

CHRISTOPHER J. BAKES
personal correspondence

June 17, 2020

VIA FEDEX AND EMAIL [*email where available*]

Wilton Gregory

Scott Santarosa, SJ

John Martin, SJ

Tom Reese, SJ

Re: *Catholic primer for a scandalized laity*

Gentlemen:

I will share a copy of this letter with all who seek a voice against socio-political arrogance disguised as Godly. I will remind them that we the laity have a duty to correct. I hope this letter will become their primer. I have drafted it with that in mind. Though I'm an attorney, I write as a Catholic layperson.

I am well-known to one of you. I have friends in common with all of you.

Right now I am very angry.

Each of your recent public statements about race and politics have been disastrous. Your comments have been non-theological and non-pastoral. You have not surrounded yourself with genuine diversity, seen in your failures to seek multiple perspectives. Thomas Sowell. Rapper Lil' Wayne. Kanye West. Black Republicans, the original abolitionists. Morgan Freeman. Black cops. Black conservatives. Genuine Liberals. Where are they in any of your commentaries? I see only an echo chamber.

Wilton Gregory
Scott Santarosa, SJ
John Martin, SJ
Tom Reese, SJ
June 17, 2020
Page 2

As I shared with one of you many months back – in personal correspondence on a grave but unrelated matter – I resent having to correct church leaders. But I was willing then and am happy now to put my empowered post-Vatican II lay voice to work. I am a cradle Catholic raised by a rectory housekeeper, educated entirely in Church schools, servant of the Church, friend of the Society of Jesus, and attorney confidante of priests and lay people who have been harassed by Church power.

Confused faithful now need an accurate summary of Scripture, Catholic teaching, and United States history. Your castigating all for the sins of a few? And past sins at that. Tainting the entire nation, place of hope for so many? No known legal procedure applies today's laws to people dead for centuries, which should be instructive to all. Or does the Church and papacy wish today to be held to account for three centuries of Jewish ghettos in the Papal States? The ghettos closed in 1871, and only after papal rule ended. Perhaps the Society would like to be penalized permanently for constructing Georgetown through sales of black slaves, Georgetown being one of their first ministries in the nation. Shall the New Testament be repealed because it commands slaves to obey their masters? (*See* 1 Tim. 6:1-2.) Shall the entire Church be condemned – laity, religious, and priests – for the Church's centuries of failure to effectively respond to the slave trade? Perhaps we can convene mock trials to determine these and other questions. We can add to the list a trial to determine just how sexual predators, scandal and promiscuity were able to spread so widely and deeply throughout the institutional Church and its major religious orders – and in the late 20th century no less.

Or do we confess, do penance, make amends and move on, forgiven and in prayer to avoid the sin again? Our great nation has already sought forgiveness and offered its penance. Constitutional principles were relied on to free the slaves. A bloody Civil War was fought. Further constitutional amendments were enacted. All of this occurred within a noble century-long civil rights movement that did not call for the elimination of history or the destruction of statues – even though those activists were direct victims. Perpetual retribution is itself sinful.

Your comments opposed all of this. They have not been pastoral. You neglected large expanses of the faithful, Catholic and non-Catholic. In a troubled time, you failed to be inclusive in your messaging. You politicized your messaging and picked a political side and just one sin. You passed judgment on the innocent. You neglected the guilty. You polarized rather than heal. You condescended.

Failures of pastoral care. Recent events called for a genuinely pastoral response, or at least silence if pastoral was beyond you. We as Catholics could have charted a distinctive course independent of highly secularized influences – particularly those that come from the Left and Leftism, traditional tormentors of the Church, and part of an extremely dangerous broader movement now coming toward us. As a long-time Democratic Party activist, I long opposed the precursors to these forces within the Party, unsuccessfully as it turns out. My lifetime of

"Leave them; they are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:14)

advocacy for the poor and marginalized has been aimed at bringing all into the mainstream, not creating multiple sub-factions that poke holes in the Body of Christ.

