

25 YEARS AND COUNTING

July 1st marked my 25th anniversary as president and CEO of the Catholic League. It's been a great run, and I am not about to pack it in. On July 18, I turned 71. Fortunately, God gave me pretty good health and a whole lot of energy.

When I took over in 1993, the league was in financial and organizational ruin. I told the board of directors to give me plenty of rope—don't try to micromanage me—and if I didn't produce, then they should yank me. Fortunately, they granted me the authority, and matters quickly turned around.

Why don't I retire? After all, most of my friends are retired. I stay for one reason: I love what I am doing. I love fighting for justice, and to make right that which is wrong. I also love winning. While we don't win them all, our track record is clearly better than any comparable organization.

What are we fighting for? Respect. A fair hearing. An equal playing field. That's about it. What I want is a reasonable opportunity for the Church's voice to be heard. We don't have that. Instead, we have to endure a culture that is increasingly secular, irrational, and hateful.

The de-Christianization of Western civilization has not worked out for anyone. To make a fast comparison, consider such social ills as crime, delinquency, divorce, out-of-wedlock births, drug abuse, suicide, school shootings, homelessness, sexually transmitted diseases, and abortion. Now think about the most Catholic decade in American history—the 1950s—and make the comparison with today. The secularization of America has been an unmitigated disaster.

We have also become an increasingly irrational society. The sad fact is that the most educated persons in our society are also the most irrational. Most of them are white, and the worst among them have postgraduate degrees.

They are the ones who believe that a pregnant woman is not carrying another human life. They are the ones who believe that two men can get married. They are the ones who believe that a male who thinks he is a female is a female. It's all a fiction. If they were independent thinkers, they would be able to think straight. But they are not—they are the victims of indoctrination.

Our society has also become increasingly hateful. It's not enough to disagree anymore—it's important to silence opposing views. It's not enough to speak passionately about issues—it's important to engage in obscene attacks. It's not enough to win on the issues—it's important to personally destroy the opposition.

This is the environment the Catholic Church finds itself in. To be sure, the Church has made some serious mistakes along the way. But if some of our teachers, i.e., the clergy, have failed us, our teachings have not.

The trio of maladies that I mentioned—secularism, irrationality, and hatred—are reflections of what is at bottom a breakdown in community and common sense.

Western civilization has witnessed radical individualism run amuck, destroying the prospect for community, or a collective sense of oneness. That's why America is so divided: our nation is coming apart at the seams, owing in large part to the loss of social glue that binds us together. As every Catholic should know, it's easy to think of ourselves first if we don't have time for Him.

Common sense is now a rarity, especially among the cultural elite and other big-sky thinkers. Their idea of helping the poor is not to empower them, but to drag the successful down. They work tirelessly to tell us of the harm that smoking does and then inform us in same breath of the need to legalize pot; Marijuana, Si, Marlboro, No. They defend the most pornographic

material on TV, the screen, and the Internet, and then condemn the Miss America pageant for the bathing suit competition. They invite the homeless to camp out in coffee shops and are then shocked to learn they destroy the place.

By contrast, Catholicism embraces community and possesses common sense. That alone merits a defense of the Catholic Church. To be exact, it is the job of the Catholic League to help make the Church's voice ascendant again. Somebody has to stand up to the roar of madness that surrounds us, and no entity is better equipped to do so than the Catholic Church.

The founder of the Catholic League, Father Virgil Blum, believed too many Catholics were complacent. That was true when he started in 1973 and it is true today, though it is certainly not true of Catholic League members. You are the ones who energize me.

The Church has weathered many storms before. It's been beleaguered and besieged. It's been subjected to vitriol and violence. Yet it always rebounds. It will again.

There are those who counsel retreat, advising practicing Christians to carve out small enclaves to repair to, essentially withdrawing from the center of the dominant culture. That's a fool's errand.

This is not a time to quit the fight—it's a time to redouble our efforts. Anyone who thinks that things can't get any worse knows nothing about history.

Count me in. Hope you're in as well.