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**Bishop Joseph Strickland's interview  
with LifeSiteNews' Lisa Bourne**

*LifeSiteNews: In a previous conversation we had you mentioned that you had felt called at one point to begin teaching the truth more powerfully, so I'd like to ask you if you could tell us more about the circumstances surrounding that situation. What made you feel called to begin teaching the truth more powerfully?*

Bishop Joseph Strickland: Well I suppose it really began with my own childhood and growing up here in East Texas, where many Catholics would walk away from the Catholic faith. And I always even as a young person had the impression that it was because they didn't really know the Catholic faith.

I was born in 1958, so I grew up in the 60s and early 70s. And the Church was not focusing on really teaching catechetical truth as clearly at that time as it had in the past. So I think that it grew from that. And then really, I would say the more immediate call that I felt was really shortly after I became a bishop, just a recognition as I traveled the diocese and worked in various parishes. I'd basically spent most of my time in one parish as a priest, and so as I was traveling around, it just became more and more evident that people really didn't know their faith well. And it's such a treasure to know Christ through the Catholic tradition that I just felt that we really had to get busy teaching more effectively, teaching the basic truth, so that people could know the truth and then certainly understand why that's so important because it brings us the life of Christ.

*And other than your desire to faithfully exercise the teaching office entrusted to you as the bishop was there anything else that prompted you to promulgate the Constitution on*

*Teaching that you have done in your Diocese of Tyler, Texas? Was there anything else that prompted that? I ask because you reference reformation of teaching in the diocese in the Constitution.*

It just really grew out of that basic feeling as I was talking with various priests and staff here in the diocese. I guess the *Constitution on Teaching*; really, it was sort of the second step of my own reflection. Because early on as I recognized the need to focus on teaching, I thought that we probably need to establish some sort of an institute, or some sort of a body that would be charged with teaching, and so thinking about the need for an institute. Really the *Constitution on Teaching* grew out of that, with the idea that this institute was going to need what I'd call the roadmap, a plan, for moving forward with trying to teach in all the different ways and all the different aspects of the life of the community that we're trying to capture. So really, I'd have to say a need for a body or an entity, which I determined an institute would probably be the most appropriate, and then the *Constitution on Teaching* grew out of that.

I guess a little further detail of my own reflection was that a recognition of really putting our resources more into the primary work of the Church, which is teaching, in my opinion, rather than some of the other good things that we were focusing on. But really, and a lot of times, as with anything, sometimes I've heard that if you want to know someone's priorities you look at their checkbook and what they spend money on. And I guess in light of that it was a real shift that I saw necessary to say the primary thing we need to put dollars into is the teaching mission; paying good personnel and having resources, that costs money, but really putting much more into that than we had. We had a group of wonderful lay catechists, volunteers, but we really had not put a large portion of the diocesan budget into the teaching

effort, and with the Constitution as the roadmap, the Institute, the *St. Phillip Institute* that we've established, is receiving a significant portion of the funding of the diocese, because I think we need to put financial resources into paying salaries, into having resources that are available for the teaching mission. So a large part of it was a recognition that we had some wonderful people and some good people employed, but a very small employment group, and most of it was volunteers. And I guess part of my realization was, we need to have on the payroll the most important people, and have multiple people with expertise in catechesis and in teaching the faith that are employed by the diocese in order to really spread this around the 33 counties that make up the Diocese of Tyler.

