News

Fr. James Altman, then pastor at St. James the Less Catholic Church in La Crosse, Wisconsin, i

Fr. James Altman, then pastor at St. James the Less Catholic Church in La Crosse, Wisconsin, is seen in his August 2020 YouTube video. In the clip, he attacks Catholics who are Democrats. (CNS/YouTube screenshot)

by The Associated Press

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

La Crosse, Wis. — April 26, 2021

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

A priest in La Crosse has been ignoring COVID-19 gathering restrictions at his masses while warning people that vaccines are useless and anyone who imposes virus-related protocols will burn in the "lowest, hottest levels" of hell.

The La Crosse Tribune reported April 25 that it had obtained a photo of Fr. James Altman presiding over a crowded Easter service at St. James the Less Catholic Church. The picture shows at least 50 people crowded into the first five rows of pews. They don't appear to be wearing masks.

The photo was a screenshot from a video of the service that shows about 170 parishioners walking up to receive communion, many of whom accepted the wafer by mouth. Few wore masks.

The La Crosse County Health Department advises people to wear masks in indoor public spaces and recommends limiting capacity in public buildings to 75%. The Diocese of La Crosse's COVID-19 protocols allow only 25% occupancy with social distancing, and require parishioners to wear masks.

The Tribune also obtained a page from a St. James church bulletin calling vaccines "an experimental use of a genetic altering substance that modifies your body — your

temple of the Holy Spirit." The bulletin goes on to warn readers that it's "diabolical" for anyone to shame or compel someone into getting a shot and making "you nothing other than a guinea pig."

"If the Injection actually worked, no one who actually took it would have cause for fearing anyone who did not. They would be 'safe' even if you coughed in their face. Therefore, their use of peer pressure to force you into Godless conformity is damnable," the bulletin said. "God is still the best doctor and prayer is still the best medicine," the bulletin said.

The Tribune noted that another video of a Palm Sunday Mass earlier this year shows Altman railing about COVID-19 protocols, calling them "godless" and "Nazi-esque controls."

"Let us be clear, God damns every single one of those godless moves, whether it be in civil government or worse, in the complicity of many of in the church," he said. "The lowest, hottest levels [of hell] are the final burning place for those shepherds who were complicity in the godless restrictions."

Altman came under fire last fall for calling Democrats godless and warning they would go to hell if they don't repent.

The Tribune could not reach Altman for comment. A call from The Associated Press on April 26 to Altman's extension at the church was met with an automated greeting that would not allow a message. He did not immediately return a message left with a receptionist.

Diocese officials said they continue to work privately on issues surrounding Altman. The diocese said in a statement that the diocese's leader, Bishop William Callahan, understands times are difficult but that doesn't give anyone permission to use a religious post as a "tool of condemnation."

Advertisement