

Traditionalists for Vetting the Vatican Getting Their Wish – They are Being Vetted

[New Era World News](#)

HIDDEN IN THE AFTERMATH OF A TUMULTUOUS THEOLOGICAL TREMOR, a tremor intended to shake the pontificate of the Pope Francis, hidden in this aftermath can be found [unsubstantiated volatile rumblings such as the following](#) that give an indication what it is all about:

“On April 8th, Amoris Laetitia was published; a document wherein it would appear that the pope had declared that fornication and adultery are not necessarily mortal sins, and what’s more, Almighty God Himself occasionally asks us to persist in committing them! The point apparently being, to open the door to Holy Communion for the civilly divorced and remarried, cohabitators, and perhaps even those who persist in homo-deviant acts.”

Apparently, there are more than a few who have fallen into the cracks caused by this global convulsion. Either they are sincere members of the Body of Christ being confused by sincere but liberal bishops and equally sincere traditionalist cardinals or there is, as [Pope Francis himself has noted, a cabal at work in the Church](#), a cabal that he is in the process of sweeping away. A cabal that Francis has identified as the “most serious problem he faces:

“The problem is not having this [homosexual] orientation. No, we must be brothers and sisters. The problem is lobbying for this orientation, or lobbies of greed, political lobbies, Masonic lobbies, so many lobbies. This is the most serious problem for me” ([CNS News](#)).

This problem has grown so acute that it has apparently penetrated the hallowed ramparts of Malta leading [Pope Francis to order a purge of Freemasons from the Knights of Malta](#).

For a long time, many on the right have been pleading for the popes to clean house; now that the cleaning has commenced many of the supplicants ravenous for a papal crackdown, are finding themselves on the bristles tips.

In the Holy Father's own words:

"There are also cases of malicious resistance, which spring up in misguided minds and come to the fore when the devil inspires ill intentions (often cloaked in sheep's clothing)."

*"This last kind of resistance **hides behind words of self-justification and often accusation,**" he said. "It takes refuge in **traditions, appearances, formalities,** in the familiar, or else in a desire to make everything personal, failing to distinguish between the act, the actor and the action*

By using words such as *traditions, appearances* and *formalities*, it is quite clear whom the pope is referring to. [His words are similar to those of Cardinal Ratzinger](#) when he headed the sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (CDF):

"It is necessary to be strong in faith and to resist error even when it masquerades as piety."

The culprit is then brought into stark relief when the sacred scriptures point their light on the theme or error, piety, tradition etc:

*"And what I do I will continue to do, **in order to end this***

pretext of those who seek a pretext for being regarded as we are in the mission of which they boast. For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, who masquerade as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan masquerades as an angel of light. So it is not strange that his ministers also masquerade as ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11: 12-15).

Strangely, this could apply to “ministers” on the left and the right who have entered into an highly unusual alliance. Usually the two, left and right, are at each others throats, now in a strange set of circumstances they are either consciously or unconsciously working together to unseat the pope before he unseats them. Churchmen of the right are claiming that *Amoris Laetitia* is unclear while those on the left are confirming their allegations by implementing specious diocesan guidelines that permit liturgical and sacramental abuses in the name of *Amoris Laetita*.

These obfuscating claims and divisive schema have prompted Cardinal Mueller to suggest that it is the bishops, not the pope, that are causing the confusion. Recently, to the chagrin of both the right and the left, Cardinal Mueller defended the [doctrinal integrity of Amoris Laetitia](#). Those on the left (those who think the Magisterium has somehow opened the door for Holy Communion to unrepentant adulterers based on a private judgement of their own unformed conscience) are obviously in error – Cardinal Mueller has begun the process of addressing their error. But it is the Churchmen on the right who are unexpectedly sensing the heat. Following closely on the heels of this doctrinal pronouncement, intended to bring clarity, the Prefect for the CDF took measured aim at the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX). Mueller is in the process of revealing that it is not just liberals on the left that are causing confusion – those on the right are equally culpable. To do so he is using the issue of religious freedom.

According to Cardinal Mueller:

“Religious freedom as a fundamental human right and freedom to protect religion regarding the supernatural revelation in Jesus Christ are recognized by every Catholic without reservation.”

In response to this verity, some of the “faithful” composing the radical and schismatic far-right are acting like liberal protesters who have taken to the streets to vilify President Trump. Like them, they are engaged in a smear campaign involving false reporting, blatant disrespect, and sacrilege. [Expletives such as the following are rolling off of their tongues:](#)

*“Müller not only made it clear that he is in no way to be taken seriously, **he revealed his Catholic IQ**; placing himself squarely in the category of **functional idiot**.”*

Is this how one should speak to the Prefect for the Sacred Congregation of Faith, the highest doctrinal authority in the Catholic Church? If not, this is a manifest instance of pride revealing what is hidden in the hearts of those who are impelled to speak this way:

*“Do you not understand, that whatsoever entereth into the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the privy? But **the things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart**, and those things defile a man. For **from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies**. These are the things that defile a man” [\(Matt 15: 17-20\)](#).”*

A wise and well developed man does not revile his enemies – he opposes, but also respects. If the opposition happens to be with superiors, he prays for his superiors knowing that they will receive a stricter judgement and is careful not to offend

in word esp. with words delivered to ears that have no business in the matter; that is, those who are not in a position to ameliorate:

*“Be ye not many masters, my brethren, knowing that you receive the greater judgment. For in many things we all offend. **If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.** He is able also with a bridle to lead about the whole body...Even so the tongue is indeed a little member, and boasteth great things. **Behold how small a fire kindleth a great wood.** And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity.*

So how do we know that wisdom or words presented as wisdom are from the Holy Spirit, are from above? First, those who speak them are not in the business of daily reviling their superiors to an audience incapable of doing anything about it. Such men and women engage in controversies and apparent controversies like the Virgin Mary and like the just man, Joseph: Quietly and Privately; when they do so Loudly and Publicly, we begin to grow suspicious of their motives. When sarcasm and belittling are added to the mix, our initial suspicions are emboldened because love is *not* sarcastic. The Spirit of God is revealed in “good conversation”, “meekness of wisdom”, it avoid “contentions”, it is “chaste” and “peaceable” and “full of mercy.”

*“Who is a wise man, and endued with knowledge among you? Let him shew, **by a good conversation, his work in the meekness of wisdom.** But if you have bitter zeal, and **there be contentions in your hearts; glory not, and be not liars against the truth.** For **this is not wisdom, descending from above: but earthly, sensual, devilish.** For where envying and contention is, there is inconstancy, and every evil work. But the wisdom, that is from above, first indeed is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, **FULL OF MERCY** and good fruits (patience, kindness long suffering etc), **without judging, without dissimulation.** And*

the fruit of justice is sown in peace, to them that make peace.

Some members of extreme right groups such as the the Society of St. Pius X (SSPX) wonder why they are having difficulties with the Vatican. When they speak in the following manner, as some of them do, it should not be too hard to figure out.

According to some members of SSPX, both Pope Francis and Cardinal Mueller are "**functional idiots**" whose ideas are "laughable" because they are "clowns" and "fools".

*"Which brings me to Müller's **laughable suggestion** that recognition of the Second Vatican Council is "not an unreasonably high hurdle" to overcome with respect to the regularization of the SSPX. Presumably, by "recognition" he means to say that the Council represents "an integral part of the tradition of the Church;" the prerequisite established by **Benedict the Abdicator.**"*

"Remember, this Müller is the same German clown that just a few moments earlier said that it's not acceptable to take one "key statement" of faith and reject others – as if the text of Vatican II doesn't do exactly that on any number of points; most notably as it concerns the very matters he chose to highlight, religious freedom and ecumenism."

By bringing up the issue of religious freedom, which he wants members of the SSPX to "unreservedly recognize" as a "human right", and "an obligation to ecumenism", Cardinal Mueller has placed them in an imbroglio. In an attempt to demonstrate their intellectual superiority, some radical members of the SSPX begin to sound like emotionally distraught liberals who believe their ideas to be so extremely sacrosanct that they can impose them on everyone; those who disagree with them in the hierarchy are accused of vile intent, a disorientation

that must be combated:

“Rome has long been Satan’s playground, and only a fool ever imagined that Cardinal Müller may have somehow been spared the diabolical disorientation that has infected the overwhelming majority of those in the sacred hierarchy.”

As Jesus warned, a man’s worst enemies are from his own household ([Matt 10:36](#)). These are enemies detected by their sarcasm, contentiousness, reviling and sacrilegious audacity; like the Pharisees before them, who accused Jesus Christ of being possessed by demons, they are not afraid to fulfill scripture by saying the same about His apostolic successors:

“Do not we (Pharisees) say well that thou (Jesus) art a Samaritan, and hast a devil” ([John 8:48](#))?

Addressing the issue further Jesus hinted that others would follow in the Pharisee footsteps and renounce the leaders of His Church the same way:

*“It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, for the slave that he become like his master. **If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more those of his household!** ([Matt 10:25](#)).”*

Like their forefathers they will bring division into the Kingdom of God, which will be their undoing.

*“This man drives out demons only by the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons.” But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, **“Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and no town or house divided against itself will stand”** ([Matt 12:24-25](#)).*

Since the Gates of Hell cannot prevail against the Church, apparently, it is time to drive this divisive force out of the

Kingdom of God- something these brash opponents fear more than anything else. Like nation's around the world who have begun to see the pernicious errors of liberalism and have begun to set it aside – [some like Poland have gone as far as declare Jesus Christ to be their King](#) – Francis too has begun the long overdo and arduous chore of papal house cleaning.

[On the issue of religious freedom](#), one adamant accuser who believes he is superior to the Prefect of the CDF speaks with sarcasm containing all the marks indicated above. Addressing Cardinal Mueller's declaration of religious freedom as detailed in [Dignitatis Humane](#) he states:

"I say, there is no human right to freedom of religion when that religion is false."

It is questionable if this critic of Vatican II ever read the document and if he did that he properly understood it. He is already engaging a straw man.

"So Mr Muller, do you believe these religions are as equally true as the Catholic faith founded by God in the flesh of Jesus Christ? If so, then you must at least tacitly support the above named practices no?"

"It seems to me, (and I do not have a degree in philosophy or theology, thank God,) that Catholicism and all the other mentioned "religions" cannot both be true. And, if you believe Catholicism is true, how can you then lend support the above named practices? especially when I really do not see Jesus as approving the above practices anywhere in Scripture."