*To that end do you think that it could be said that to best be able to authentically live the Catholic faith, one has to know or learn the Catholic faith and it's that kind of at the heart, would you say, what's behind why you're doing this?*

Absolutely. As I've said I guess my bias comes from growing up in this area. I was in a strong Catholic family and really, most of what I learned, frankly, was from the family, from parents who were committed and well-catechized Catholics, especially my mother who was a cradle Catholic. My father was a convert and very supportive always. But my bias was, people are leaving. In my own peers growing up, I was in a public high school, and there were a very small number of Catholic young people at my high school. At the same time I believe I'm probably the only practicing Catholic of all of those, and I think what the missing ingredient was not really knowing the basic teachings of the Church and not knowing what the Real Presence really means - that Christ is there in the form of consecrated bread and wine. Just across the board there is a lack of really solid knowledge of what the Catholic Church is, where it came from, who established it, how it

continues through 2000 years of history. I've always had the bias that if people really know that, they're going to embrace the Catholic faith. And I think we've seen a lot of those stories, especially I've seen them in recent years, of some very high profile converts who have studied themselves into the Catholic faith. I guess with that emphasis on teaching and learning, I would hope we can help teach all of the people in the Diocese of Tyler, teach them into to the Catholic faith, and not just leave it to them individually to go after that truth on their own. Which they certainly can, but I feel like it's my job as bishop and it's our work as a diocese to teach people the treasure they have in their Catholic faith.

*That's really kind of a simple and straightforward way of looking at it, but it seems like it seems lost in a lot of situations today, and I say that as a preface for my next question. Some of the words that you used to describe the Constitution on Teaching are audacious, far reaching, and that is a new focus for the diocese. How is this information implementation going?*

I'm pleased with how much progress we've made. The *Constitution on Teaching* was published in May of 2017, and so it will be two years in May of 2019 since it actually was published. And I think we've made great progress. I was just meeting with one of our great priests this morning that's been collaborating with helping to implement the Constitution. As I told him, God willing, I'll be bishop here for about 15 more years. And I would expect when I retire, I won't be able to say, Oh well, we've fully implemented this Constitution on Teaching. I think it really is the mission of the Church always. But I feel like, with the Institute, which is already producing some great teaching tools and instruments for helping people have access to the wonderful truth that our Church teaches, I think with the Institute, the Constitution is, we're making great work great progress in implementing it.

But as I said, it will take the rest of my life of ministry and beyond to continue to implement what it is to teach in every aspect of our lives from cradle to grave, what it is to live the Catholic faith and the treasure that we have, in knowing this truth that is designed to draw us more fully into the life of God and to the life of God's Son and the Holy Spirit.

*Bishop, in the Constitution you make some hands-on commitments to help foster elements of that constitution. And one challenge for a bishop in leadership is balancing between being hands-on, or, perhaps being perceived as micromanaging. Can you tell us how the Constitution has been received by-and-large by your priests and other staff in this regard, as far as you trying to really roll your sleeves up and be involved?*

I think it's been well received. Certainly it varies from priest to priest, and the energy level and the ability to really embrace something as challenging as this. But I'd say for the most part, as priests work with a bishop they're likely to be, you know, pretty docile and at least our priests are pretty receptive, or at least not negative or pushing back. How energetic they get about really implementing elements of this *Teaching Constitution* on their own parish level; that varies from one priest to another. But there are a number of priests that are very committed and working very hard to do this. I think as far as the micromanaging idea, I've always tried to be very conscious of that. I think frankly the advantage that the staff and the priests have is, as a bishop, any bishop, we have so much to do; I just don't have the chance too much to do a lot of micromanaging. So I'm relying a lot on individual priests in their parishes and the staff of the Institute, the St. Philip Institute, to really continue the day-to-day work of making the Constitution really happen, and the work of the Institute continue to bring the truth more fully to every Catholic and beyond in the Diocese of Tyler.