Rather than embracing the richness and wisdom of our shared faith traditions and educating the public in the complete teachings of the Church, each of you walked politicized paths, taking potshots at our nation (all of you), the President (all except Scott) and law enforcement (Scott). I once wrote to the congregation of Sisters that taught me as a child. They had just promoted in their alumni magazine the women's marches of January 2017. The marches were full of signage and imagery that were spectacular affronts to Catholic teaching. I shared the following thought: "You owe us your continued allegiance to the values you taught us."

The same applies to you.

Our nation is a multi-cultural triumph. I turn first to your commentaries regarding race in the United States, which you characterize as racist to the core.

As a matter of fact, we as a nation are an unrivaled multi-cultural triumph. We gather people of all colors from all nations into one kaleidoscopic nation with Freedom and Liberty as cornerstones. Racial characteristics do not unite us as Americans (as in China, Japan or Russia). Great ideas do. And once you begin attacking those ideas, calling our nation's very roots into question and selectively accuse without evidence or process, you have taken our national idea, contorted it, and contribute to its disintegration.

People do not come to the United States from the world over because we are "systemically racist." They come here because we are not.

Our nation has always been a trend-setter. In each of the last five centuries, our nation stood for something distinctive, whether as a nascent nation gradually coming together while still colonies or as a singular nation bound by ideas following 1776. Our nation has for all of these centuries been a refuge from what troubled the rest of the world, whether oppressive monarchs or oppressive religions or dead-end national economies that perpetuated the suffering of the poor. As our nationhood evolved, it was 17th century England's own forms of rights that were brought to this country. They made their way into the governance of each of the colonies. Flawed though England or the new colonies may have been by today's standards, they were avant-garde and forward-thinking for the time. They continued to evolve.

The same holds true for the American 18th century. As monarchs and faiths continued to persecute elsewhere, and as the papacy continued to confine Roman Jews into their ghetto, the new Americans were calling upon Enlightenment ideals – planted here on the firm foundation of Judeo-Christianity – to form a national union that continued the evolution of old English rights. Our nation drafted a binding document to memorialize these rights, called it the Constitution, and

with it was born the many constitutional guarantees of Liberty – as in “Liberal.” It was history’s first written civil protection of individual liberty.

The great documents of our founding – cornerstones of enlightened Liberalism – have always been rejected by the Left and Leftism. Leftism had its own evolution. It is consistently ugly and murderous, whether in 1789 France, 1917 Russia, 1949 China, or 2020 Venezuela. Born in France, Leftism devised a new methodology of aggressive deconstruction, destabilization, and destruction, with the Catholic Church consistently on the receiving end (which permanently diminished the Church in France). Leftist revolutions worldwide have all followed the French model.

Perversely, it is the French Revolution that is promoted as the preferred Revolution in too many modern classrooms – where, of course, Leftism dominates. Leftism and its acolytes have no use for a bourgeois Revolution like the American or a stable moral construct like the Catholic Church. It wants to destroy and rebuild. It is therefore a grand form of stupidity and short-sightedness that any Roman Catholic – members of the church tyrannized since 1789 by these forces – would find common cause with Leftism, Marxism, or any of their variants. While the Constitution may not have finally abolished slavery, it started the process, just as all western countries had by that time started the process. Contrast this to other continents and areas – including in Africa, in Catholic and Portuguese Brazil, and within Islam, where slavery persisted even into this century. Our Constitution was the great liberator.

In the American 19th century, the battle against slavery played out on the American continent, a bloody war was fought, and the institution ended. Remnants persisted in the form of discrimination. Yet during this exact period the United States was presented with the Statue of Liberty – forever commemorating that at the time the US was deemed the cradle of Liberty and destination of those “yearning to breathe free”: flawed in part, triumphant in part, and exactly like humans and humanity itself, including each of you. From the 19th century forward, the nation continued its evolution.

