



DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

A devout Catholic...

Recently, the Vice-President offered what seems to be a repeated trope these days, viz., the Catholic Church is increasing her financial health by accepting grants from the federal government. Our government asks to use our on the ground expertise to assist migrants. Not only do we not get rich from this association but we actually spend more than any of the government grants contribute. We do what the government won't or can't. We don't ask about a migrant's status when someone approaches us who is hungry, thirsty or in need of shelter. We serve Christ, following the biblical imperative: *whatsoever you do to the least of my people...* cf. Matthew 25:40-45). Perhaps you don't know this, but the Catholic Church is the largest provider of social services in the world, and only second in the United States, behind the federal government. You should be proud of the fact that together by God's grace we accomplish much in answering the scriptural mandate to love. Cardinal Dolan replied to the Vice-President perfectly, he called Vance's assertion, a scurrilous lie. As I told Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene who made a similar accusation, the Church is not in charge of the border, the federal government is, time to quit the sleight of hand Congress and do your job.

What intrigued me was not the accusation from the Vice-President but the assertion that, and this somehow justified their positions, they were devout Catholics. President Biden repeatedly asserted this about himself. It seems to me to be a rather unusual thing to say about oneself, kind of like asserting that you're extraordinarily handsome. The appellation so it would seem come from others who viewed repeatedly one's integrity as a Catholic man or woman. Being a devout Catholic would seem to be a good thing to aim for in the life of discipleship, but is it? The only degree in the life of a Catholic is sanctity. There are saints, that is, those set apart for Christ and on the path of sanctity and those who by their own choices are not. Being a devout Catholic is simply being Catholic, only heroism whose ardor is given by God, sets one apart as an exemplar of discipleship, that's what we call a saint. Each of us are called to be saints, it is said, it is the only real tragedy in life if we do not become so.

The people in my life who taught me the most about the journey of faith, taught me that it was not about them, not about me, it was about Jesus. Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, without him we can do nothing (cf. John 15:5). Let Jesus make you a saint. Your job and mine is to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, to surrender to him that his plan may be accomplished in us, to say in wonder and with some trepidation with St. Peter: to whom shall we go Lord, you have the words of everlasting life (cf. John 6:68). To be a Catholic is a great gift from God. It is given to us so that you and I might be witnesses for others sake. Jesus gives a rather powerful commandment to those who profess their love for him: *if you love me, keep my commandments.* (John 14:15). Let's keep his commandments for love of him, let's forsake all other paths as good as they might seem, let's become the saints we're called to be, let's be Catholic.

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