"I am seeing a conflict here buddy, because you say you are Catholic, but you seem to support the right of anybody to do

anything in the name of "freedom of religion"

An outlandish presumption based on obnoxious ignorance, followed by disrespect, calling the Cardinal "buddy" and a silly deduction based on his own straw man argument. The fact is, he does not know what the cardinal thinks; if he does know, his sin is compounded because the cardinal does not believe anything remotely close to his distorted suppositions and conclusions.

Projecting his guilt and hiding behind a shield of feigned piety and sarcasm he then accuses cardinal Mueller of "Satanism" – enough is enough.

"Actually, your belief in "freedom of religion" sounds exactly like Satanism to me... do whatever you want whenever you want with no restrictions...but again I'm just an ignorant lay Catholic person...not a prince of the Catholic Church."

Speaking of his reform of the Vatican Curia, Francis told the curates that his reforms, reforms he has just begun, would require more than surface ironing out; no he intends his reforms to be so deeply penetrating that they will remove ingrained stains, those that are most difficult to get out:

"Dear brothers, it's not the wrinkles in the church that you should fear, but the stains!"

In his annual address to the Vatican Curia, he implied some of those engaged in "malicious resistance" to the reform are inspired by the devil. Resistance, he said is sometimes "open" and sometimes "hidden", both of which can be constructive if conducted with proper intentions. However, he warned that

"There are also cases of malicious resistance, which spring up in misguided minds and come to the fore when the devil inspires ill intentions (often cloaked in sheep's clothing)."

“This last kind of resistance hides behind words of self-justification and often accusation...It takes refuge in traditions, appearances, formalities, in the familiar, or else in a desire to make everything personal, failing to distinguish between the act, the actor and the action.”

Pope Francis means business and they know it. St. Peter *ora pro nobis*.

[Continue to Part Two](#)

Continued Attacks on Pope Francis – Radical Traditionalists Defaming Pope over Malta

[New Era World News](#)

CHARACTER ATTACKS ON POPE FRANCIS from a hand full of far right traditionalists have become common place. A few months ago it was *Amoris Laetitia*, this week it is about scandals and abuses revolving around the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. Interestingly, both cases involve the traditionalist, Cardinal Raymond Burke who in each instance is the man behind the frontal assault on the pope. It is becoming increasingly clear who the real villain is or might be.

What follows will be confusing, if the two major players and their titles are not clearly delineated and distinguished before proceeding.

Major Players:

1. GRAND MASTER – Fra Matthew Festing (British)
2. GRAND CHANCELLOR- Albrecht von Boeselager (German)

Pope Francis is being accused of tyrannical abuse of office, of being a man who cries for mercy yet knows how to play political hardball when it comes to his opponents. Even if true, so what? Is not this exactly what is expected of a virtuous and competent leader, a man rich in mercy yet courageous enough to act with full authority when the situation calls for it? Is not this the model for leadership that the traditionalists opposing Francis have yearned for and have placed before us in the image of Christ the King who will come in power and glory to judge the living and the dead? Some Traditionalist never tire of stressing God's justice: "He is not just love, he judges us too." As stated many times by New Era, although what the traditionalists are stating might be true, we are living in an Hour of Mercy! Instead of justice, men and women in tune with God's Spirit should be pleading for mercy and performing acts of reparation out of love for poor sinners to spare them from God's justice. As was stated in a previous article, they had better watch what they are asking for because it might soon be falling on their own heads.

Apparently, Cardinal Burke did not learn from the *Amoris Laetitia* imbroglio, which lost steam after Cardinal Mueller, the Prefect for the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, announced that "[there is no problem with its doctrine.](#)" So instead of *Amoris*, the issue is now the handling of a few traditionalists in the Sovereign Order of Malta.

Background

In November of 2015 Cardinal Burke and Grand Master Festing attempted to have Grand Chancellor von Boeselager removed from office using the charge of disobedience after the latter refused to step down at Fester's command. Then according to CRUX, in order to secure his removal, Fester and Burke cooperated with the Lepanto Institute (a traditionalist Institute that does not shrink from acting as critic and guardian of the Church's internal affairs) to further investigate charges that von Boeselager had "signed off" on a program to distribute condoms as part of a Malta medical mission program that he headed. Boeselager had, however, been previously exonerated of those charges. **The Order of Malta had already investigated the issue and had cleared the Grand Chancellor of any wrong doing.** According to [CRUX](#),

"The Vatican had also been informed at the time."

Since this is the case, the issue becomes broader in scope. If already cleared, why were Cardinal Burke and Grand Master Fester intent on reopening the case? Cardinal Burke did not let up; after gathering additional evidence on von Boeselager, he continued to press the issue. Because Boeselager has the support of several high ranking Vatican dignitaries and prominent German Bishops, Burke needed the support of the pope. He apparently succeeded because after meeting with the pope, Francis wrote him a letter in which he specified that:

"Catholic moral precepts must be followed but that the differences should be resolved through DIALOGUE RATHER THAN EXPULSIONS."

This point is key and the fulcrum on which the whole story turns: Cardinal Burke subsequently exceeded the authority given to him in the pope's directive. Instead of solving the issue through "dialogue" as instructed, he proceeded to maneuver to have Boeselager removed from office. In true Burkeian style, he accused the Grand Chancellor of being a

“liberal”. As such, he should resign; both Burke and Festing insisted. When Boeselager refused, they charged him with disobedience and removed him from office.

Interesting, as CRUX points out, the only person that was actually disobedient was Cardinal Burke himself, disobedient to the pope’s clear directive. Not only had the pope told him to handle the situation through dialogue, the Vatican Secretary of State, Cardinal Parolin,

“...wrote twice to the American cardinal to make clear that the pope had approved no such action. He also made clear Boeselager should be reinstated, and any differences between them resolved through dialogue.”

It was at this point that Pope Francis intervened and asked a commission to investigate, but Grand Master Festing refused to cooperate citing the fact that the Order is a sovereign entity and that the issue was an internal affair they would handle themselves.

What is Going On?

As a sovereign entity the Order argued that it did not have to submit to a papal inquiry. Further since the Vatican Yearbook lists the Order among “States with embassies accredited to the Holy See” and not among its religious orders, even though they are a lay religious order, it did not have to comply with any requests from the pope. Lawyers for the Order contend that Order’s Constitution clearly specifies that “religious members”...are only subject to their appropriate Superiors in the Order.” Therefore, it is argued that the pope, in order to pierce this legal bubble, would have to abrogate their rights and laws, which he has not done.

Since the pope has apparently disregarded these stipulations,

he is being accused by writers such as [Phil Lawler](#) of “unprecedented papal intervention” into the affairs of that venerable body.” Lawler insists that this action of Pope Francis

“...fits into a pattern that should, at this point, worry all faithful Catholics. Under Pope Francis, the Vatican is systematically silencing, eliminating, and replacing critics of the Pope’s views.”

For the record, the Order of Malta does have international juridical identity, but

“[...it is also a lay religious institute whose members profess loyalty to the pope](#), and as such is subject – as are all recognized Catholic organizations – to the jurisdiction of the Holy See in religious matters.”

As CRUX further point out, the argument about sovereignty “beggared belief”. Cardinal Burke had attempted to use the pope’s authority to get Boeselager to resign then turned around and insisted that the pope has no authority in the matter.

” Given that Burke’s attempt to use the pope to justify Festing’s sacking of Von Boeselager (Burke) had (himself) dragged the papacy into its internal affairs.”

Festing, apparently urged on by Cardinal Burke continued the fruckus, and Pope Francis continued **investigating through a committee headed by Archbishop Sivano Tomasi**. According to [Catholic World Report](#) (CWR), the “situation is now a full-blown crisis.” Why is it being presented as a crisis? Because some traditionalists are trying to mar the pope.

As of last Tuesday, January 24, the papal committee completed its investigation and Festing was called to the Vatican to

meet with Pope Francis. In the Catholic version of “fake news”, The CWR correctly states that after Pope Francis met with Grand Master Festing a second time, he showed him the Papal Commission Report containing documented information about organizational dysfunction relative to his leadership and indicating the need for extensive reform of the Order beginning with its ruling clique consisting of fifty to a hundred knights drawn from Europe’s traditional nobility.

The investigation must have been thorough and convincing: **At the end of the meeting Festing tendered his resignation in writing.** Then Francis took further steps: He declared all actions taken by the Order since the dismissing of von Boeselager (December 6, 2016) as “null and void” including his elected replacement. Festing acquiesced unlike Burke, who has refused to stop fighting:

“Even after Festing had agreed to the pope’s request to resign, Burke tried to persuade him to retract, in effect telling him to keep fighting Francis, [according to sources in both the Vatican and the order.](#)”

So How did the Order Respond?

The stage was set for a battle between the Vatican and the Knights of Malta; however when the information reached Malta and was digested by its Sovereign Council; they, like Festing, also acquiesced to Francis’ requests. They accepted Festing’s resignation and reinstated von Boeselager as Grand Chancellor.

On January 25, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin wrote on Pope Francis’ behalf to members of the Order’s Governing Board. He stated that, the Grand Commander, **Ludwig Hoffmann von Rumerstein, is now in charge of the Order** and that

“...in the renewal process which is seen as necessary,” Pope Francis would “appoint his personal Delegate with powers that he will define in the act of appointing him.”

Cardinal Burke, it appears, will find himself further demoted; that is, his use of “soft-power” as papal liaison is being eroded. First he was removed from the Apostolic Penitentiary to become the Vatican’s liaison with the Order of Malta, which responsibility is now being redefined and down-graded to a mere “titular role”. Francis’ legate, not Cardinal Burke, is now the pope’s “official spokesman during his mandate” pertaining to formal relations between the Order and the Holy See.

Be that as it may, the main thrust of these moves, as noted by CRUX “is not to silence Cardinal Burke, but to reform the Order’s constitution and governance so that it better serves the purpose (mission) for which it exists, something that Burke failed to do: seeing that the knights better serve their ancient charism to **defend the faith** and **assist the poor**. The latter was a mission area stressed by Boeselager, while the **camp supported by Festing and Cardinal Burke favored a more traditional agenda to bolster their financial portfolio and**

” ...build up the elite quasi-monastic arm of the knights (stressing the military aspects, trappings of nobility, and social-cultural-theological traditionalism, rather than placing the main thrust of their efforts on pastoral and charitable works consistent with the pastoral spirit of Vatican II and the modern papacy). Although those stressing the former number “only around 50 of the 14,000 members of the order, they are the ones who hold the leadership positions of the world-wide knights, and elect its leader.”