No thoughtful scholar would reduce all of this to “systemic racism,” or blame an entire nation for individuals’ sins, particularly where the clear national trends have been in the completely opposite direction.

Racism. Your elevation of a singular sin called “racism” discounts nearly all Christian teaching, trivializes it, and fashions a world where virtually no other sin matters. Not only is this dangerous, it is also juvenile. It misses out on greater teachings of multiple lessons that complete the full tapestry of sin, grace and healing.

Isn’t racism actually an aggregation of many sins? If the faithful of all millennia read, grasped and applied the Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes (and Woes), the Commandments, lived the Seven Virtues and avoided the Deadly Sins, wouldn’t all forms of

racism evaporate, from venial to mortal? Don't the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity belong in all pronouncements about grave social sin?

Racism is not a singular sin. It is many. Yet by your singularization of a poorly defined "racism" as alone deserving of submersion teaching through web proclamations and other public statements, you end up removing it from the fuller tapestry where it belongs and was already forbidden – part of the full tapestry of human sin. And if "racism" alone can this week be so unanimously declared a solo evil, tainting the whole nation and implicating us all, I direct your attention to the past months and years of your ministries that missed so many other sins and other opportunities to teach just as loudly about them. The messy lives that end badly (whether in police custody or anywhere else) could all have benefited from Christian teaching.

Poor George Floyd lived a dangerous life full of the pathologies that we all know corrode poor communities. Did he come from stability, and if he did not what can we learn from that? You have nothing to say about this? Christianity teaches comprehensively about all of these things, but I didn't hear any of it in your messaging. Who is safer as a result of your commentaries and accusations? When the Church fails to teach and family structures collapse, who is left with the remnants? The police. What do you expect might happen when spiritual and social failure ends up on the streets?

Did you also teach of the horrors black residents of troubled neighborhoods endure when they and their families are caught in the cross-fires of gun violence and gang intimidation, products of poverty and the collapse of family? Did you teach how Church and Christian teaching provide perfect training manuals for leading better and more structured lives, with these how-to manuals being part of revealed scripture inspired by God himself? How many Catholic schools have closed in just such neighborhoods?

Speaking of our Catholic schools, did you work with the political party most likely to preserve them in poor urban neighborhoods where they would surely help resist the scourge of poverty and uplift the poor? Or did you align in talk and spirit with the political party opposed to vouchers or other assistance, the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing?

Did you teach the horror of the statistic that in New York City, black women's abortions outnumber black live births? (2015: 22,838 live births compared to 25,698 abortions, according to the New York Department of Health). Imagine these souls brought together in a single place. Imagine that place full of these tens of thousands of black children not allowed to live, then imagine in an instant the deaths of them all, vanished. 25,698 of them. No outrage?

Do you inform the Spanish-language faithful of our country that one of our political parties stands in comprehensive opposition to core teachings of the Church? Or do you by your political alignments let them stumble into that party without warning that their belief system will quickly be under siege?

Wilton Gregory
Scott Santarosa, SJ
John Martin, SJ
Tom Reese, SJ
June 17, 2020
Page 6

Have you taken a political side and condemned from just that podium? In opposing lawful procedures associated with immigrant arrivals, did you likewise advocate abolishing entry requirements into the Society or into the Church?

Did you teach clearly and unambiguously about the moral failure of the papacy in 2018 and its accommodation of the People's Republic of China, in effect endorsing the PRC's persecutions of the Church and mass incarceration of Muslims?

