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Fidelity oaths raise questions about new evangelization

Isabella R. Moyer | Jul. 16, 2012 NCR Today

There is much to ponder regarding the fidelity oaths [1] required of all catechists by the Arlington Diocese. Discussion boards are already abuzz with predictable comments from both sides of the issue. One thing (among many) that troubles me is how Bishop Paul S. Loverde uses [2] the upcoming Year of Faith and call to a new evangelization as his rationale for demanding these oaths.

Yet again, we are told of the need to evangelize those who have "drifted away" and "fallen away" from the church. Categorizing Catholics who no longer belong to a parish community as having drifted or fallen away relieves our church and her leaders from blame. Fingers point to secularism and indifference as the evils of the world that must be battled.

But many are leaving the church in anger. They are angry at the unfolding sexual abuse crisis that is growing like a disease across the world. They are angry at a clericalism that focuses on privilege and authority. They are angry at a church that puts more emphasis on doctrine, the letter of the law, rather than on the Gospel call to feed the poor and hungry in our midst. They are angry at a church that does not embrace fully the gifts of women.

At the heart of evangelization is the person of Jesus, an encounter with our loving God. At the heart of faith is our response to that love nurtured in prayer, formation and right action. Meanwhile, we see increasing efforts to circle the wagons around unquestioning faith and orthodoxy. We see a church that is becoming more a doctrinal police state than a loving community.

Are these the tools we need for the new evangelization? How many hearts will it welcome back into active life in the church?

Source URL (retrieved on *08/31/2016 - 03:00*): https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/fidelity-oaths-raise-questions-about-new-evangelization

Links:
[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/sunday-school-teachers-balk-at-oath-agreeing-to-all-church-teachings/2012/07/11/gJQAcAvGeW_story.html
[2] http://www.washingtonpost.com/r/2010-2019/WashingtonPost/2012/07/11/Local/Graphics/BishopLetter.pdf