

The Newsletter of the Dominican Friars Foundation



# BLACKFRIARS

Fr. Sebastian White, O.P., is the new editor of *MAGNIFICAT* (see page 5).  
Photo by Martin Jernberg

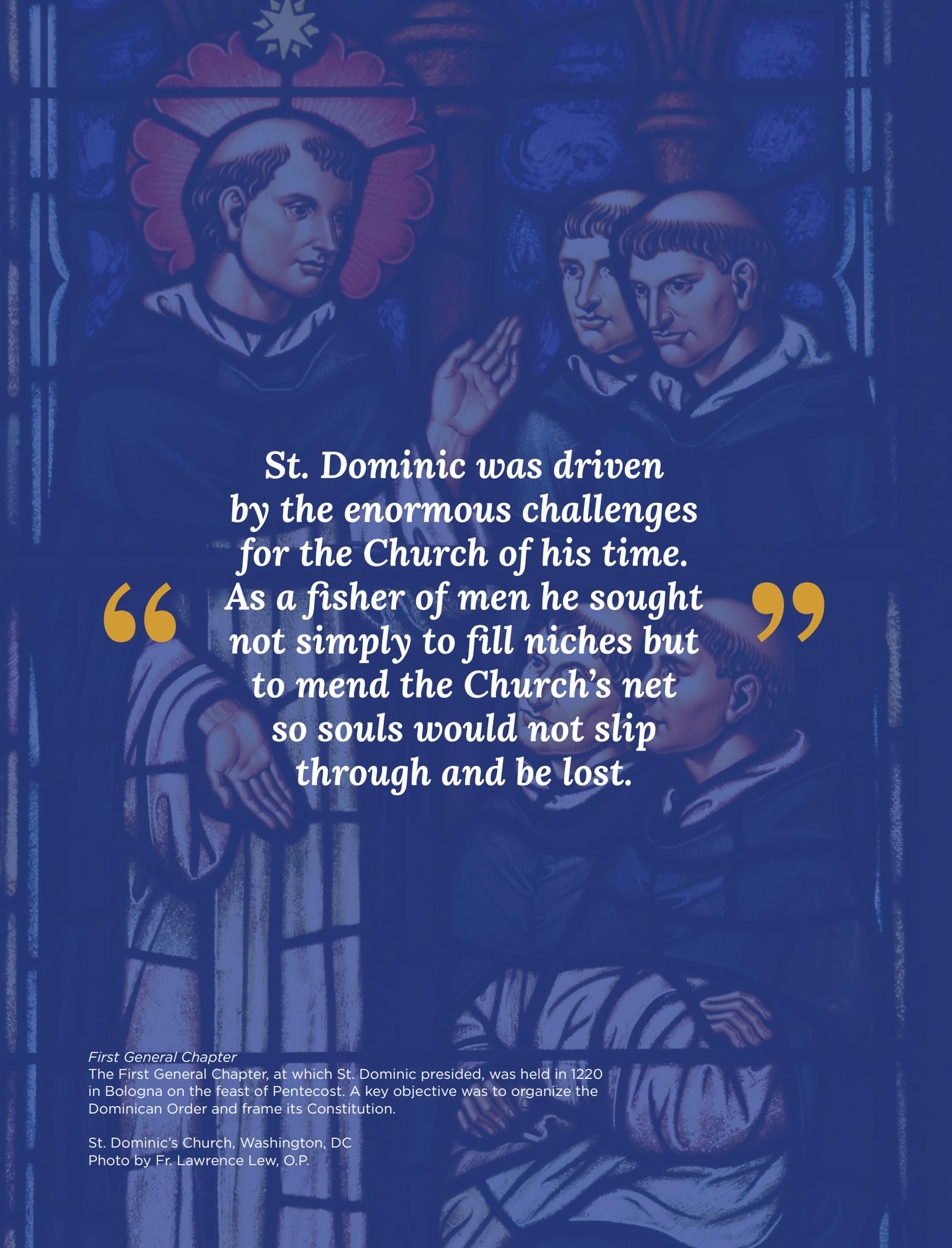
## **INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

**Defending the Seal of the Confessional**

**Dominican Order Elects a New Master**

**Friars Chaplain FOCUS  
Summer Projects**

Volume VI, Issue III

A stained glass window with a blue and purple color scheme. On the left, St. Dominic is depicted with a halo, looking towards the right. In the center and right, several other figures, likely his followers, are shown in profile, looking towards the left. The background features architectural elements like columns and arches.