A small clique that many members have grown weary of. Consequently according to [Catholic World Report](#):

“Boeselager and his allies in the Vatican “have triumphed.

However, the Catholic World Report could not help displaying its loyalties by asserting that

“These allies have carried out a sordid campaign of leaked letters from Cardinal Parolin’s department, which served the sad and obvious end of framing a public narrative in which Fra’ Festing supposedly ‘defied’ the explicit wishes of the Pope.”

But, according to [CRUX](#)

“The reaction from traditionalists and critics of the pope has been apopleptic, seeking to portray Francis as an autocrat imposing his vision of the Church on a hapless conservative order. In reality, he is doing no more than what popes have always done with Catholic organizations that suffer from abusive or dysfunctional leadership which undermines their witness.”

“Francis has done the same with other religious orders or societies, such as the Peru-based Sodalitium. Benedict XVI did the same with the Legion of Christ, among others.”

“Why should Francis’s critics believe this one is any different? Sadly, some have become so invested in Burke’s campaign against Francis over Amoris Laetitia that they have failed to spot what this is about.”

Clearly, there are two conflicting interpretations of events, one favoring Cardinal Burke and a small camp of traditionalists, the other favoring von Boeselager and those who want to engage in pastoral and charitable works per the

instructions of Pope Francis. Since there is division in the Order exacerbated by confusion in the press, it appears that some other agent having an agenda contrary to the Holy Spirit's unifying charity are at work.

Is Anything Else Going On?

Changes being experienced around the world relative to the growing global rising against liberalism are being echoed in **the Church as it has finally begun to take decisive steps to deal with the infiltration of Masonry and Masonic influences into its various dicasteries, departments, orders etc.** Like the nations of the world reacting to the rising tide of liberalism, the Vatican is reacting to the rising tide of Masonry, which like liberalism has become an unbearable cause of dysfunction, division, and confusion that needs to be thrown off.

Thus, according to the CWR:

*"There is much more" going on. Edward Pentin of the National Catholic Register [reported on January 7th](#) that Cardinal Burke had been asked by Pope Francis to expose problems within the Order: "Hopes that the contraceptive scandal would be addressed came on Nov. 10, when Cardinal Burke was received in private audience by Pope Francis. During that meeting, the Register has learned, the Pope was 'deeply disturbed' by what the cardinal told him about the contraceptive distribution. **The Pope also made it clear to Cardinal Burke that he wanted Freemasonry 'cleaned out' from the order, and he demanded appropriate action.**"*

According to Robert Monihan writing for [Inside the Vatican](#):

"During the past several months, quietly and privately on most occasions, but sometimes publicly, a word has been

whispered and spoken aloud in Rome in a way unlike any other time in the 33 years that I have been writing about Vatican affairs. That word is freemasonry."

Apparently, Pope Francis equated the condom scandal and other reports of activities in the Knights of Malta along with division within its ranks and dysfunction as indicators of Masonic infiltration, which he wants out of the order and out of the Church.

Monihan echoed what was reported by the CWR:

"Published reports have stated something that few have noted, but which must be studied and explained: that Pope Francis, in a meeting in November with Cardinal Raymond Burke, gave Burke a very unusual instruction. The Pope, it is reported, during their November 10 meeting, asked Burke, the American cardinal who is the ecclesial Patron of the Knights of Malta, to carry out an important and delicate task: to ferret out and remove from the Knights of Malta all members who are... freemasons."

The pope followed-up was with a letter to Cardinal Burke, in which he "underlined the cardinal's constitutional duty to promote the spiritual interests of the order and **remove any affiliation with groups or practices that run contrary to the moral law.** Here, repeated, is the critical phrase":

"The Pope also made it clear to Cardinal Burke that he wanted Freemasonry 'cleaned out' from the order..."

Monihan correctly identifies Cardinal Burke as "one of the leaders of the 'traditional' faction in the Church and in the College of Cardinals because of his raising questions about the "progressive" teaching of Pope Francis, especially in *Amoris Laetitia*. Although the issue of condoms and leadership are being or have been rectified, the vetting of Masonry and

Masonic influence in the order will be an ongoing saga as Pope Francis attempts to do in the Church what leaders around the world are doing in the State: ridding their countries of liberalism and the disorganizing influence of Masonry.

Masonry is a fraternity of Satan, the Father of Liars. As such, it has long been characterized by Gnosticism, Esotericism, and double meaning; **it advances error by crafting antithetical ideologies which it sets in apparent opposition** in order to ravish the truth and lull unsuspecting victims into its deceptive web. Its symptoms include, confusion, dysfunction, and division. In dealing with this diabolical sect, Pope Leo XIII invoked the Blessed Virgin Mary:

“Let us take our helper and intercessor the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, so that she, who from the moment of her conception overcame Satan may show her power over these evil sects, in which is revived the contumacious spirit of the demon, together with his unsubdued perfidy and deceit” ([Humanum Genus](#)).

Pope Pius IX was equally clear:

*“WE strongly exhort them to beware of the perfidious discourses of sectarians who, under a disguise of honesty, are inflamed by an ardent hatred of the Religion of Christ and of all legitimate authority: they have but one thought with the sole aim of exterminating, all Divine and human rights. Let them all be fully conscious of the fact that the affiliates of such sects are as the wolves who, as Our Lord predicted, **come disguised with sheeps hide to devour the whole flock.**”* ([Multiplices inter](#)).

Those who advance error can be easily detected. They cover themselves by pointing their fingers at deviating others at the opposite end of the spectrum. Realizing that most

traditionalists are true sons of the Church appalled with abuse and desirous of high sanctity, we hope that the conflict between traditionalists and liberals within the hallowed Order of Malta is *not* a manifestation of a Masonic dialectic and that traditionalists controlling the inner circle at Malta and pointing the finger at supposed liberals are not part of the cabal that Pope Francis is vetting and wants “cleaned out” of the Order. How traditionalists members of the Order fare in this process will be interesting to see. Those who cry loudest against an abuse are often the perpetrators of abuse themselves.

Amoris Laetitia Endorsed by Cardinal Mueller: “No Problem with its Doctrine”

THE ISSUE OF THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION, *Amoris Laetitia* is still in the air. However, this morning it took a sharp turn towards closure; it did so for two reasons. One, Pope Francis punctuated his push for pastoral theology both clarifying his intent and strengthening its dynamism by tying it to the issue of “*authority*”, authentic Christ-like authority. The linking of pastoral theology to authority by the pope was complimented by Cardinal Mueller, the Prefect for the Sacred Congregation of Faith, who also spoke out clearly, two days earlier, on the doctrinal message and pastoral dimensions of the document, *Amoris Laetitia*.

PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND CHRIST-LIKE AUTHORITY

This morning January 10, 2017 [Pope Francis gave a homily on authority during morning Mass at Casa Santa Martain](#) in which he stated

“Authority, if true, will enter hearts, like Jesus’ did. But if it’s just formal, it won’t ...”

To clarify his meaning the pope juxtaposed top down authority imposed by means of bureaucratic position (like that exercised by the Pharisees) to “real” authority acquired by affinity of hearts (like that exercised by Jesus, the Good Shepherd). To further clarify his meaning, Francis examined three characteristics of “real authority”.

He begins by noting that the scriptures reveal people were amazed at the teaching of Jesus; they were “amazed” because He taught “as one with authority and not as their scribes” ([Matt 7:29](#)). Francis explains that the teaching of the legalistic Pharisees did *not* enter the hearts of those who heard it. True authority penetrates into the heart. Like the Pharisees, Jesus did *not* neglect any point of the law, yet He taught it in such a way that His words entered into people’s hearts.

A priest who teaches with true authority is able to penetrate hearts because he is a servant of rather than a lord over his flock. **It is servant-leadership that confers genuine authority.**

Pharisees teach, but they do *not* touch hearts because they are too “clerical”, too concerned about their positions of authority. This type of priest, Francis emphasized, is infected with a

“...psychology of princes: ‘We are the masters, the princes, and we teach you. Not service: we command, you obey.’ And Jesus never passed Himself off like a prince: He was always

the servant of all, and this is what gave Him authority.'"

Moreover, **a true servant leader is in close relationship with those whom he serves.**

"Jesus did not have an allergy to the people: touching the lepers, the sick, didn't make Him shudder."

The Pharisees, however, assumed a position of superiority. A Pharisee eschews "the poor people, the ignorant," they liked to parade about the piazzas, in soutains and genteel garb.

*"They were detached from the people, they were not close [to them]; **Jesus was very close to the people, and this gave authority.** Those detached people, these doctors, had a clericalist psychology: they taught with a clericalist authority – that's clericalism."*

Quoting Blessed Paul VI (*Evangelii nuntiandi* 48), Pope Francis made clear: **"One sees the heart of a pastor who is close [to the people]."**

In addition to service and closeness to his people, a man with authority is **"coherent"**.

Coherence distinguishes the authority of the scribes from that of Jesus. That is, Jesus' life corresponds to His words. A coherent shepherd lives what he preaches as Jesus "lived what He preached." A clericalist is more intent on looking good and dazzling people with his brilliance while assuming a posture of superiority. Consequently, they are not coherent; their personality is divided on a central point about which Jesus warned His disciples:

*"**But, do what they tell you, but not what they do': they said one thing and did another. Incoherence. They were incoherent. And the attitude Jesus uses of them so often is hypocritical.**"*

And it is understood that one who considers himself a prince, who has a clericalist attitude, who is a hypocrite, doesn't have (true) authority! He speaks the truth, but without authority. Jesus, on the other hand, who is humble, who is at the service of others, who is close, who does not despise the people, and who is coherent, has authority. And this is the authority that the people of God senses."

A priest with authority is a servant that is close to his people, a servant who lives a coherent life. Like Jesus, he is a good shepherd, a good pastor. **A pastor knows the truths of the faith but is able to concertize them in love as a shepherd having authority over his flock because he knows them, serves them and coherently loves them.** It is the pastoral dimension of his formation that confers the fullness of authority necessary for his office, necessary for success as a pastor.

