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Retired U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke speaks to the New York Men's Leadership Forum on April 23. (NCR photo/Camillo Barone)



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Retired U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke decried what he termed the "persecution" of the pre-Vatican II Latin Mass during a men's breakfast event in New York City on April 23.

Burke, a former head of the Vatican's highest court who has taken an increasingly critical tone against Pope Francis over the last decade, also offered his views on denying Communion to Catholic politicians who support abortion rights to an all-male audience of about 150 at the New York Men's Leadership Forum.

On the Latin Mass, which Francis reimposed restrictions [on in 2021](#), Burke said, "The Eucharist is so diminished today," in part due to the conciliar reforms, "which made it seem like just some kind of everyday thing."

On Catholic politicians taking Communion, Burke called it "a scandal" that there are U.S. politicians "who probably can claim to be devout Catholics and who publicly promote abominations like procured abortion, or this transgender agenda or whatever else it may be, and they approach the holy Communion."

Although Burke did not name President Joe Biden or any other current politician, he added: "I don't need to mention their names since it's evident." Biden is a Democrat and Catholic who supports abortion rights.



U.S. Cardinal Raymond Burke participates at a conference, "The Synodal Babel," at the Ghione Theater Oct. 3, 2023, in Rome. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

The cardinal did reference an earlier Democratic nominee for president, former U.S. Sen. John Kerry. Burke recalled serving as the Archbishop of St. Louis in 2004, when Kerry was the presidential nominee, and telling Kerry he [could not receive Communion in the city](#).

Burke also criticized the major reform project of the German Catholic Church, known as [the synodal way](#) or the Synodal Path, saying it was leading to "apostasy."

"I'm sorry; it's an objective fact," the cardinal said in response to an audience member's question.

The New York Men's Leadership Forum is a nonprofit organization that says its goal is to provide programs for men "to be inspired by Christian ideals, and to apply those ideals to their everyday activities," and includes a number of high-profile finance industry leaders [on its board](#).

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Quoting encyclicals from Popes Leo XIII, Pius X and Pius XI, Burke's speech focused mostly on the values of obedience and family, leveraging the theme of the concept of Christ's kingship, which the cardinal then used to emphasize how the only possible freedom of man in society is that of freedom of religion, with no exception outside Catholicism.

"Pope Leo XIII made clear that the family is a true society, and one more than any state, and that consequently it has rights and duties peculiar to itself, which are quite independent of the state. These rights and duties are inherent to the nature of man, male and female, which means the individual man, an individual woman to marriage, and it's through the family," said the cardinal.

After Burke's speech, Douglas Dewey, president of the New York Men's Leadership Forum, asked the cardinal about the concept of obedience "in times that are chaotic and contradictory." Burke responded that "today there's this sense that obedience is blind," and that there are times "when obedience demands us to disobey."

"We do not obey anything that goes contrary to the will of Christ," said the cardinal.

**[Related: Behind the synod opposition: Far-right groups, political activists and Cardinal Burke](#)**

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