**St. Dominic was driven  
by the enormous challenges  
for the Church of his time.  
“ As a fisher of men he sought  
not simply to fill niches but  
to mend the Church’s net  
so souls would not slip  
through and be lost. ”**

*First General Chapter*

The First General Chapter, at which St. Dominic presided, was held in 1220 in Bologna on the feast of Pentecost. A key objective was to organize the Dominican Order and frame its Constitution.

St. Dominic’s Church, Washington, DC  
Photo by Fr. Lawrence Lew, O.P.



Letter from the Director

**Dear Friends,**

“When was the last time you were doing something you loved so much that you lost track of time?” asks Andreas Widmer in his 2011 book, *The Pope and the CEO*. Widmer makes the case that the success of a start-up comes not from just developing a niche but also doing what you love. While this approach may not seem particularly unique, his mentor certainly was. Widmer took the lessons he learned from Saint John Paul II during his years as a Swiss Guard and applied them to become a successful entrepreneur.

Another pope teaches us a similar lesson through the example of St. Dominic (who famously “lost track of time” while preaching all night to an innkeeper who had fallen away from the Catholic faith).

“He did not view [his position] as a personal privilege or as the beginning of a brilliant ecclesiastical career but, rather, as a service to carry out with dedication and humility,” Emeritus Pope Benedict reminds us. He then asks, “Are not a career and power temptations from which not even those who have a role of guidance and governance in the Church are exempt?” St. Dominic was driven by the enormous challenges for the Church of his time. As a fisher of men he sought not simply to fill niches but to mend the Church’s net so souls would not slip through and be lost.

In a recent article in *The Catholic Thing*, Dr. Robert Royal, “half-joking,” claimed the sons of St. Dominic are the Catholic spiritual and intellectual entrepreneurs of our own day, setting up over 45 student-led Thomistic Institute chapters on college campuses across the country that run programs on philosophy, theology, and the

arts. Royal recalls, “I met student leaders of chapters at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Yale, the University of Texas, Brown, Trinity College, Columbia, the University of Utah, Toronto, Oxford, to name just a few.” Royal continues, “The Dominicans have been drawing numerous vocations from such institutions for some time now and, as befits the Order of Preachers, are quite able to operate at as high an intellectual level as any institution you can name.”

It is because of your generosity that we Dominicans can “lose track of time” doing what we love, namely contemplating the Truth, not only in theology, but in every domain of reason, from the material sciences to philosophy. This Truth is our service to the Church, which we share through preaching and teaching with young adults in parishes, with the FOCUS missionaries we mentor as chaplains, through Catholic publications like *MAGNIFICAT*, and even at times through the secular media, all of which you will read about in this issue.

Thank you for being an essential part of the ever necessary work of contemplating and sharing the Truth anew.

*Father Gabriel*

Father Gabriel Gillen, O.P.  
Executive Director  
Dominican Friars Foundation



## PUTTING CHRIST FIRST: A NEW CONVERT ENTERS THE CHURCH THROUGH THE DOMINICAN CHARISM

Raised as an Evangelical Christian in Switzerland, Elise Améz-Droz didn't seriously question her faith until graduate school.

"I was a little discouraged about life in general and somewhat depressed and I started to grapple with my faith, wondering, 'What's the foundation? What do I really believe?'"

At a conference, Elise made a friend who was entering into the Catholic Church. His experience contradicted the negative view of Catholicism she was brought up with.

"He clearly had a relationship with Christ, and I thought that was very odd. Why would someone who has such a vibrant faith want to become Catholic?"

Elise began attending Mass and reading St. Augustine's Confessions, as well as grappling with the question of authority in the Christian faith.

"Mary, the Saints, the tradition—if I accepted the authority of the Church, I had to accept everything. The theme throughout was, do I believe the Church has the authority that it does?"

Taking her religious education seriously, Elise visited three parishes before deciding on an RCIA program led by Dominican student brothers at St. Peter's Church on Capitol Hill.

"I wanted to go somewhere where I could have specific answers to my questions and know that I could trust whoever was teaching. I knew that the Dominicans were the Order of Preachers. That's their job: to study the Bible and to study tradition and teach very precisely."

*"Even more than what they taught, it was their lifestyle, their single focus, their single mindedness about Christ that was very compelling to me."*

More than their doctrine, however, Elise was moved by the Dominican way of life. "Even more than what they taught, it was their lifestyle, their single focus, their single mindedness about Christ that was very compelling to me."

Elise entered the church in 2019 and remains connected to the charism of St. Dominic by listening to the Thomistic Institute podcast and attending Mass at the Dominican House of Studies.

"[The Dominicans] are people who have dedicated their lives to teaching and preaching and learning and being infused with Christ. Knowing there's a whole community of people who live like that helps me remember what's most important about the way I live my life: To put Christ first."