THE PASTORAL DIMENSION OF AMORIS LAETITIA

To grasp *Amoris Laetitia*, it must be interpreted in this light, in the light of pastoral theology deeply rooted in the wisdom and truths of the faith, in the constant teaching of the Church, as Francis points out twice in [paragraph 300](#) of *Amoris Laetitia*"

"Priests have the duty to "accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church"

"This discernment can never prescind from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church."

Clearly, the issue at hand is a pastoral one, viz., how to uphold the teachings of the Church in the modern world, a world void of a sense of the sacred, a world in which divorce

and remarriage are common place, a world in which the sons and daughters of the Church have been inculturated without their awareness of its effects. Since the whole process is about salvation and pastoral accompaniment during an Hour of Mercy, pastors are being nudged into being more pastorally minded. This is clear to the Archbishop of Dublin, to the Prefect for the Sacred Congregation of the Faith, and to many other cardinals and bishops who stand with the pope in opposition to Cardinal Burke and the misinformed lay men who have lined up to bat for him against the pope.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who make dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly; and by pleasing speeches and good words, seduce the hearts of the innocent. For your obedience is published in every place. I rejoice therefore in you” ([Romans 16:17-19](#)).

Men causing dissension are all misreading the document, which is clear enough to many others, and to the *New Era* staff. Thus, according to Cardinal Mueller:

“It is a misreading” of the Pope’s exhortation to say it has been the cause of polemics.”

“The Church has no power to change the Divine Law”...not even a pope or council can do that.”

Some, like those at *Church Militant* and *The World Over*, like to point out that there is confusion and therefore implicitly (in Arroyo’s case – explicitly) take the side of Cardinal Burke. It must be admitted: Yes, there is confusion, but that does not mean that Cardinal Burke is correct in his assessment of *Amoris Laetitia* and that the pope must answer in some way

to him.

There is confusion because men like Mr. Arroyo, and ultra-traditionalist or liberal bishops are manufacturing confusion. In a response to *New Era's* third article on the issue ([Attack on Pope Francis: Supposed Loyal Catholics Distort Information Defame Pope](#)), Dr. Marzak pointed out that there is always confusion where there is disobedience and pride, when people pursue their own path rather than submit to legitimate magisterial authority in humble obedience. He pointed out that it is liberal bishops and schismatic *seda vacantists* who are causing the confusion; they are often supplemented by well meaning but over-zealous laymen who misunderstand pastoral theology and the relationship between the practical and speculative intellect as examined in [Article One](#). In response to a comment pertaining to [Article Three](#) in the series on *Amoris Laetitia*, Dr. Marzak stated.

“Watch what will happen this year when Cardinal Mueller begins to deal with them (those liberal and ultra-conservative bishops causing confusion). Now that the Church is fully aware of their aberrant policies the CDF (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith) will act – let’s watch and see.”

*“It is just not liberals causing confusion, how do you account for pious *sedivacantists* who ordain their own bishops contrary to what the Church teaches; they are causing confusion too (and most of it).”*

“Nonetheless, it is not confusion that is the issue, it is pride leading to willful disobedience which the self-righteous perpetrators then try to mask in confusion to cover their errancy by instead attacking the papacy as if they were some type of holy body constituted to lead the church instead

of the See of Peter.”

In this regard, Cardinal Mueller has spoken out, and spoken out clearly. In a January 8, interview with tgcom24, Cardinal Mueller objected to Cardinal Burke and those “Princes of the Church” who publicly challenged the pope by questioning the doctrinal accuracy of *Amoris Laetitia*. According to Cardinal Mueller, the Church’s highest ranking doctrinal official, the prefect for the Sacred Congregation of the Faith, according to Cardinal Mueller: ***Amoris Laetitia* is “very clear”**. This has been *New Era*’s position from the beginning of the controversy, so much so that the staff here has been in a continual quandary over Cardinal Burke and Raymond Arroyo’s failure to “get it” speculating that the problem might be either a clerical error having to do with authority or a failure to appreciate the fine differences between the intellectual work of pastoral theology *vis a vis* dogmatic theology. Now that Cardinal Mueller has vociferously supported the clarity of the document, the staff here is relieved.

Highlighting the pastoral dimension of *Amoris Laetitia*, Cardinal Mueller stressed that it is Pope Francis’ desire that priests take time

*“...to discern the situation of ... persons living in an irregular union – that is, not in accordance with the doctrine of the church on marriage – and asks for help for these people to **find a path for a new integration into the church** according to the condition of the sacraments (and) the Christian message on matrimony.”*

Cardinal Mueller clearly understands the difference between pastoral and dogmatic theology and how they intersect; consequently he sees clarity in the document:

*“In the papal document, he said, “I do not see any opposition: On one side we have the **clear doctrine on***

matrimony (dogmatic), and on the other the obligation of the church to care for these people in difficulty (pastoral)."

Cardinal Mueller evidently understands [Amoris Laetitia is a "call for the pastoral accompaniment of people who are divorced and civilly remarried or who are living together without marriage.](#)

Concerning the doctrinal clarity of the document, Mueller told the Italian television network:

*"A possible fraternal correction of the pope seems very remote at this time because **it does not concern a danger for the faith.**"*

["Amoris Laetitia is very clear in its doctrine and we can interpret \(in it\) Jesus' entire doctrine on marriage, the entire doctrine of the Church in 2000 years of history."](#)

We hope this is clear enough. **According to the highest ranking doctrinal official in the Catholic Church; AMORIS LAETITIA DOES NOT CONCERN A DANGER FOR THE FAITH."**

Further, in response to a query which asked are the divorced-and-remarried in some cases permitted to receive the Eucharist "without the need to change their way of life" Cardinal Mueller responded:

"If Pope Francis' exhortation "had wanted to eliminate such a deeply rooted and significant discipline, it would have said so clearly and presented supporting reasons,"

Cardinal Mueller is not confused, nor are score of other bishops, nor is the staff at *New Era*. As Dr. Marzak has previously pointed out, the confusion is being caused, on the one hand, by disobedient liberal bishops such as the one in

San Diego and, on the other hand, by far right leaning bishops and churchman nearing schism or already in schism. Confusion emanating from diverse poles of the theological spectra helps generate more confusion among the larger body of sheep and lambs. The confusion is *not* coming from either Pope Francis or *Amoris Laetitia*; the confusion is rooted in clericalism, intellectual arrogance, liberal moral weakness (concupiscence and irascibility) that blinds and, above all else, it is rooted in disobedience and pride.

No where does the document *Amoris Laetitia* admit people living in mortal sin to receive the sacraments. What the Pastoral Exhortation does encourage, [as Cardinal Mueller correctly points out is:](#)

“A process of (pastoral) discernment, (that), might eventually lead to a determination that access to the sacraments is possible.”

If its detractors better understood and appreciated the pastoral dimensions of theology and the extreme difficulties, sacrifice and self-giving pastoral theology demands; if they understood what Francis means by “authentic authority”, they might “get it”. Some seem more intent on running the Church like a police state, a state in which they can comfortably sit back and play the judge as if God were some type of task master watching closely every day to espy and root out all errors rather than a God of LOVE who humbles Himself, who abases Himself to become little like his flock in order to tenderly serve, love and nurture them by knowing their names and sharing their lives, their pains, joys, sorrows and tribulations and by confirming His life to the doctrine of His Cross (coherence).

It is too easy to play the judge; it costs nothing but an easy arm-chair accompanied by good cuisine and an ever watchful eye always ready to catch a sinner and even a pope in error. In

this they feel self-satisfied and accomplished. **This might be dogmatic theology, but without love and authentic authority it fails even at that and it is certainly not pastoral theology,** the theology of the Good Shepherd” who lays down his life for his sheep. This is the type of shepherd Francis is endeavoring to be, the type of shepherds he is calling the priests of the Catholic Church to become.

Archbishop Martin & Cardinal Muller with Pope – EWTN’s Arroyo Behind Dissent

THE ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN, IRELAND, Diarmuid Martin, and Cardinal Gerhard Muller, the Prefect for the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith (The Holy Office) have weighed in on the theological dimensions of Pope Francis’ Post Synodal Exhortation, [*Amoris Laetitia*](#). The issue as reported earlier by [*New Era*](#) is the integral relationship between Dogmatic and Pastoral Theology.

Archbishop Martin subtly referenced the papal exhortation in a recent homily given to marriage counselors working for the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference. The Archbishop began his homily with these words that foreshadowed his concern about spiritual renewal manifest in compassionate but authentic pastoral theology:

“The Gospel of this afternoon’s Mass recalls once again that great figure John the Baptist. John’s task was to announce the coming of Jesus. He was called to reawaken a sense of expectation among a people that had grown tired and distant from God. He was called to bring renewal to institutional expressions of religion which, at the time, had often become fossilised into mere formulae or external ritual.

The archbishop is concerned, as is the pope, about fossilized, legalistic, and judgmental Catholicism, a Catholicism that lacks vibrancy and compassion, a Catholicism out of tune with human misery, of the fact that “the harvest is plenty but laborers are few” ([Matt 9:37](#)). Before our Lord spoke these poignant words, He looked on the crowd and had COMPASSION because the vast flock was lost in sin and confusion, because they were suffering:

“And seeing the multitudes, he had compassion on them: because they were distressed, and lying like sheep that have no shepherd.

Suffering, lost and wounded souls need compassion and love, not criticism, rejection, head wagging, and cold or severe judgement. Love is the universal balm, the spiritual ointment that makes the wounded whole. God is wise, God will judge and so must we ([1 Cor 2:15](#)), but before all else, GOD IS LOVE and those who deny this do not know Him.

“And every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is charity. ([1 John 4:7-8](#)).

Saving souls is a labor of love; it is too easy to sit in an armchair and condemn; it takes work, great work, to get off of your but and get dirty in the work of patiently ministering to wounded humanity lost in sin like sheep without a shepherd

[\(Matt 9:36\)](#)..

Since the Lord has appointed the present time to be an **“Hour of Mercy”** before His final coming as “Just Judge” the Church should be showing a merciful and compassionate face, a face most associated with its pastoral dimension.

[“Speak to the world about My mercy ... It is a sign for the end times. After it will come the Day of Justice. While there is still time, let them have recourse to the fountain of My mercy. \(Diary 848\)](#)

Jesus revealed to Saint Faustina that the present hour is *not* a time of retribution but a time of compassion, healing and mercy for all:

“I sent prophets wielding thunderbolts to My people. Today I am sending you with My mercy to the people of the whole world. I do not want to punish aching mankind, but I desire to heal it, pressing it to My Merciful Heart.”[\(Diary, 1588\)](#).