Did you teach about the related moral failure by a Vatican representative's 2018 statement that "at this moment, those who best realize the social doctrine of the Church is the Chinese[,]" who have "defended the dignity of the human person"? (Bishop Marcelo Sanchez, February 8, 2018.) Pius XI issued encyclicals against Stalin (*Divini Redemptoris*, "On Atheistic Communism") and Hitler (*Mit Brennender Sorge*, "On the Church and the German Reich"). Meanwhile, Francis has entered into a Chamberlain-like accommodation with the largest oppressor on Earth while remaining completely silent about its tyranny. He urged the good people of China not to question their criminal government, but to be good citizens. It is the United States that to this warped thinking is the sinning nation. No admonition to looters to be good citizens? No praise for multi-cultural triumph? No word about this nation's historic commitment to "freedom, liberty and justice for all"? Rather it is Marxist China that is the Christian witness? The same government that harshly punished those of its physicians who tried to warn of the Covid virus and then provided false information to the World Health Organization? Does Marcelo Sanchez stand by his endorsement? No outrage with the world now under siege?

Do you teach of the dangers of the oppressed becoming the oppressors? In my 1990s advocacy for gay equal rights in the military, it never occurred to me that my hard work for basic equality would eventually morph into cosmic demands that the entire human construct – gift of God and Genesis – be eliminated. I recently wrote to the Human Rights Campaign, source of boycott threats against any business that stood for traditional marriage. I reminded HRC of the honors it bestowed on my pioneering work, advised that they were now the oppressors, and that I now found no morality in a cause I once embraced but which now had become an instrument of oppression in its own right. I've seen some of your own statements on gay rights. I've certainly not seen this warning, nor any call that all – gay and straight – must weave themselves into the fabric of a moral, Scripture-based life, nor a warning that threatening faithful Christians with boycotts is its own form of immorality.

I turn now from this list to each of you.

Scott. I start with Scott and his May 31, 2020, "A Pentecost Message on Justice from Jesuits West Provincial," written as if it is the only penitential aid we need in order to examine our consciences. His paragraphs implicated all "law enforcement" in murder, while saying nothing

"Leave them; they are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:14)

of the many in law enforcement who serve him, each of you, me and the public at large, they being our thin blue line protecting us from chaos and anarchy.

Nor did Scott say anything about the pathologies of social, spiritual and moral failure that afflict so many poor communities of all races, failures that lead in bright straight lines to so many catastrophic outcomes. And while Scott by sloppy drafting implicated everyone as “racist,” he failed to account for the full measure of all Church teaching that already forbids racism and all sins of superiority, subjugation, submission, and bullying – each of which, tragically enough, remain present at all levels of authority in the Church.

“Law enforcement” didn’t collectively sin, and it was Scott’s error to make that suggestion. Individuals sin. They stain their own souls, harvest of the concepts of free will and sin itself. Attacking “law enforcement” also brings with it a whiff of Leftism and radicalism, a few ideological steps away from calls to “defund the police,” a stunt that would only endanger the innocent, particularly including the black poor. We can see what happens when order and law enforcement abandon the poor – looting and rioting. Yet Scott’s Pentecost Message devoted no space to this violence that had just occurred.

Did Scott hear the speech by NYPD’s union President Patrick Lynch? (Available at <https://youtu.be/9nhWAAKSDBQ>.) An Irish-Catholic, he shared his dismay at Mr. Floyd’s death at the hands of one law enforcement officer and the neglect of two others who stood by. (Standing by in silence is a core sin of many within the modern Church, as we the scandalized faithful have come to learn.) In his speech, Mr. Lynch introduced all of the unions who united in response to the despicable treatment of law enforcement by so many politicians in “leadership.” His introductions of brother and sister union officials made clear just how many were Irish-American and Italian-American, presumably Catholic. Many are black. All were smeared by Scott’s message that Mr. Floyd was killed “by law enforcement.”

Perhaps I should have been prepared for Scott’s one-note “Pentecost Message.” Perhaps corrosive Leftism has already found a home in the Province. It was with great dismay that I was directed to the St. Ignatius College Preparatory (San Francisco) website and its tribute to Marxist college professor Angela Davis, who continues to believe in and promote Communism. (See <https://www.siprep.org/about-us/magis/diversity/diversity-news>). She is a deconstructionist and revisionist who would erase the western civilizational canon. She proclaims allegiance to a worldview condemned by Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, focal writing of the Church’s actual teachings on actual social justice. Has the Province repealed *Rerum Novarum*? *Divini Redemptoris*?

