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Christianity is about the absence of fear

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NCR Today

Jesus came to set us free. He was a liberator. Christianity is about nothing if it is not about liberation. Liberation from sin; liberation from death; liberation from all fear.

As clear as any sign I know the current leadership of our church is on a misguided course is its use of fear to have its way. Creating a fearful climate is the antithesis of building Christian community.

And yet I hear it again and again, from within religious communities, from theologians, from priests, from lay people everywhere. People are afraid to express themselves as Catholic/Christians lest they be penalized, exiled.

And now we read about the sad story of Jesuit Fr. Bill Brennan, a 92-year-old Milwaukee-area priest, who has been removed from priestly duties because he shared a liturgy with a woman.

Brennan told NCR he was hesitant to confirm the news regarding his loss of faculties because he was also ordered not to talk to the press. "I'm risking my existence in the Jesuit order by talking to you," Brennan told NCR.

Brennan said his restrictions include:

- Suspension of priestly faculties, prohibiting him from performing any priestly duties in public;
- Refraining from contact with media, "through phone, email, or any other means";
- Not appearing as a Jesuit at any "public gatherings, protests or rallies";
- Not leaving the Milwaukee area "for any reason" without his superior's permission.

What? Not leaving the Milwaukee area for any reason without his superior's permission? Sounds like

something recorded by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn.

In times like these we must focus on the gospels -- and pray for those who are persecuted as well as those who persecute them.

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