He further revealed to Faustina that those who have the most right to His mercy are the most grievous sinners:

“Let the greatest sinners place their trust in My mercy. They have the right before others to trust in the abyss of My mercy. ... Souls that make an appeal to My mercy delight Me. To such souls I grant even more graces than they ask” [\(Diary of Saint Faustina Para 1146\)](#).

Jesus has a

“[...special compassion for the worst sinners](#), because they are most in need of His mercy.”

The Hour of Mercy is a time to pronounce, to pronounce the

good news, *not* to renounce.

*“For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world”
([John 12:47](#), [John 3:17](#)).*

The archbishop of Dublin apparently had all this in mind when he opened his homily on marriage and family life. Although he did not specifically mention the doubts (dubia – perhaps complaints might be better) registered by opposing Cardinals Joachim Meisner, Raymond Burke, Carlo Caffarra and Walter Brandmüller, he did speak about “grey areas” in family life and the inability of clergy to embrace pastoral challenges with love and compassion rather than “black and white” dogmatic pronouncements.

In his homily Archbishop Martin attempted to pull diocesan marriage counselors into the mystery of romance associated with love and marriage and the uniqueness of each couple by reference to “[The Jeweler’s Shop](#)”, a literary work of Pope John Paul II:

“As a young bishop, Pope John Paul II wrote a play called “The Jeweler’s Shop”. It was a simple play in which the principal character was a jeweller who looked out as young couples would stop by his shop window examining the wedding rings on display.”

“As he watched them, he began imagining who these different couples, with whom he had never spoken, actually were. He began to see that each was different and that for each of them their love for each other, their hopes for a future together were unique.”

*“Like the Jeweler in Pope John Paul’s play, you realise that **each couple is different, that no couple is perfect, that***

there are many who face real challenges as they try to hold on to what remains of an initial dream which seems destined to be on the way to failure."

From here the archbishop proceeds to Pope Francis and *Amoris Laetitia*:

"Pope Francis has given the Church that remarkable document his document Amoris Laetitia which is the fruit of the reflections of the world's Bishops at two Synods as well as the contribution of married couples and experts from every corner of the world. Pope Francis presents a wonderful kaleidoscope of the teaching of Jesus and the scriptures on the beauty and the joy of marital love. He stresses the role of the Church to learn to teach that message in a language which will be understandable to the men and women of today. He stresses the role of the Church in accompanying men and women on the journey of married and family life, even when the initial dreams begin to fade or indeed fail."

What is important is understanding the men and women **"of today"**. Most people today have been inculturated, misled, propagandized and cerebrally maligned without there even knowing it. Many are lost and bewildered and do not know why. Some are well to do and affluent but lost in materialism and its attendant economic, political or moral liberalism. Human beings must be encountered where they are at or they will not be encountered at all. This is why St. Paul, perhaps the greatest evangelist, reminds all evangelists to become **"all things to all men with the view of winning them to Christ:**

"Whereas I was free as to all, I made myself the servant of all, that I might gain the more. And I became to the Jews, a Jew, that I might gain the Jews: To them that are under the law, as if I were under the law, (whereas myself was not under the law,) that I might gain them that were under the law. To them that were without the law, as if I were without

the law, ... that I might gain them that were without the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all."

To the sinner, I became a sinner (**thou not in deed but in acceptance not of their sin, but of them**).

For some Pharisaical Catholics the question might be asked: "Are you (plural) trying to win souls to Christ or to win an argument?" If you would endeavor to first befriend repugnant, heretical, schismatic sinners by loving them, withholding judgement, and refraining from didactic instruction, you might then find that the pope is correct; you might find that after laboring as accompanying-compassionate-empathetic pastors that souls become more trusting, pliable and then more teachable.

Following this line of thought, the archbishop becomes very specific:

*"No marriage is lived just in clear and abstract **black and white realities**. The Church has to understand the grey areas of success and failures, of joys and of disappointments. **Repeating doctrinal formulations alone is not the way to accompany people** on a difficult journey. Jesus' method was that of accompanying. His method was to show that mercy is more effective than condemnation in changing people's lives."*

This is the heart of *Amoris Laetitia*. It does **not** excuse sin nor does it deny dogma. Rather, it affirms dogma, is always cognizant of its co-primacy, ever ready to share it, while temporarily putting its subordinate principles on hold giving way to the ultimate dogma of LOVE from which all the others flow as do the fruits and the beatitudes. Love is the primordial and eternal motive behind all of creation and the Divine impetus for the Incarnation itself ([John 3:16](#)); it is the motive behind the life, death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ ([John 15:13](#)). Love is first; it is at the

beginning and it is at the end ([1 Corinthians 13: 1-13](#)).

“But in all these things we overcome, because of him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” ([Romans 8:37-39](#)).

As such, a pastor must first see with his heart, putting the dogmatic intellect on *ever-ready* hold while forming a relationship rooted in mercy and compassion so that the truths of the faith may be planted on fertile soil at an opportune future time, a time recognized by the integral eyes of love and wisdom. “*Accompaniment*” is before all else pastoral. However, if the path of accompaniment *never* reaches out to the higher truths, if it never gently (but firmly) corrects sin, if it never gives sage direction, it is a false love, a false accompaniment. Nonetheless, accompaniment begins with love. Like the Divine Logos who lowered Himself to become man in order to lift all men up, all His pastors must descend to the level of those whom they serve in order to then carry them upwards in the ascent towards the Holy Trinity, to “become all things to all men”, patiently enduring their insults in order to save them.”

After establishing this central idea, Archbishop Martin proceeds to examine men who, like Cardinal Burke and reporters like Raymond Arroyo, men who “do not seem to get it.”

“There are some in the Church (the archbishop says) who are unsettled by the ability of the Pope to place himself in the midst of the uncertainties of people’s lives. Some, even senior Church figures, seem to feel that the affirmation of certainties in an abstract and undoubting way (here he is

referring to the clear truths of dogmatic theology) is the only way (to evangelize or bring souls to Christ)."

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the archbishop wants to throw abstract dogmatic certainties out the window. The archbishop and the pope are both aware that *accompaniment* (pastoral theology) does **not** mean that the truths of the faith (dogma) are discarded as Cardinal Burke and company want to insist that they do:

"Accompanying is of course not saying that anything goes. It is being alongside those who are troubled pointing towards – and indeed representing – Jesus who gently leads us beyond the often paralysing doubts that beset us, gently leads us beyond our own limitations and the imperfections of our love."

Many pastors are comfortable being philosophers and theologians, of sitting in the professor's seat and teaching college students and seminarians. This is a wonderful ministry, but most priests are called to be pastors, not professors. By the way, even the best professors develop a pastoral dimension to enhance their pedagogy, a dimension that enables them to engage their students outside the classroom, in smokers, at pubs, dinner engagements at their homes, social gatherings, back-packing and various other outings, which further enhance the teacher student bond and the impact their teaching – how much more a "pastor"?

The bottom-line:

"Faith is not about empty formulae or external ritual. It is about authentically entering into the very life of Jesus Christ himself and witnessing to that life in our daily lives."

Cardinal Burke and company try to excuse themselves from the

above critique by emphasizing that they want to save souls and protect people from sinful actions that harm individuals and families:

"We hope that no one will choose to interpret the matter according to a "progressive/conservative" paradigm. That would be completely off the mark. We are deeply concerned about the true good of souls, the supreme law of the Church, and not about promoting any form of politics in the Church."

Most devout Catholics would say that they are concerned about the salvation of souls. This, however, is *not* the question.

The question is how are they going to go about the task of salvation, how are they going to go about the task of saving souls: (1) by telling poor sinners the truth and how wrong they are or (2) by embracing them in their error with love and compassion while patiently (and with great difficulty) bearing with them while slowly leading them onward until such time that they begin to ask questions or they are ready to receive some elements of the faith?

The pastoral approach is not for cowards. No, it is for the strongest, for the prudent, those selfless who deny themselves and make reparation for the sinners they are serving (until they mature enough to embrace the salvific way of purgation leading to illumination-union), those who are aware that **modern** men and women, boys and girls, have been heinously, sometimes blindly, conditioned against truth, against the Christian faith; they have been conditioned to plasticity and artificial relationships, to individualism and narcissism, everyone being out for themselves all hidden behind a veneer of niceness. In this type of environment, it is *not* cheap words, but genuine love and self-giving that speak volumes.

Modern men and women mistrust melodious words; they are tired of con-games – they have heard it all before, been there – done that; **what they rarely witness is authentic love in action.** This is something they have not seen, somewhere they

have not been. **In a pagan environment** it is quiet consistent acts of love that bear witness to the faith greater than any theological treatise or display of philosophical brilliance.

“But we entreat you, brethren, that you abound more: And that you use your endeavour to be quiet, and that you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you: and that you walk honestly towards them that are without” ([1 Thessalonians 4:11-12](#)).

Empty words or too many true words are simply lip service, lip service that is associated with those who teach doctrines from their heads rather than love from their hearts – their hearts are far from God, which is another way of saying that they are far from Love, because God is Love. This type of lip service is rejected by the Lord Himself:

*“This people honoureth me with their lips: but **their heart is far from me**. And in vain do they worship me, **teaching doctrines and commandments of men**” ([1 Matt 15:8-9](#)).*

In short, great as wisdom is, love is primary:

“Wisdom which is a gift, has its cause in the will, which cause is charity, but it has its essence in the intellect, whose act is to judge aright, as stated above ([Aquinas, Sujuma Theologiae, Second Part of Second Part, Q 45, Article 2](#)).

“Hence the wisdom of which we are speaking presupposes charity” ([Aquinas, Sujuma Theologiae, Second Part of Second Part, Q 45, Article 1](#)).

WHAT DOES CARDINAL MULLER THE PREFECT FOR THE SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF FAITH HAVE TO SAY?

Given such a stinging renunciation of dogmatic theology severed from pastoral theology (a strong mind from a pure heart) or of dogmatic theology that claims to be pastoral but is not (see note below), we would expect some conformation from the highest doctrinal authority in the Church.

