



Association for the Rights of Catholics in the Church

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Easter Sunday, April 24, 2011

USCCB
3211 Fourth Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20017

Dear Bishops,

We join many educated Catholic seekers dumbfounded by your Doctrine Committee's condemnation of the widely-used book *Quest for the Living God* by Sr. Elizabeth Johnson. We are stunned most especially by Cardinal Wuerl's 13-page letter to the US bishops, titled "Bishops as Teachers" which is to be considered as a "resource" for condemning the book. His emphasis on the apostolic authority of the bishops in a key passage seems to imply that "Since we don't have the arguments let's insist on our authority".

There is no doubt in our minds that the bishops when grounded in the faith experience of the Catholic community are the authentic and authoritative teachers of Catholic faith. However, we consider appealing solely to authority as the basis of teaching to be lacking in authenticity and more dictatorial than true teaching. "Because we say so" is acceptable for small children, but certainly not for adults. .

We acknowledge the right of freedom of expression. Nevertheless, we expect that the USCCB would not abuse this right, nor under the guise of authoritative teaching, to expect unquestionable reception by us who are listening carefully for supporting arguments based on scripture, traditions, and current knowledge* for what is being presented by "our authentic and authoritative teachers" (the bishops). Please be mindful, that authority alone does not work. Jesus knew this and used miracles to back up his teachings. We do not expect miracles from you, but we do need sound reasoning behind your teachings.

We are grateful for your work and dedication, but please do not let the power of your authority lead you to believe that it can change the experience and education of Catholics and their well-formed consciences.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Patrick B. Edgar, DPA, M.Div.
President

* "The bishops should present Christian doctrine in a manner adapted to the needs of the times, that is to say, in a manner that will respond to the difficulties and questions by which people are especially burdened and troubled."
(*CHRISTUS DOMINUS*, 9/28/1965, Paragraph 13).