*Okay, and further on the St. Philip Institute of Catechesis and Evangelization in your diocese, you say in the Constitution that the Institute will produce or obtain all the materials necessary for teaching in the diocese and ensure their suitability. This, you say, will in part entail ensuring that the teaching materials are useful, offering clear and concise teaching, which truly informs and educates and never obfuscates or confuses. Can you share why you thought this particular element was necessary, that the material explicitly be clear, informing and educating, and never confuse people?*

Yes. Because I think what's sort of underlying that is a perception, at least in my experience, which I acknowledge is fairly limited, I mean I'm just one individual who's lived his own journey in the faith, and as a priest and now as a bishop, but I think there has been some lack of clarity. You know the classic Baltimore Catechism; I think many have sort of turned away from that, because it was too, you know, just too rote or too distilled, maybe, just not elaborating enough. And I think it's always striking a balance. But I guess the catechesis that I grew up with was so far from anything like the Baltimore Catechism, that it did tend to confuse, or just leave very vague, some basic clear teachings, that need to be there. I continue to believe that one of our key areas of teaching and in really emphasizing and embracing more deeply as Catholics is the Real Presence. And I think to be very clear and to really develop catechetical tools that help children, young people, everyone understand that we truly believe the bread and wine becomes the body and blood of Christ – that it's not just a symbol, that it's not just a nice image, but it's a reality. And I think you can translate that fairly easily and fairly concisely, but using the specific language of the Church. You know, words like transubstantiation, and explaining, even to younger children, I mean if you break it down properly, I think they can

understand that; no the bread doesn't look different, and the wine doesn't look or taste different, but it truly becomes the body and blood of the Son of God.

I think that sort of clarity of teaching was somewhat missing, at least in what I grew up with. And I think as I've tried to continue to focus on teaching, I think that the truth is, it's pretty clear; sin is wrong, virtue is what God has revealed to us, and it's challenging, but it's clearly what we're supposed to do.

And I think we're in an age, maybe every age of human history has certainly had these tendencies, where we say things are complex, or confused, or you know, just very difficult to understand. We use that sort of as a crutch to say then, well I don't really have to worry too much about doing this, or about changing my life, because it's so complex, it's so confusing. I think instead we need to just say it's really not that confusing, and then, like the proper living out of sexual intimacy - it only happens in marriage. That's pretty clear. I mean; we don't operate in a world that accepts that clear truth. But I think that's an example of the kind of clarity that we need to not say it's not confusing, it's not complex. Yes, it's very challenging, and we have to be compassionate to those who fail — sinfulness — those who fail to live up to the ideals of our faith. But I think we do need to be very clear on what those ideals are.

*Absolutely, it'd be kind of problematic to ask people to follow something if it's not clear what the expectation is. The Constitution on Teaching is very comprehensive. Looking at a particular area requiring a year of formation for marriage preparation is just one example of a bold initiative that is contained in it, as is incorporating natural family planning training as an integral part of that marriage preparation program. Are you aware of any other bishops that have done*

*either of these, and in particular, how is the implementation of that aspect going? How's it been received, whether by the prospective couples, pastors or sponsor couples? And also, as with the earlier question about the clarity of teaching material, was there anything in particular that made this necessary in your mind to require a full year of marriage prep and incorporate NFP in the program?*

Well on part of your question I do know a number of bishops and other dioceses that are working on elements of this where NFP is part of marriage preparation. I'm not specifically aware of any mandates of a year of formation, which we're still working toward. But in talking to other bishops, I think many agree that we need more time to really prepare for embracing marriage. And in approaching that one thing, the change of the language, instead of marriage preparation, we speak of marriage formation. I really like something that Pope Francis said in one of his documents that really, for marriage we need remote formation, which really begins as soon as children are old enough to grasp the concept of marriage really, especially in the teenage years, to help guide young people to understand what dating and courtship, what role should it play and how does it work in their lives. And then the actual proximate marriage formation, which is for a young couple, a year before a wedding date, and then the ongoing marriage formation, the follow-up for at least five years, and really for the rest of their married life, to continue to enrich and be formed in the idea of what marriage is in Christ and in our Catholic faith.