According to Cardinal Gerhard Muller, Prefect for the Sacred Congregation of the Faith, **the ultimate aim of knowledge about God is salvation:**

“Knowledge of God” is ordered to “the ultimate end of man, for man’s salvation.”

Since the end of knowledge is salvation, salvation takes precedence over knowledge; salvation is the *telos* of knowledge, the end by which the means, (knowledge) is to be judged. If knowledge is *not* resulting in salvation, knowledge is not doing its job. As such, at times, (speculative-dogmatic) knowledge might be reduced in the name of prudence (practical knowledge – the realm of pastoral theology), love, and compassion for the sake of salvation. For example, The First Council of Jerusalem dealing with pagans from an anti-Christian culture, reduced the role of knowledge and limited it to a few specifics:

*“For it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to **lay no further burden upon you than these necessary things:** That you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which things keeping yourselves, you shall do well” ([Acts 15:28-29](#)).*

Many would argue, and have argued, that contemporary society is neo-pagan, a culture just as removed from God as that of

the Roman Empire; in such a case, similar rules apply.

Nonetheless, pagan culture or not, Cardinal Muller has clearly indicated that *Amoris Laetitia* does *not* permit civilly remarried divorcees to receive Holy Communion and must be interpreted in light of the magisterium:

“The magisterium of the Church still applies to those passages in Amoris Laetitia on pastoral care for remarried divorcees.

Pope Francis himself pointed out the same in his exhortation:

“Priests have the duty to accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church” ([para 300](#)).

Further on, he states once again:

*“What we are speaking of is a process of **accompaniment** and **discernment** which “guides the faithful to an awareness of their situation before God... This **discernment can never rescind from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church” ([para 300](#)).***

In May of 2016 the cardinal, talking about *Amoris Laetitia*, was quoted by the German paper [Die Tagespost](#), as saying that John Paul II’s teaching contained in *Familiaris Consortio*, and Benedict XVI’s exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, remain “unchanged.”

According to the [National Catholic Register](#),

“Cardinal Müller argued that if Amoris Laetitia really wanted to “rescind such a deeply rooted and such a weighty discipline, then it would have clearly expressed and stated its reasons.” But he pointed out that the document has “no statement to that effect.”

“At no point has the Pope called the arguments of his predecessors into question,” he said. Those arguments, he added, “are not based on the subjective guilt of these brothers and sisters, but on the visible, objective way of life, which is opposite to the words of Christ.”

Since *Amoris Laetitia* must be interpreted in light of the constant teaching of the Church, clearly the issue at hand is a pastoral one, viz., how to uphold the teachings in the modern world, a world void of a sense of the sacred, a world in which divorce and remarriage are common place, a world in which the sons and daughters of the Church have been inculturated without their awareness of its effects. Each marriage case is unique and must be judged by its relative merits. Since the whole process is about salvation and pastoral accompaniment during an Hour of Mercy, pastors are being nudged into being more pastorally minded. This is clear to the Archbishop of Dublin, to the Prefect for the Sacred Congregation of the Faith, and to many other cardinals and bishops who stand with the pope in opposition to Cardinal Burke and the misinformed lay men who have lined up to bat for him against the pope.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, to mark them who make dissensions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not Christ our Lord, but their own belly; and by pleasing speeches and good words, seduce the hearts of the innocent. For your obedience is published in every place. I rejoice therefore in you” ([Romans 16:17-19](#)).

Men causing dissension are all misreading the document, which is clear enough to many others, and to the New Era staff. Thus, according to Cardinal Muller:

“It is a misreading” of the Pope’s exhortation to say it has been the cause of polemics.

“The Church has no power to change the Divine Law”...not even a pope or council can change that.”

NOTE

Dogmatic theology does not become pastoral theology when it equates pastoral theology with telling people their sins, or by trying to save them with a simple dogmatic fix by way of simple words that might be interpreted as lip service if there is no sincere follow-up a follow-up that costs the speaker some strenuous and *unadvertised* effort.

“TAKE heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them: otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in heaven. Therefore when thou dost an almsdeed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. Amen I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee” (Matt 6:1-4).

Attack on Pope Francis: Supposed Loyal Catholics Distort Information Defame

Pope

WE WERE NOT PLANNING A THIRD ARTICLE on Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, but just when it was presumed that enough had been said, we were presented with a letter from Pope Francis to the Argentine bishops, which has been accosted by EWTN host Raymond Arroyo and his guests Robert Royal, editor-in-chief of *The Catholic Thing*, and Fr. Gerard Murray, a canon lawyer for the Archdiocese of New York.

Pope Francis recently replied to the bishops of Buenos Aires, Argentina, after they had drafted a series of ten guidelines to assist local clergy implementing *Amoris Laetitia*. The pope indicated in the document that bishops should draft guidelines to assist their clergy making pastoral decisions involving divorced and civilly remarried Catholics and the possibility of admitting them to Holy Communion as discussed in his Apostolic Exhortation. Francis applauded their guidelines and indicated that they had understood the pastoral dimensions of *Amoris Laetitia* as well as the integral intersection of pastoral and dogmatic theology. Francis assured the bishops that their document was not only "very good", but also that it "throughout specifies the meaning of Chapter Eight of *Amoris Laetitia*."

The same cannot be said for Mr. Arroyo who is clearly uncomfortable with both the pope and the Argentine episcopate. He decided to embrace his guests warmly while employing innuendo to demean the Holy Father. He referred to his two guests as the "Papal Posse" as if the pope were some type of fugitive being hunted for bounty. Together, they concocted a distorted and twisted case against the pope and the bishops, resorting to worn-out misinterpretation, partial information, and faulty cross references.

The three present the pope as a man deviating from traditional Catholic teaching about marriage, divorce and civil unions by comparing his work with that of Pope John Paul II, especially [*Familiaris Consortio*](#), which they claim, Francis has deviated from.

Arroyo initiates the conversation with his guests by quoting the bishops' guidelines (the entire text of the Bishops ten guidelines can be [cross referenced here](#)). He excludes, however, vital and critical information necessary to properly interpret and assess the document, ***information that would throw his own distorted interpretation into jeopardy***. He does not start at the beginning but half way into the document, after ignoring guidelines one to four he begins with partial quotes taken from guidelines five and six.

Before looking at the bishop's guidelines, it will help to point out that the disputed paragraphs 300-308 of *Amoris Laetitia* begin with the following words that demonstrate the pope intends to remain within the bounds of traditional Catholic teaching on the matter:

*"Priests have the duty to "accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to **understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church and the guidelines of the bishop**" (para 300).*

Clearly, the whole issue of divorce and remarriage must conform to the "teaching of the Church. Further, in paragraph 304 Pope Francis states:

"This discernment (to live together under the conditions just stated and perhaps others) can NEVER prescind from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church... THESE ATTITUDES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR AVOIDING THE GRAVE DANGER OF MISUNDERSTANDINGS, such as the notion that any priest can quickly grant "exceptions", or that some people can obtain sacramental privileges in exchange for favours" (para

In other words, whatever follows must adhere to the constant teaching of the Church and this adherence is essential for *“avoiding the grave danger of misunderstanding”*. No priest can *“grant an exception”* to the dogmatic truths of the faith.

Amoris Laetitia cannot be understood properly if we prescind from the above statements; they help the reader realize that any pastoral discussion that follows in the text must adhere to Church teaching; of this the pope is fully cognizant.

Without its introductory orientation, the document cannot be read properly; it sets the tone for what follows. The same caveat applies to the Argentine Bishop's Guidelines. For example, before jumping into the Articles, it is necessary to know what prompted the bishops to draft them, what is their purpose and their end? According to the bishops themselves, they drafted the guidelines to:

“...encourage the growth of love between spouses and to motivate the youth to opt for marriage and a family.”

In other words, the primary purpose is promoting the sanctity of marriage; it is less about divorced and remarried as it is about the beauty and sanctity of marriage and the choice to marry. Then the bishops proceed to open the door to Divine Mercy calling to mind the very special time of mercy the Jesus has granted to His Church.

“Francis has opened several doors in pastoral care for families and we are invited to leverage this time of mercy with a view to endorsing, as a pilgrim Church, the richness offered by the different chapters of this Apostolic Exhortation.”

Strangely, Arroyo ignores this invitation to mercy.

Ironically, [EWTN is a leading promoter of Divine Mercy](#), at least it use to be.

The Argentine bishops proceed to explain that *Amoris Laetitia* is intended to help priests in their difficult work of “pastoral care for families.” Clearly the guidelines are intended to aid pastoral discernment. Although they flow from objective universal principles, they are not not dogmatic pronouncements.

Contrary to what we will hear from Arroyo, the bishops inform their clergy up front, that receiving the sacraments is not a matter of gaining permission; it is a matter of penitent couples discerning their walk with Christ accompanied by their pastor who is expected to guide them as a good shepherd by taking time to know them and to provide them with ongoing spiritual direction.

“Firstly, we should remember that it is not advisable to speak of “permissions” to have access to sacraments, but of a discernment process in the company of a pastor. It is a “personal and pastoral discernment” (para 300).

It is difficult to appreciate and understand the document and guidelines without this information, yet Arroyo seems to consciously ignore it. His report blatantly discards the intent of the guidelines: to bring parishioners into a closer relationship with their Lord, Jesus Christ, and each other (especially in the Eucharist) – this is the primary role of a pastor, a role that is often neglected for more mundane business and temporal affairs.

“In this path, the pastor should emphasize the fundamental proclamation, the kerygma, so as to foster or renew a personal encounter with the living Christ.”

The idea is not to simply grant permission to receive the sacraments or to deny them. Positive or negative, the whole purpose of the whole process is to bring people into union with Christ, and each other, no matter where they are or might

be; sinners are called to repentance and this involves a relationship not a simple “yes you may” or “no you may not”.

Perhaps if Arroyo had meditated on guideline three rather than ignoring it, he might have been able to correctly interpret the rest of the document, but Arroyo ignores guideline three as he ignored one and two and then four.

Guideline Three

*“This itinerary requires the pastoral charity of the priest who receives the penitent, listens to him/her attentively and shows him/her the maternal face of the Church, **while also accepting his/her righteous intention and good purpose to devote his/her whole life to the light of the Gospel and to practice charity (cf. 306).**”*

These is essential information that cannot be ignored “*without avoiding the grave danger of misunderstanding*”. This type of pertinent information is ignored by ideologues so as to create misinformation and spread confusion. A couple must be willing to devote their entire lives to the light of the Gospel; **no where does the document say that adulterous people may be permitted to the sacraments, as the “Posse” claims it does.**

What *Amoris Laetitia* explicitly states is that couples must *sincerely* repent and seek spiritual growth, just like the rest of the members of the Body of Christ.

