In a single-sentence statement, the Vatican announced today that Pope Francis has removed Bishop Joseph Strickland from the Diocese of Tyler, Texas, and appointed the Bishop of Austin as administrator of the diocese (see here for the diocese's announcement). Recall that this is the pope who shows mercy to everyone, except those who actually defend the Catholic Faith.

As *Catholic Family News* has reported previously, Pope Francis intervened to overturn the excommunication of Fr. Marko Ivan Rupnik, S.J., who had been found guilty by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of grave sins against the Sixth and Ninth Commandments. What has Bishop Strickland done? He led a prayer service of reparation against the blasphemies performed in Los Angeles by the "Sisters of Perpetual indulgence." He defends Catholic moral teaching. He permits the Traditional Latin Mass, and even offers it himself. This is the diabolical disorientation into which the hierarchy of the Church has fallen. A bishop is allegedly punished for doing what any bishop for 2,000 years would have done. The definition of a tyrant is a ruler who governs not for the common good, but for his own personal pleasure. Clearly this pontificate is a tyranny.

The defenders of absolute papal authority, who forget that the pope is the Vicar of Christ but not Christ Himself, will no doubt immediately start proclaiming that the pope has the power to remove any bishop. Certainly that statement is true, but it is not complete. All authority on earth, including the highest authority, is limited by the divine and natural law. It is contrary to divine and natural law to inflict penalties when there has been no crime. Certainly, in a case of a close call, the pope should be given the benefit of the doubt in rendering judgment. This action is so blatant that there is no doubt to which we can give a benefit. This action, therefore, is illicit and invalid. Bishop Strickland should model himself on Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who maintained until his death that the alleged suspension *a divinis* and *latae sententiae* excommunication was invalid and of no effect. No human authority can impose a punishment where there is no crime. That is why the Archbishop continued his seminaries and continued to ordained priests, notwithstanding these declarations. He understood that law is at the service of justice and ecclesiastical authority is oriented toward the salvation of souls. Bishop Strickland should do likewise.

Clearly, the time for submitting *dubia* has long since past. The Church is under assault from within. *Catholic Family News* calls upon all Cardinals and Bishops of the Church to come to the defense of Bishop Strickland and support him to remain in his diocese. If a substantial number of the hierarchy refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of this unjust action, the Vatican will have no choice but to acknowledge the *fait accompli*. It is time to resist the tyrant dictator to his face.

We, the laity, should pray for this good bishop and for the hierarchy — that they have the

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fortitude to do what the present crisis demands. Clearly, we are in the time predicted by Our Lady of Akita, in which Cardinal is against Cardinal and Bishop against Bishop. *Ex hoc tyranno, libera nos Domine.*

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