So I'm really pleased with how the marriage formation program is developing. We were blessed to hire a wonderful young wife and mother of three kids. And she was one of the first hires for the Institute. Because, I guess my philosophy is, as it speaks of somewhat in the Constitution, is that we need to start at the foundation, and marriage and family is the



foundation of Catholic society, of Christian society. And there's so much broken about those foundations, and in the Church and in the world today, that I think to help young couples that are in love and approaching marriage, thankfully they are approaching marriage, which too many are bypassing marriage, but for certainly the couples that come to the diocese, or to a parish here in the diocese, seeking marriage, to bring them to a strong formation.

And with the 50th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, we've focused on in the diocese that this is a truth that the Church has been teaching for those 50 years. Largely ignored, even, I have to say, by bishops, and certainly by the faithful, by priests. I have to admit that as a parish priest, for many years, I always believed what the Church said. But I can honestly say I didn't focus on it that much, because it really wasn't very popular to focus on. But if you read *Humanae Vitae*, Pope, now St. Pope Paul VI, in number 14 of *Humanae Vitae*, he basically is prophetic and he lays out: This is where we're headed if we ignore God's plan for a married couple, open to life and not using contraception. And I think we've ended up exactly where his prophetic prediction said we would end up. So with all of that being realized, I felt that we need to start at the very foundation of the Christian community, which is marriage, and then the families that are formed on a solid marriage, and natural family planning, which avoids contraception, even that is challenging, to always have the basic principle of being open to life. And using NFP only to manage somewhat the timing of pregnancies in a marriage, but certainly not using it as contraception, to really control that, you know that has to be a balance as well.

But and sadly, after 50 years of *Humanae Vitae*, it's somewhat revolutionary to do what we're doing, but it's in line with what the Church has continued to teach for these 50 years. It's been the official teaching. It's been not emphasized

that much, and certainly I guess you could overemphasize it, because I've had some say that well everything traces back to *Humanae Vitae*, I think it is very significant. And I guess the way I would put it is, everything traces back to ills of our society, which has been the case since Adam and Eve, it traces back to disobedience to God's plan and to God's will. And so the contraceptive mentality that is very much in the Catholic community, and certainly in the non-Catholic, or even just humanity, contraception is accepted as something that is smart to use. And it's like you're strange or you're delusional if you're not using contraception. So it's kind of a revolutionary idea, but it is the teaching of the Church and I think there's tremendous wisdom there. And so we took the bold step of saying, yes, we're going to take more time for marriage formation and we're going to just build-in the natural family planning. We've made great progress there. There's still a lot more to do to have the trainers and physicians that are cooperating with couples that want to follow the Church's teaching. But I think there's a real desire there on the part of many of the couples, especially after it's really explained to them what God's plan is and how natural family planning can be used properly.

And even in our area, we're less than 10 percent Catholic in the diocese, and we're finding more and more non-Catholics who are saying, hey, I think the Catholic Church has something here that we need to pay attention to. Because really, the Catholic Church — and even as eroded as it is as far as Catholic practice — continues to teach that contraception is not morally acceptable. And we're the only church that even attempts to teach that, that many of the non-Catholics individually are saying, we want to learn more about this because we think the Catholic Church is on to the truth of God's plan.

*Chastity is a call for all Catholics and it is somewhat related to our last question, obviously. Calling on priests to preach chastity might be considered by some to be controversial. How has that particular part of the Constitution been received would you say?*

Certainly no pushback on it. I don't know how many people have focused on it directly, but I think a lot of the feedback I've gotten is, as you said, it's a call that every person is called to, in whatever state of life. And to preach that, I mean, sadly the devastating scandals that we're dealing with in the Church is basically a failure of chastity to a large extent. So I really haven't had it received as anything controversial, now whether people are living it or not is a whole different question. But as far as it being the ideal of the Catholic faith and of Christian life, I think there's been a basic acceptance of that among those who already believe.