The Eucharist is as much Bread for the sick as it is Food for the righteous. As with any sinner, and the Church is full of them, the divorced-remarried couple might fall, but they then must get up and move ever closer to the Lord becoming ever stronger by reception of the sacraments, which strengthen them in God’s mercy and love to be able to live their resolve. Because divorce and remarriage is generally accepted as “normal” as with other types of sin, such as homosexuality, it is easy to understand how such couples might justify their own behavior and why pastoral care is necessary. **Pastoral care is**

not meant to condone sin; it is meant to mercifully convince sinners of their sin so that they can embrace the Gospel life and eventually receive communion.

BEFORE ANY ONE CAN BE ADMITTED TO THE EUCHARIST HE OR SHE MUST REPENT AND SINCERELY RESOLVE TO "DEVOTE HIS/HER WHOLE LIFE TO THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL."

The "Posse" has twisted the hell out of this thing. Perhaps they were too busy looking for faults to be merciful. Like blind guides, they strain at a gnat (people trying to avoid sin and live a continent life in difficult circumstances), and swallow a camel (failure to see with a heart of mercy).

Finally, the bishops point out that divorced-remarried people can and will be denied the sacraments. But if they are denied, it is good pastoral practice to include them elsewhere in the ministries of the parish (if they are trying to grow and not simply rebellious).

"This path does not necessarily finish in the sacraments; it may also lead to other ways of achieving further integration into the life of the Church: greater presence in the community, participation in prayer or reflection groups, engagement in ecclesial services, etc. (cf. 299)."

Clearly, the pope and bishops are conveying to their priests that this is not a *carte blanche* ticket to the sacraments, that they will have to often say no, but even then, they should act as good and wise pastors.

Arroyo and the "Papal Posse" left all of these guidelines out of their supposedly scholarly and objective scrutiny.

WHAT DID THEY SAY AND HOW DID THEY MISREPRESENT HIM?

Arroyos begins his presentation by *partially* quoting Articles

Five and Six:

“When the concrete circumstances of a couple make it feasible, especially when both are Christians with a journey of faith, it is possible to propose that they make the effort of living in continence.”

He then omits the following text:

*“Whenever feasible depending on the specific circumstances of a couple, **especially when both partners are Christians walking the path of faith**, a proposal may be made to resolve to live in continence. *Amoris laetitia* does not ignore the difficulties arising from this option and offers the possibility of having access to the sacrament of Reconciliation if the partners fail in this purpose” (cf. footnote 364, Recalling the Letter that Saint John Paul II sent to Cardinal W. Baum, dated 22 March, 1996).*

A proposal to live in continence is to be made “depending on the particular circumstances”, especially when both partners are Christians (that is, not always). *Amoris Laetitia*, recognizes that this proposal will be attended by many difficulties (falls), which the pastor must be willing to lead the couple through. Moreover, they must avail themselves of the sacrament of Reconciliation, as the Church has always taught (nothing new here, but neglected by Arroyo). The “Posse” also neglects the footnote from the letter composed by Saint John Paul II to Cardinal Baum cited above. In that letter, which the Argentine bishops include in their guidelines approved and applauded by Pope Francis, Pope John Paul II states:

“It is also self-evident that the accusation of sins must include the serious intention not to commit them again in the future. If this disposition of soul is lacking, there really is no repentance: this is in fact a question of moral evil as

such, and so not taking a stance opposed to a possible moral evil would mean not detesting evil, not repenting. But as this must stem above all from sorrow for having offended God, so the intention of not sinning must be based on divine grace, which the Lord never fails to give anyone who does what he can to act honestly” ([From a Letter that Pope John Paul II sent to Cardinal W. Baum, March, 22, 1996](#)).

Clearly, Pope Francis and the bishops understand that there must be true repentance along with the intention of not sinning, which are necessary for the outpouring of divine grace. In other words, God is a healer who wants to administer the balm of grace, but will not do so unless there is true honesty accompanied by true repentance and firm resolve to defeat sin. These are necessary conditions for all divorced and remarried couples to receive the Eucharist; nothing new here, but misrepresented by Arroyo. Nothing new here except the pastoral dimension and outreach to all divorced-remarried couples not just those with an annulment. Annulment or not, all such couples must meet these basic guidelines, guidelines that Arroyo happened to somehow miss in his haste to vilify the pope.

By the time we arrive at Article Six, would the reader be surprised to learn that Arroyo fails to mention vital information. According to him, Article Six states:

“If one arrives at the recognition that in their particular case, there are limitations that diminish responsibility and culpability particularly to the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. “

Article Six does state this, but it also states more that Arroyo failed to mention; it states that:

“If it is acknowledged that, in a concrete case, there are limitations that mitigate responsibility and culpability

especially when a person believes he/she would incur a subsequent fault by harming the children of the new union, Amoris laetitia offers the possibility of having access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist."

The bishops demonstrate that there are cases that mitigate the responsibility of not separating, when for example, the divorced-remarried couple have children of their own. Separating could be a sin against their own children. In such a case, if they sincerely repent, resolve to devote themselves to Christ and live in continence, they might be admitted to the Eucharist after receiving spiritual direction and first going to confession.

Of course, Arroyo might have difficulty making his case that Pope Francis is allowing adulterous couples to receive Holy Communion if he included this information. Quite simply, a couple living together in continence having sincerely given themselves to spiritual growth and union with Christ are not an "adulterous couple" anymore; they are simply a couple living together because of the mitigating circumstances of their children, which almost demands that they live together.

They are not "adulterous" just because some people in the community might think so. It is necessary to avoid this scandal by their own witness, or some unique way in which the information is communicated.

At this point, as can be seen in the video below, Arroyo asks Mr. Royal what he makes of the partial quote given him by Arroyo. Royal states that he does not know what to make of it. Perhaps if he were given the entire statement he could figure it out.

Worst of all, Royal has the effrontery to claim that:

"In one way we finally do have an explicit statement on the part of the Holy Father that there are – maybe very few – but there are some cases where people are divorced and remarried

involving active sexual lives – what use to be called ‘living in adulterous relationship – that they can receive communion’ (2:20 in video).

This is an absolutely ridiculous and false statement; no where in the document do the bishops or the pope say anything remotely close to this nefarious nonsense. Pope Francis and the Argentine bishops have made it abundantly clear: There are a few cases where divorced and remarried couples can licitly live together, such as the case to care for their children and see to their proper upbringing. However, they must also be invited to spiritual growth by their pastor, accept the invitation, repent, sincerely resolve to live in continence and go to confession before being admitted to Eucharist. This is in fact what the bishops and pope wrote, what they teach and what they profess, to say anything else is a gross distortion.

POPE FRANCIS’ RESPONSE

In his letter of reply to the Argentine Bishops Pope Francis states:

“May the Lord reward this effort of pastoral charity. And it is precisely pastoral charity that drives us to go out to meet the strayed, and, once they are found, to initiate a path of acceptance, discernment and reinstatement in the ecclesial community.

“We know this is tiring, it is “hand-to-hand” pastoral care which cannot be fully addressed with programmatic, organizational or legal measures, even if these are also necessary. It simply entails accepting, accompanying, discerning, reinstating.”

The pope realizes the authentic pastoral work is an extremely difficult task requiring the ability to discern each unique situation, to make prudential judgments, to be patient, to pray, sacrifice and give oneself as a good shepherd for the flock. This is what Francis desires of Christ's priests, more than anything else.

Before the interview ends, Arroyo has to set up Father Murray. Responding to Arroyo's ridiculous questions: How do we know anything is settled when we don't even know what was said?, "What does that mean?", Father Murray responds:

*"The Pope has made it absolutely clear that in his opinion and his way of looking at things, that **there are circumstances that people might find themselves in in which they can continue to live in an adulterous relationship and at the same time receive communion**" (3:50 in video).*

"So we are basically at a loggerheads here. One pope says you have to live continence if you are in an invalid marriage, if you want to receive the sacraments, and now Pope Francis is saying in some circumstances that is not necessary" (4:28).

Given what the document clearly states, it is difficult to comprehend how Father Murray can come to such a conclusion. **Divorced-remarried couples who follow the above guidelines can continue to live in a relationship, but it can no longer be an adulterous relationship.**

[Please read the Argentine document yourself](#) after finishing this article and see if you agree with the Posse. The two popes are not at "loggerheads", they agree! Pope Francis is simply extending the universal call by the King of Mercy for an Hour of Mercy into the pastoral work of the clergy as presented in more detail, in "[Pope Francis and the Ultra Conservatives](#)."

At the conclusion of the video below, Arroyo makes the silly claim that the pope is forcing all local priests to become "little popes." This is another ridiculous claim. The pope is the universal shepherd responsible for universal dogma and

principles of the faith; it is *not* his job to make local prudential judgements and pastoral discernments; it is impossible do so. Local clergy in union with their bishops must be equipped and responsible for local decision making, for local guidance of the flocks entrusted to their care.

Only they are close enough to them, close enough to enter into significant and merciful pastoral relationships necessary to lead their people into holiness.

Thus, Pope Francis reminds the bishops that seminary education must include formation for pastoral work of the apostolate; it is equally important to dogmatic education. Clergymen must learn to be better shepherds, must learn to discern so that they can apply universal norms to particular cases, sometimes in particular ways that appear to be *illicit*, but under further investigation are in fact *licit* due to the unique pastoral circumstances known to local clergy alone.

Pope Francis and The Ultra Conservatives Continued

AS PRESENTED IN PART ONE, Pope Francis is doing his theology from an integral heart-mind unity, that is, integral dogmatic and pastoral theology. Because pastoral decision making is often “fuzzy” because it deals with “grey” matters that are not black and white, a document such as [*Amoris Laetitia*](#) , is also somewhat obtuse. Nonetheless, at every point there is an ambiguity there is also a clarification close by or previously stated in the document. Often times the ambiguity is on the

part of the reader who misses what the pope is actually saying. His method is not to write this exhortation in black or white but to leave it somewhat grey because pastoral theology is itself somewhat grey. However, for those who can see in grey, it is not overly difficult to discern what the pope is communicating.

