have political extremists of both the left and the right taking to the streets in shows of force. We've seen them in Berkeley, California, Charlottesville, Virginia, and elsewhere, striking fear into communities with violent words and actions. They are not interested in dialogue, but in hate-filled rants and chants. Meanwhile, some, who may not directly participate in such actions, wink at the violence and say "Hurray for our side." At the end of this road lies the death of democracy.

In 1920, as the Russian Revolution took its bloody course and Fascism loomed on the horizon, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats penned one of his most famous poem, *The Second Coming*. Its first stanza echoes a lament for all eras tragically engulfed in political extremism:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Can the center hold in this country? Or will the falcon of democracy spiral out of the control of any falconer? Democracy lasts only so long as citizens are willing to reason with one another in the public square—what may be called the center—for the common good of all. When this willingness to participate in reasoned dialogue and compromise ends, so does democracy. Democracy by definition demands the hearing of many voices in order to arrive at a consensus for action.

In *Federalist #50* James Madison observes: “When men exercise their reason coolly and freely, on a variety of distinct questions, they inevitably fall into different opinions, on some of them. When they are governed by a common passion, their opinions *if they are so to be called*, will be the same.” The very lack of differences of opinion, Madison suggests, signals that passion is predominating, that no sifting of opinion is taking place that would allow for a considered public view to emerge through reasoned dialogue.

Today, however, we find a balkanized media landscape where people increasingly hear and see only those they agree with. A consensus develops, but it is merely the consensus of a tribe, not the community as a whole. Fearing backlash from the most politically engaged—but extreme—wings of their party, legislators shrink from compromise. Solutions to complex problems are therefore kicked down the road for another day, or thrown to the people for a yes or no vote.

The result is that the constructive deliberation so cherished by Madison is transformed into a blizzard of sloganeering ads that distort more than clarify the issue in question. This is governing by plebiscite rather than the sifting of opinion Madison favored. He had special hope for a U.S. Senate where public views could be refined “by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom and love of justice, will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary and partial considerations.” (*Federalist #10*)

Catholic teaching also calls for careful deliberation and discussion before making decisions, including decisions in the political realm. The Church holds up the virtue of prudence, which involves reflection and consultation; evaluation as the reality is judged in the light of God’s plan; and, finally, the moment of decision. (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, par. 547)

Perhaps it is time for a new Madison to emerge on the political scene, someone who can work with others to renew our institutions so they will more truly foster the virtue of prudence and promote the calm and reasoned exchange of opinions so necessary for a government to arrive at decisions that promote the common good.

In the meantime, one thing is certain: The “center” cannot hold if violent speech and violent action take center stage and push aside reasoned dialogue. In this descent into barbarity, “the ceremony of innocence” (our civilization) faces ruin. The only remedy is for good men and women to speak up. Too much is at stake for people to simply stop talking, and more importantly, listening to each other.

Mike Hoey is the executive director of the Missouri Catholic Conference

Get ready for the 2018 legislative session!

JANUARY

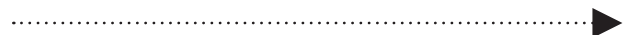
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MO General Assembly opens

MAY

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MO General Assembly closes





The Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) seeks to inform, educate, and mobilize citizens on the major issues confronting our state and nation. You can learn about the MCC's legislative priorities at www.mocatholic.org and also access the legislative toolbox, a set of guides and graphics that can help you understand how the legislature functions and how you can get involved. You can take a look inside the toolbox here.



MOCAN

By becoming a member of the MCC's Catholic Advocacy Network (MOCAN), you'll receive updates on MCC progress and involvement with legislation, and you'll also be able to get involved yourself. If you receive our MCC Weekly Update by email then you are a member of MOCAN. If you do not receive our emails, but would like to become a part of MOCAN, contact the MCC at (573) 635-7239 or mocatholic@mocatholic.org. Non-Catholics are also welcome to join.



MISSOURI LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

Stay up to date on important legislative dates with this helpful calendar.



STATE & FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE LINKS

Find your state and federal legislators by using these directories, and also learn more about the legislative processes in Missouri and the federal government.



LEGISLATIVE GLOSSARY

Don't worry, you're not the only one who gets lost in legislative jargon. This glossary will help you learn legislative terms.



HOW A BILL BECOMES LAW

It's probably been a few years since you've seen Schoolhouse Rock, so we've provided a graphic that explains the path a bill must take to become a law in Missouri.



COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Want to send a letter, make a phone call or meet in person with your legislature? Find out how in this guide.

Get ready for the 2018 legislative session by visiting the Missouri Catholic Conference website at mocatholic.org! Email us with questions at mocatholic@mocatholic.org.



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MISSOURI CATHOLIC CONFERENCE



The Diocese of Jefferson City Welcomes a New Bishop



In late November, Pope Francis named Father W. Shawn McKnight, a priest of the Diocese of Wichita, as the new bishop of Jefferson City after accepting the resignation of Bishop John R. Gaydos. Bishop Gaydos has served as the third bishop of Jefferson City since 1997. He will continue to live in the Diocese of Jefferson City and will serve as the diocese's Apostolic Administrator until the new bishop is installed on February 6, 2018. The MCC thanks Bishop Gaydos for his faithful work in the diocese over the last 20 years as we welcome Bishop-Elect McKnight to Missouri and to the MCC Board of Directors.

Father Shawn McKnight was born June 26, 1968. He was ordained a priest for the diocese of Wichita on May 28, 1994. He earned a master of arts degree and a master of divinity degree from the Pontifical College Josephinum (1993-1994) and later earned a Licentiate of Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm in Rome in 1999. In 2001, he earned a Doctor of Sacred Theology also from the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm.

Currently, Bishop-Elect McKnight serves as the pastor at the Church of the Magdalen in Wichita, Kansas. He formerly served as executive director of the Secretariat for Clergy, Consecrated Life and Vocations (CCLV) of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) from 2010-2015. He has also held numerous academic, professional and academic society positions among them serving as director of Liturgy and director of Formation at the Pontifical College Josephinum.