*And further on the subject of calling for priests to preach on certain subjects. In discussing the ongoing formation for priests in the Constitution, some of the areas in which you plan to provide continued teaching for priests to be certain they're educated and therefore can preach effectively in these areas are on the Church's teaching on moral topics including contraception, which we've touched on, euthanasia, gender ideology, same-sex attraction, responsible parenthood, organ harvesting, it's a long list, stem cell research and pastoral care for stillborn and unbaptized children. So, Bishop, whether in the case of a priest who might be resistant to preaching on a certain topic or a catechist or any other diocesan representative, what are your thoughts on how you would respond to either resistance or refusal to teach or preach, or in fact if there was a case of someone disseminating a stance that's in conflict with Church teaching*

*on any of those areas, how would you think you would respond to that?*

Well just to try to continue to teach clearly what the Church actually says on each of those complex topics. I guess I feel blessed. I'm not aware of any one priest, catechist, deacon, anyone who would be officially teaching in the name of the Church here in the diocese. And I have an idea that I would hear about it, the way the lay people, I mean, they have a right to speak up and I think they are speaking up even more in recent months, but I haven't heard any direct opposition or teaching anything contrary. Certainly whether or not in a given parish on a given topic the teaching is embraced as fully as I would like it, I'm sure there's some variation there. But at least as far as any overt opposition, I haven't seen that.

And I think for the most part I have to acknowledge we're in a fairly conservative area, where a lot of these teachings are not passé as they are considered in some places. I mean just for the

gender ideology issues, for example, I've talked to bishops in other parts of the country where the erosion of those basic understandings of the human person is much further down the road than it is here in East Texas among Catholics or among non-Catholics. I have to acknowledge that probably I have an easier flock to manage than in a lot of those areas. Not necessarily holier, but at least more docile to not pushing back against basic teachings of the Church and the message of the Gospel and as it relates to morality, sexuality, and human life.

*In the Constitution, Bishop, you say that you wish to expand and improve the diocese's ministry to those in irregular marriage situations. Can you clarify what circumstances all fall under that category with regard to in the Constitution?*

*And how do you respond or plan to respond to those in irregular marriage situations, or any relationship scenario that's considered by the Church to be outside of matrimony, who either perhaps don't desire to regularize their union or they don't desire to cease being in a union that cannot be regularized, or if they are planning to, have a desire to, or are already partaking in Holy Communion without benefit of Confession and absolution? Have you thought about how you might, in addition to that, if folks aren't coming to Mass to hear this teaching how do you think you would try to reach them to teach them about this issue?*

Well, those are a lot of questions. I think that basically that irregular marriage, I worked in our diocesan tribunal for about 15 years as a canonist, and irregular marriages are basically those that are, for Catholics, not accepted as canonically valid in the eyes of the Church. So we have a lot of situations where people, really, maybe without even realizing that when they go to a justice of the peace, or get married in Las Vegas or are some of those kinds of venues, that that is not considered marriage, it's irregular as far as the Church is concerned. So there's quite a spectrum of what sort of relationships. They may be living together, which is, in Texas, if a couple presents themselves as a married couple, by common law in the state of Texas they're considered to be a married couple, and there's some legal things that kick-in in relationship to that. So it would cover the spectrum for a Catholic, possibly two Catholics married. We have numerous Catholic couples, both are Catholic and just for whatever reasons, sometimes economics, sometimes without really realizing that they're not marrying in a way that is accepted by the Church, they get married by a justice of the peace or in some other context. Probably many of our irregular marriages deal with a Catholic marrying a non-Catholic and without realizing that they need to get canonical form. You can get

permissions for just about any sort of different configuration of where the marriage would take place, who receives the vows, all of those questions. But very often we have couples where a Catholic marries a non-Catholic and the Catholic was not catechized well enough to even understand that getting married, for the Catholic, just going and getting married and their spouse's Baptist Church or Methodist Church, they're not considered married in the Catholic sacramental picture of marriage. So it covers quite a spectrum to deal with irregular marriages.

