

'Deny Thyself' Is Not in Politicians' Vocabulary

Joe Biden calls himself a "devout Catholic." Sorry, Joe, but your claim is bogus and your hypocrisy rank, as can be seen in the whole recent communion controversy.

That Catholic bishops shouldn't have to deny Joe Biden communion because of his support for abortion, which the church considers a grave sin, is a point correctly made by Larry O'Connor in "[I Deny Myself Communion, So Should Joe Biden](#)." O'Connor, who remarried without having his previous marriage annulled by the church, attends Mass on Sundays, but quite rightly never receives communion. To do so would be to add sacrilege to his other sins.

Joe Biden commits this same sacrilege every time he receives the Eucharist. Certainly the bishops have the right and even the obligation to forbid communion to anyone who is guilty of a grave sin and remains unrepentant, particularly a public figure setting a poor example for others. As O'Connor points out, however, Joe Biden should deny himself communion.

But reading O'Connor's article made me think of self-denial in a more general way. Many of us are not particularly adept at self-denial. Our enormous levels of debt, both in our government and in our private sector, reveal our inability to put the brakes on our spending. Our national epidemic of obesity demonstrates our inability to eat healthy foods in moderate amounts. Our divorce rates stem from several causes, but surely a cornerstone of these broken marriages is the inability to control personal desires. Our obsession with all things sexual—pornography, hooking up, and casual sex—also reflects our lack of self-control.

Coupled with this diminished practice of self-denial is our

shrunk sense of responsibility. An example with national ramifications can be found in our border crisis. Joe Biden and his government cooked up this mess, and not until recently did Biden send Vice President Kamala Harris to the border for a firsthand look at the horrendous damage done to our country by their policies. Neither wants to be seen as having created this catastrophe, even though one of their fellow Democrats admits the current administration's approach to the border [creates a weak image for the party](#).

We see this same irresponsibility in our everyday lives. We lie to a best friend, she discovers the lie, and we try to cover our tracks by blaming circumstances or other people. We bollix a project at work and blame it on an underling. We hurt our spouse with wicked and undeserved remarks, and blame our cruelty on a hard day.

In many ways, entitlement is a form of irresponsibility. We've endured a long week at the office and tell ourselves we deserve that six-pack of beer. We may owe a minor fortune in credit card bills, but we need that vacation at the beach. On a national level, our government decides certain groups are entitled to special treatment and favors.

From this refusal to take charge of our lives and accept the consequences of our actions comes victimhood, that cancer on today's culture. These days, it seems many Americans revel in being victims, wounded by racism, by misogyny, by poverty. Given the freedoms and prosperity of our society, it should astound all of us how so many men and women have claimed to be sufferers of oppression who then band together to demand even more rights without ever recognizing the accompanying responsibilities those rights demand.

Of course, plenty of people practice self-denial. All of us can surely think of people young and old who daily sacrifice themselves for their family, friends, and other loved ones. The hard-charging attorney who gives his all to support his

growing family, the contractor who hits the road by dawn to do the same, the 60-year-old daughter who helps care for her mother with Alzheimer's, the nurse who goes above and beyond the call of duty when treating her patients: in one way or another, these noble souls set the self aside and strive to do the right thing. They're the glue holding society together.

Yet how rarely we celebrate them.

Today's public figures maintain they know what is best for the rest of us, yet many of them are, like Joe Biden, pompous hypocrites who know little to nothing about self-denial. Let's resolve to be better people than so many of those now running our government or dictating to our culture. Let's serve others rather than focus on our own desires. Let's seek the good for our friends, family members, and even strangers.

Oscar Wilde once said, "We're all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

Let's be the ones looking at the stars.

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