Tom. Tom virtue-signaled in front of the White House, where he had his photo taken in a mask and “I can’t breathe” sign as he picketed a *Republican* President for acts and omissions committed by *Democrats* at all levels of state government in *Democratic* Minnesota. How was this in any way an homage to anything the Church teaches? Didn’t this photo-op actually

capture Tom's sin of silence in his failure to call *Democrats* to account? Just a mile or so away sat the Democratic National Committee headquarters, unpicketed. (For next time, Tom, here is the address: Democratic National Committee, 430 S. Capitol St. SW, Washington, DC 20003.)

John. John sent a tweet attacking the President of the United States because he carried a Bible across the street to visit a church, calling it a repugnant photo-op. (The tweet was later deleted.) How was this an expression of anything "Ignatian"? It was childlike and impulsive, and an affront to Church teachings on humility, prayer and Scripture. Read some of the comments left by John's Facebook followers to learn how fully he sinned as provocateur and divider. Meanwhile I – Jesuit-educated lawyer – wait for *America Magazine* "a Jesuit review" to renounce its call for then-Judge Kavanaugh's nomination to the Supreme Court to be withdrawn. Judge Kavanaugh, Jesuit-educated and Catholic, pro-life, family-committed and faithful, deserved the due process that both *America Magazine* and Senate Democrats denied him.

As to those Democrats, they now routinely ask in the judicial nominating process whether a nominee's Catholicism should be disqualifying. Where is John's outrage at restoration of that 19th century canard (then too a tactic of anti-Catholic Democrats)? And if photo-ops are outrageous, what about the "photo-op" staged by my fellow Democrats in the Capitol rotunda, wearing vestments and kneeling, trappings of a liturgy and smacking of a weirdness I can only describe as pagan (pardon the use of that old chestnut, but it's all I can find that fits).

Where was John's outrage at their hypocrisy? *All of them* have advocated against measures that could save what remains of urban and rural Catholic schools benefiting the poor, and particularly the black poor. *All of them* celebrate unrestricted abortion – producing those that result in death counts disproportionately high in black communities. *All of them* who were able to vote voted against the 2019 Senate bill "Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act." Virginia's Democratic Governor Northam, a pediatrician no less, advocated "comforting" distressed child survivors of abortion but allowing them to die. *America Magazine* reported on the bill's failure but offered no opinion. It was silent about Governor Northam's grotesque statement.

Wilton. Wilton's attack on the President was the most impulsive and arrogant coming as it did from a member of the Catholic episcopacy. In a week of upheaval where a *Protestant* President made a gesture of prayer at a *Catholic* shrine, Wilton slapped away ecumenism and the universality of prayer and instead picked a political side – then virtue-signaled by issuing a public notice that he found the President's actions "reprehensible." Instead of inviting dialogue through prayer, Wilton attacked.

I find that "reprehensible."

Total pastoral failure. In the chaos of the past weeks, all of you were called to higher words and actions than you offered. You instead issued put-downs and insults. You attempted to force the faithful to accept an errant narrowing of our Catholic Christian faith and its constructs.

There are no race-based Beatitudes. There are no Asian Commandments. The Sermon on the Mount is the Sermon on the Mount, not the black, white, or brown Sermon on the Mount. I wonder what changes in society you might have brought about had you presented the totality of Church teaching over time, using the same energy you now deploy in your web proclamations about “systemic racism.” “Systemic racism” is a political construct. It takes no teaching skill and certainly no bravery to adopt the slogans of the loudest faction, while completely neglecting the totality of sin and the human condition.

No systemic racism; no “original sin.” Augustine of Hippo, North African and a Berber, was stalwart against attacks on his faithful. He formalized the doctrine of “original sin,” which has now been assigned as a group sin to all of America – presumably the origin of our “systemic racism.”