The question for those who aren't hearing Sunday homilies, which is a large portion of the Catholics, at least not on the every Sunday basis and certainly the non-Catholic side, I'd have to say that we're still looking for ways. One of the favorite images that I've used as we've been trying to implement the Constitution is that the Catholic Church has the truth, it's in big books on shelves. And to get it out of those big books into the hearts and minds of the people, that's really the work of the St. Philip Institute and what we're working on developing, a lot of things these days are video based, and where we're certainly exploring that. We have a studio that is pretty state-of-the-art that is all set up, and different teaching opportunities are recorded. We can Skype with different groups, that sort of thing. I think we have to continue to look for what we've been calling a delivery system to get it to the Catholics and to the non-Catholics, but especially Catholics who may not be there for every Sunday, or not many Sundays at all, to reach out to them as well. So all of that is an ongoing effort to find the best mechanisms and the best ways to reach out to people.

*Our discussion right now about irregular marriage situations has concerned heterosexual couples. So I would pose the same question to you as far as would your answers to the question apply, I know it's a lot of lot of elements to your*

*answer here, to couples that are in same-sex relationships who are seeking to be faithful Catholics. How do you respond to that as far as ministering to those folks?*

Well hopefully with tremendous compassion and embracing them as children of God and helping them to, and I know it's challenging, but to come basically to the teachings on chastity for every Catholic, as we began this part of the conversation, to recognize that we believe that every person is called to be chaste, to chastity for their state of life.

Marriage, between a man and a woman, as the Church defines it, a permanent lifetime commitment open to children - that's the only place for sexual intimacy. And I think where a lot of things are confused and kind of conflated in society, and even among Catholics these days, is that, 'oh, well, I love this person. OK. Wonderful.' Love, true love is always of God. God is love - love is God, as John's Gospel says.

But I think what we have to do is for those who, as you mentioned, for someone who is in a same-sex "marriage" who wants to be a faithful Catholic, first they have to learn, and we've actually dealt with those situations since the Constitution was published in a couple of instances, people have come forward really saying they wanted to live as faithful Catholics but they're in this kind of relationship that the Church doesn't recognize as marriage.

So I think it has to be with great compassion, because I think any kind of mistreatment of any child of God because of an orientation or of any choice they've made, is not of Christ. I mean he's always reaching out in compassion, but also pulling people away from sin. And we believe that sexual intimacy between people of the same sex is wrong. I mean it's right there in the Catechism, it's very clearly taught. That doesn't mean either of those people are bad people or should be denigrated in any way. And sadly that has happened

through human history. But, so absolutely, we respect the individual, but the greatest respect is to share the truth with them that we believe they're called the chastity.

And I know that probably a lot of people would laugh me out of the room in today's society. But I think we seriously have to say these two men or these two women are not married, they're not in a marriage, and so sexual intimacy is not appropriate.

I think we kind of even, with young couples, I mean I've talked to couples preparing for, a man and a woman, male and female, preparing for marriage and many times they are living together, living under the same roof. I've talked to individual couples that were seriously committed to living the Church's teaching and it made a commitment to be chaste and to abstain even though they're under the same roof, which a lot of people would say, 'oh sure, yeah?' But I mean these young people have really presented to me in my work as a priest in the past, that they really are committed to this. And you have to take them at their word and encourage them. I mean it's probably a real source of temptation and a very difficult situation to be in, to really retain chastity, but certainly doable, according to some of the couples. I mean it's certainly probably isn't the norm now. I think society presumes that if a man and a woman are living in and sharing the same bed, probably they're going to be sexually intimate.

But I think that's where we have to really just be very clear that who you love is not really the issue. I mean for one thing we can get into a whole teaching about what love really is. And it's ultimately built in to sacrifice. I mean that's the love that Christ shows us. He sacrifices himself for all of us.

But all those kinds of issues I think we have to say all of us are called to chastity, and whatever your state of life, if you're not married and according to the definition of the Church



that's between a man and a woman in a lifetime commitment ... (you must abstain).