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Photo: Elise Améz-Droz at St. Peter's Square in Rome



*“I want MAGNIFICAT to help as many people as possible know and love Jesus, know and love Mary, and know and love the saints and the Catholic faith.”*

Fr. Sebastian White, O.P (left), with Bro. Reginald Hoefer, O.P., in the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, New York City

## Q&A WITH MAGNIFICAT EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FR. SEBASTIAN WHITE, O.P.

Bro. Christopher Daniel, O.P., contributed reporting.

**In the summer of 2018, Fr. Sebastian White, O.P., became editor-in-chief of MAGNIFICAT (U.S. edition), a monthly liturgical prayer magazine with over 300,000 readers. Fr. Sebastian stepped in to succeed founding editor-in-chief of the American edition, Fr. Peter Cameron, O.P., after his 20-year tenure.**

**What are people looking for when they subscribe to MAGNIFICAT?**

I think the big draw is that it helps people to pray and experience their faith and the communion of saints in a very personal and consistent way every day of the month. It also gives readers a real sense of union with the Church and with one another. Another draw of MAGNIFICAT is its beauty and the art included in it, which helps us to visualize and ponder the mysteries of the faith, and to keep them dwelling in our hearts. Good art helps us to lift our minds to God. The daily meditations are also really popular because they help people to pray over each day's Gospel.

**What do you personally bring to the position of editor-in-chief?**

Fr. Peter is immensely talented and did such an incredible job as editor, so of course I cannot compare myself with him! I am just honored

to be part of the MAGNIFICAT team and to offer the spiritual insights and important truths that I believe people need to hear. This is shaped by the experience I had as a preacher and from being chaplain at NYU and living at St. Joseph's in Greenwich Village, which was my assignment for the first four years of my priesthood. I also returned to the Catholic Church just after college, after being raised in a Protestant church. This, too, shapes how I preach about the faith. That experience has given me a deep gratitude and joy at being Catholic.

**What are your hopes for MAGNIFICAT going forward?**

As a Dominican priest and as editor-in-chief, I want MAGNIFICAT to help people get to Heaven. I want MAGNIFICAT to help as many people as possible know and love Jesus, know and love Mary, and know and love the saints and the Catholic faith. I would love to see our number of subscribers continue to grow, because that just means more and more people are participating more deeply in the Mass, praying with the Gospel, praying with the saints, and continuing to grow in their faith.



Lieutenant Daniel Kettinger (front, second from left), pictured with his parents and his brothers who also serve in the military, is one of the newest members of the St. Dominic Legacy Society. Photo by Ehoch Wu for the *Sentinel-Tribune*. Used with Permission

## DONOR PROFILE

# DANIEL KETTINGER

**Daniel Kettinger, a US Navy lieutenant stationed in Bahrain, is one of the newest members of the St. Dominic Legacy Society, a company of men and women who have united their legacy with that of the Dominican Order for the preaching of the Gospel.**

### **How did you meet the Dominican Friars?**

My friend became a Dominican; he's Fr. Vincent Ferrer Bagan now. I would go see him when he was a brother at the Dominican House of Studies. We had some good conversations and comradery, just hanging out. I'm a bit more hot headed than him, but I would always leave feeling at peace and benefitting from his clarity.

### **What is life like as a practicing Catholic in the armed forces?**

I think the military in general is better than the mainstream of American culture. However I would say it tends to trend with the general culture, for good or for ill. The military is not a great inculcator of virtue overall. You have to come in already holding it close to your bosom, because there are times where you're not going to have the Sacraments, like when you're at sea, or under the sea.

Having been raised in a Catholic home, and then experiencing the stridently secular environment of a deployed military unit, it drives home the fact that I was given something good and valuable that I shouldn't take for granted.

### **Why did you choose to remember the Dominicans in your will?**

If my time comes early, and my state in life remains what it is, there is nowhere I'd rather it go. I don't think it could do any greater good. The public space for religious expression is under pressure. It's tending towards contraction right now. That's why I love the Dominicans: because they're an organized counter-attack against that. They're pushing against the tide and into the public space to bring the saving message of the Gospel to people who have not heard it, or who have heard distorted versions of it, and need it more than they know.