This is an inept application of Augustine. Bestowing on America the group taint of “original sin” misuses the concept of “original sin.” What’s more, if in assigning this sin the accuser is embracing Augustine’s teachings, let’s embrace the rest of Augustine’s teachings and his call to grace and conversion through Christ. How arrogant to extract just that one teaching – this “original sin” of racism – and leave the rest of his work unexamined. The unexamined portion includes Augustine’s favorite scripture verse, from Paul to the Romans (13:13-14): “Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.”

What’s this? There is something for everyone on that list. All sinners are called to account. Rioting? Wantonness? Drunkenness? Lust? Strife? Envy? Yet you all built what amounts to an exclusionary theology of “systemic racism”, a standalone sin. What a flimsy grasp of Scripture, of Augustine, of Aquinas, or of Ignatius – a soldier who battled heresy. How strange that I should read your commentaries and feel the need to shake off the sensation that I’ve just been dropped into a stew of heresy.

America’s “original sin” has been expunged. The United States has the largest, most prosperous black middle class in the world by any measure. Our black brothers and sisters are present in all sectors of society. They entertain and enrich the nation and world in multiple ways, often through elite stardom no other country gives its people of any color. We have long lines at federal buildings seeking access to the United States from all countries and races on Earth. They open businesses, they aspire, they hope, and they have faith in us. They thrive and prosper. While some don’t, many do (just as *Rerum Novarum* described would happen in free societies). Meanwhile, the *Catholic* non-English speaking countries of this hemisphere have as one of their chief exports their own people, who come to the hemisphere’s largest historically *Protestant* country for freedom and stability. The Church has been present in those Catholic countries for 500 years – incubating societies whose people must free themselves by leaving? Your charge of “systemic racism” runs headlong into facts that say the opposite.

Wilton Gregory
Scott Santarosa, SJ
John Martin, SJ
Tom Reese, SJ
June 17, 2020
Page 10

Your use of this “systemic racism” also insults black achievement in this country. 20% of law enforcement are black. 30% of our active duty servicemembers are black. Professors. Scholars. Poets. Authors. The most prosperous black middle class in the world. How remarkable that you should rob from all this triumph an insult – “systemic racism” – implying that none of this matters since it all must be accidental. How dare you and so many others teach such a put-down. You enshrine into the psyches of black Americans that they’ve really accomplished nothing at all.

“Leave them; they are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matthew 15:14).

“We need the real, nation-wide terror which reinvigorates the country and through which the Great French Revolution achieved glory.” Vladimir Lenin.

“Feminism involves ... a consciousness of capitalism and racism and colonialism and post-colonialities, and ability and more genders than we can even imagine and more sexualities than we ever thought we could name.” Angela Davis, Marxist, celebrated at St. Ignatius College Preparatory, December 11, 2017.

Welcome to the slippery slope, gentlemen.

Very truly yours,



Christopher J. Bakes

*All Hallows Parish School
Jesuit High School, Sacramento
University of San Francisco, BA
University of San Francisco School of Law, JD
United States Naval Justice School*

Past positions:

*Chair, Cristo Rey High School Sacramento Feasibility Study
Lead counsel, Watson v. Perry (Secretary of the Navy)
Board member, East Palo Alto Boys and Girls Club
Chair, music literacy program for poor and marginalized communities in Sacramento
Chair, jobs and employment outreach, Alemany Projects, San Francisco
Director, youth outreach, Visitacion Valley Projects and neighborhoods, San Francisco
Chair, reading literacy program for poor and marginalized youth in San Mateo County
Directed, drive to preserve and restore Catholic elementary education in marginalized communities in Sacramento
Member, School Board, Diocese of Sacramento*

“Leave them; they are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.” (Matthew 15:14)

Wilton Gregory
Scott Santarosa, SJ
John Martin, SJ
Tom Reese, SJ
June 17, 2020
Page 11

cc: Michael Gilson, SJ, Socius, Jesuits West Province

"Leave them; they are blind guides. And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit." (Matthew 15:14)