*Bishop Strickland, you've been speaking courageously with clarity in recent months in a number of venues on subjects of great concern to faithful Catholics, in particular the abuse scandal and abortion. You've been articulating Church teaching clearly and forthrightly. This has the potential for you to either be cast as a champion for lay Catholics, at the same time that you could potentially have some negative reaction from colleagues if they're uncomfortable with you standing out. How do you respond to either of those potential reactions?*

Well, really basically a pretty simple response, but my response is the same, is that I'm ordained. I mean it's not my truth. It's the truth of Jesus Christ. I'm ordained to shepherd people according to that truth.

And one thing that I've tried to emphasize for myself through these past months is, my work and my responsibility is with the dioceses of Tyler, 33 counties in northeast Texas. In the flock here, that is a total flock of about 1.5 million people, within that flock is about one hundred and twenty thousand on our rolls of Catholics, probably many other Catholics that should be on our rolls. And really I feel a call to teach the truth of Christ to every person that lives in the 33 counties, so the Diocese of Tyler.

So it's my job to teach what Christ teaches and so people, the laity that feel supported, hopefully they do feel supported. I'm sure some feel challenged because it's not exactly a comfortable gospel; it's a narrow path, in all aspects of living Catholic life of following Christ. It's a narrow path that is hard to walk.

So I think the laity that would say, you know you used the word champion, I think that's my job in a real sense. Not to champion myself, but to champion the gospel of Christ and to help them feel supported in it. And I have to say I've gotten a lot of support from the people here in the diocese and beyond, are grateful that I've spoken up.

As far as my brother bishops, my colleagues who have responsibilities for much larger dioceses, or you know, smaller even, there are ones than Tyler, but you know, of their own dioceses, I have to say that, behind the scenes, many of the bishops have expressed their support and their appreciation.

And I think in some ways in some of our conversations, I mean, many of the bishops are in places where the politics and the general tone of the culture is so anti-Catholic in many ways, that it just makes it much more difficult for them to speak up. As I've said we're in the Bible belt, we're in an overtly Christian area, not very Catholic, but many believing Christians. And a lot of what I speak out on — like the abortion issue — there are many of the faithful Christians in this diocese that would very much be in line with that.

So I think in some ways I have, maybe in my own prayer and reflection, I've thought, "I am in a relatively small diocese, why am I the one speaking out?"

Well, maybe the Lord is using me and helping to support the basic teachings of the faith, where it's easier said than done in some places around the country. I mean there are some dioceses where things are so secular that it's, and I've talked to some of those bishops privately, that they're just facing so much pushback, that to say just some of the things that I've said that are just basic Catholic teaching would create real challenges for them that, for whatever reasons, they are choosing not at least in this way, to, I know a lot of the

bishops are teaching in their own diocese much more clearly. But as far as you know some of the social media and that kind of thing where I've gotten national attention, I guess. Many of the bishops refrain from doing that, and I respect their choice to do that.

Like I said, my focus is always on the Diocese of Tyler, but I recognize when I tweet something it's not just for the Diocese of Tyler. And I try to be very conscious of that.

So I'd say for the most part certainly the people, I've had a lot of gratitude expressed and a lot of support for basically speaking the truth clearly from the laity and from my brother bishops.

Each one is in his own circumstances, and there are probably things that I would not choose to speak out, I'm not really sure that I can think of one now. But I think that the bishops around the world or in other parts of the United States, each one has to handle his own flock. And I can say that many of them have expressed appreciation for my speaking up. It's helped to support them when maybe, for whatever reason, they're not quite ready to join the chorus in a sense at least in an overt vocal way. But they're certainly supporting the same teachings.

So if the Lord wants to use me as a sort of a David-voice in the face of the Goliath of our sinful culture, you know I'm ready to pull out the slingshot.