**To learn more about uniting your legacy with that of the Dominican Friars, call Diana Kilarjian, Director of Gift Planning, at 646-350-0108.**



# LETTER FROM THE PRIOR PROVINCIAL

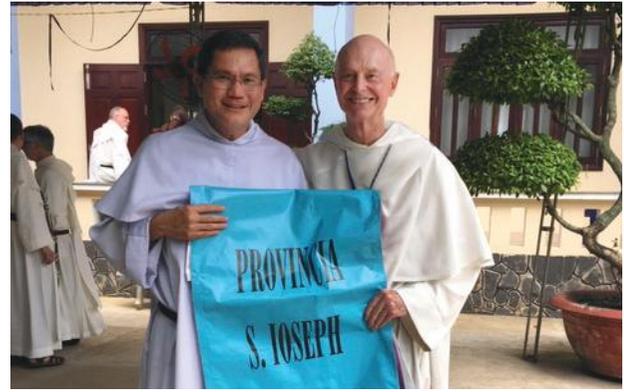
Dear Friends,

This summer I was privileged to be among the delegates who attended our triennial General Chapter. On July 13th we elected Fr. Gerard Timoner, O.P., as our next Master General. Fr. Timoner is 51 years old and comes from our province in the Philippines.

Fr. Timoner speaks excellent English and is gifted with a warm personality and a strong spirituality. His role on the International Theological Commission gives the Order another important presence in the Vatican.

Our Vietnamese brothers were extremely generous in their hospitality. The vibrancy and youth of their province was a message of hope that shined through our first General Chapter in a non-Christian land.

A providential moment reassured me that we are part of a much bigger plan: On the day of the election, I opened my *MAGNIFICAT* to discover that our own Fr. Sebastian White, O.P., had chosen for that day a reflection from Venerable Vietnamese Cardinal F.X. Nguyen Van Thuan, who was imprisoned by the communist government for 13 years. These lines in particular sum up the hopeful spirit with which we returned from the Chapter to our work of preaching:



Fr. Kenneth Letoile, O.P. (right), and the new Master of the Order, Fr. Gerard Timoner, O.P., hold the banner of St. Joseph's Province at the General Chapter.

“Forgetting ourselves, we cast our whole being into what God asks of us in the present moment, in the neighbor he places before us, motivated only by love.”

May God grant you His peace as you return from summer's rest to the duties of fall. Please keep Fr. Gerard Timoner, O.P., the new Master of the Dominican Order, in your prayers.

In Christ and St. Dominic,

*Very Rev. Kenneth R. Letoile, O.P.*

Very Rev. Kenneth R. Letoile, O.P.  
Prior Provincial



## FRIARS SERVE AS FOCUS SUMMER CHAPLAINS

Several friars of the Province of St. Joseph, including Fr. Gregory Pine, O.P. (pictured), Fr. Luke Clark, O.P., Fr. Edmund McCullough, O.P., Fr. Luke Hoyt, O.P., and Fr. Jacob Bertrand Janczyk, O.P., served as chaplains for FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) Summer Projects in the Colorado Rockies.



Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P., of the Province of St. Joseph, speaks with a student at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park, California, where he is the Chair of Pastoral Studies.

## DEFENDING THE SEAL OF THE CONFSSIONAL

Bro. Dominic Koester, O.P., contributed reporting.

When California state senator Jerry Hill proposed a bill that would compel Catholic priests to violate the seal of the confessional in cases of sexual abuse, Fr. Pius Pietrzyk, O.P., responded with an op-ed defending the priest-penitent privilege in *USA Today*. Fr. Pius, a civil as well as a canon lawyer who serves on the board of the Legal Services Corporation, also took to Twitter opposing the bill.

Speaking with *BlackFriars*, Fr. Pius called the proposed bill “an incredible infringement on the First Amendment” and the result of “misinformation” about “what actually goes on in Penance.”

Fr. Pius argued that the bill would put Catholic priests in a position of choosing between their freedom and their religious duty.

“There’s a well established tradition, and it’s really part of the ordinary magisterium, affirmed by the Holy See, that the seal of the confessional is a divine law. Divine law cannot be changed by merely human law.”

According to Fr. Pius, under the law innocent priests could be jailed: “Every priest I know would refuse to break the seal of Confession.”

The bill was withdrawn in July, but Fr. Pius claims there is a movement to introduce similar bills in New York and Wisconsin.

He cites misinformation about the nature of Confession as contributing to the legislation. “They’re surprised by the fact that the identity of the person is often not revealed. In fact, it’s a sin for a priest to try to seek the identity of the penitent.”

*“If the State can do this, if it can pry open the door of the confessional and essentially insert a microphone into every single confessional, is there any aspect of confidentiality, of conscience, of religion, into which the State cannot enter?”*

Fr. Pius sees the assault as having larger implications for freedom of conscience.

“If the State can do this, if it can pry open the door of the confessional and essentially insert a microphone into every single confessional, is there any aspect of confidentiality, of conscience, of religion, into which the State cannot enter?”

Fr. Pius urges Catholics to remain vigilant. “One thing we as Catholics should learn from this is that we really need to reinvigorate our teaching on the Sacrament of Confession—what it is, why it’s necessary—and to reinvigorate a respect for it as a Sacrament.”

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