Thus, it is necessary to put on a grey lens before proceeding to review the document.

Having done so, it should be possible to read the so-called problematic paragraphs and interpret them pastorally in order to show that they are indeed clear enough. Pope Francis' writing style is, in fact, rather ingenious; it could be argued that it is an illustrative exercise birthing pastoral thinking. That is, it is intended to induce pastoral thought in the mind of the reader, if he or she is capable and willing to engage in that type of thought rather than the simple black and white thought of dogmatic theology that many have grown accustomed to.

Most Catholics are aware of, or have heard that, the Church's approach to scripture is "Systematic". Systematic theology is uniquely Catholic theology. It means that every scripture must be interpreted in the light of all the other scriptures because scripture forms one unified whole, one body of infallible truth. No scripture should be interpreted in isolation from other scriptures. Most certainly scripture cannot be interpreted correctly if other passages are ignored or treated as if they did not exist.

This is the case with *Amoris Laetitia*. The document must be read and interpreted in its entirety not in parts, "cherry picking" difficult passages and interpreting them in isolation from the rest of the document, from points that have been made elsewhere that clarify the issue.

For example, Pope Francis specifically states:

"This discernment (to live together under the conditions just stated and perhaps others) can never prescind from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church..."

These attitudes are essential for avoiding the grave danger of misunderstandings, such as the notion that any priest can quickly grant “exceptions”, or that some people can obtain sacramental privileges in exchange for favours” (para 300).

Clearly, exceptions are infrequent and not easily given! Moreover, according to Pope Francis

“It must be said that, precisely for that reason, what is part of a practical discernment in particular circumstances cannot be elevated to the level of a rule. That would not only lead to an intolerable casuistry, but would endanger the very values which must be preserved with special care” (para 304).

As will be illustrated below, Pope Francis upholds traditional church teaching on marriage; his intent is to uphold the “very values which must be preserved with special care”. Although his pastoral theology might at first glance appear to be leading in another direction, a close and systematic read will clearly show that it does not; as he states; “it may never prescind from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church. *Amoris Laetitia* does not prescind from the Gospel. The difficult paragraphs must adhere to the perennial truths upheld by the Church according to the pope’s own statements within the document (para 300 and 304).

THE SO-CALLED DIFFICULT PARAGRAPHS (300-305)

Para 300

*“Priests have the duty to “accompany [the divorced and remarried] in helping them to **understand their situation according to the teaching of the Church** and the guidelines of the bishop... What we are speaking of is a **process of***

accompaniment (the couple is not alone) and discernment which “guides the faithful to an awareness of their situation before God. Conversation with the priest, in the internal forum, contributes to the formation of a correct judgment on what hinders the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the Church and on what steps can foster it and make it grow”

1. “Given that gradualness is not in the law itself (cf. Familiaris Consortio, 34), this discernment can never prescind from the Gospel demands of truth and charity, as proposed by the Church... These attitudes are essential for avoiding the grave danger of misunderstandings, such as the notion that any priest can quickly grant “exceptions”, or that some people can obtain sacramental privileges in exchange for favours.”

Actually, the entire dilemma is solved right here. Francis clearly states that in helping divorced and remarried understand their situation, priests must do so **“according to the teaching of the Church”**. He is concerned about the establishment of a relationship so that there can actually be a **“process of accompaniment and discernment”** necessary to **“guide the faithful”** to the truth of their situation as they stand before God. It is due to such a close bond between priest and couple that it becomes possible to eventually form a “correct judgement” , a correct judgement that is highly unlikely unless a relationship exists in which a priest pastor is guiding a couple to the truth about their relationship before God, how to improve it, and what steps can be taken to obtain fuller participation in the life of the Church – a judgmental attitude practically makes all of this impossible.

Para 301

“For an adequate understanding of the possibility and need of

special discernment in certain “irregular” situations, one thing must always be taken into account, **lest anyone think that the demands of the Gospel are in any way being compromised. The Church possesses a solid body of reflection concerning mitigating factors and situations.** Hence it is no longer **simply** (automatically) be said that **all** those in any “**irregular situation**” are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace. More is involved here than mere ignorance of the rule (which is as mitigating circumstance-but there are other more detailed and better ones). A subject may know full well the rule, yet have **great difficulty in understanding** “its inherent values” or be in a concrete situation which does not allow him or her to act differently and decide otherwise without further sin (for example not being able to live singly and afford taking care of the children thus sending them to public school because the Catholic school is not affordable or because a father figure is needed due to family alienation coupled with living in a crime ridden neighborhood.)

Because it is clear that there are mitigating circumstances such as fear, duress, ignorance etc. there is room for mitigation in the case of the divorced and remarried.

“That servant who knew his master’s will but did not make preparations nor act in accord with his will shall be beaten severely; and the servant who was **ignorant** of his master’s will but acted in a way deserving of a severe beating **shall be beaten only lightly**. Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more” ([Luke 12:47-48](#)).

An irregular situation is not necessarily a sinful situation. In fact, Saint Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary lived in a highly “irregular situation”; could they receive Holy Communion?

An unmarried couple or a couple married civilly might be living in continence or earnestly striving to overcome their physical attraction – it does happen. Francis' point, I believe, is that continence is more likely to be achieved to the extent that the couple shares a close relationship with a priest and participates in the life of the Church as long as they are committed to improving and striving to do so including regular confession, prayer and penance.

Para 302

*“The Catechism of the Catholic Church clearly mentions these factors: “imputability and responsibility for an action can be diminished or even nullified by **ignorance, inadvertence, duress, fear, habit, inordinate attachments, and other psychological or social factors**” (that inhibit a free decision necessary for a “human act” versus “an act of man” – a human act requires both knowledge and willful consent, an act of man is an act done by a human but under compulsion without a free will or with a free will but in ignorance). In another paragraph, the Catechism refers once again to circumstances which mitigate moral responsibility, and mentions at length “**affective immaturity, force of acquired habit, conditions of anxiety** or other psychological or social factors that lessen or even extenuate moral culpability. Under certain circumstances people find it very difficult to act differently. Therefore, while upholding a general rule, it is necessary to recognize that responsibility with respect to certain actions or decisions is not the same in all cases.”*

Francis is merely pointing out the more common mitigating factors, but he is not excusing anyone; they are still “responsible” for their actions and decisions; however, before any black and white judgments are made, mitigating factors should be considered and if applicable, applied.

Para 303

“Naturally, every effort should be made to encourage the development of an enlightened conscience, formed and guided by the responsible and serious discernment of one’s pastor, and to encourage an ever greater trust in God’s grace. Yet conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal. In any event, let us recall that this discernment is dynamic; it must remain ever open to new stages of growth and to new decisions which can enable the ideal to be more fully realized.”

An “enlightened conscience” must be sought and its chance of occurring is greatly increased when a priest is present and able to act as a spiritual guide. The pastor can help a couple recognize and cooperate with God’s grace to become consistently better. It is not enough to tell a couple that they do not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel and then leave them – that is a black and white dogmatic judgment, not a loving pastoral one. Pastoral care begins when a priest discerns the situation and if after discerning it he does make such a judgement, he is in a position to now help educate and form the consciences of the couple before him. It is too easy to merely say you are sinning and cannot receive the sacraments – this is not love!

Para 304

“I earnestly ask that we always recall a teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas and learn to incorporate it in our pastoral discernment: “Although there is necessity in the general

*principles, the more we descend to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter defects (in the head it is all perfect but not in reality)... In matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all, as to matters of detail, but only as to the general principles; and where there is the same rectitude in matters of detail, it is not equally known to all... The principle will be found to fail, according as we descend further into detail. **It is true that general rules set forth a good which can never be disregarded or neglected, but in their formulation they cannot provide absolutely for all (Summa Theologiae, I-II, q. 94, art. 4.236) particular situations.***"

Now, appealing to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Pope Francis is appealing to perhaps the all time favorite of the ultra-conservative crowd (one of my own too). The pope is simply making the point that was iterated in Part One about pastoral and dogmatic theology, speculative and practical thought and the necessity of fusing heart and mind in decision making. It is clear that Pope Francis knows what he is talking about, he is the Vicar of Christ after-all. Quoting Aquinas, he clearly states that "**general rule, principle or truth can *never be disregarded.***"

HOW MUCH CLEARER CAN IT GET?

However, in their particular "*formulation*" or application, general rules are no longer universal. This is not the pope's opinion; it is the constant teaching of Aristotelian Philosophy and Scholastic Theology. Aquinas' "[*Treatise on Man*](#)" (the human soul) and "Aristotle's "[*De Anima*](#)" are tough reading, perhaps this helps explain why some ultra-conservatives do not get it. Nonetheless, the issue is clear and the pope has firm grasp of metaphysics and the essence, powers and operations of the human soul a highly abstract and difficult intellectual attainment; few come away having mastered it like the pope has.

PARA 304 Continued

“At the same time, it must be said that, precisely for that reason, what is part of a practical discernment in particular circumstances cannot be elevated to the level of a rule. That would not only lead to an intolerable casuistry, but would endanger the very values which must be preserved with special care.”

Again, Pope Francis is simply correct, a particular practical discernment cannot be elevated to the level of a general rule, to the level of an absolute truth or an ontological judgement. This again is proof enough that he does *not* condone illicit relationships. No matter how great a particular mitigating circumstance might be, it can never replace the general truth given by Christ to man in both the natural and divine laws. **If a licit mitigating circumstance cannot rise to the level of a general truth then certainly the licit but potentially illicit behavior that it makes acceptable can never rise to the level of a general truth – that would “endanger the very values which must be preserved with special care.”** The pope is saying so much clearly right here – why all the confusion? Pope Francis is in absolute support of the truth and demonstrates it to wise and loving eyes that can look and see. In fact, he even states that the very truths and “values” that we hold dear *“must be preserved with special care.”* He is not excusing sin; he is mercifully and pastorally guiding souls to the best of his ability within the objective parameters of the law, stretching it to its horizontal bounds as Christ spread His arms on the cross.

Para 305

“For this reason, a pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws to those living in “irregular” situations, as if they were stones to throw at people’s lives. This would bespeak the closed heart of one used to

hiding behind the Church's teachings, "sitting on the chair of Moses and judging at times with superiority and superficiality difficult cases and wounded families". **Let us remember that "a small step** (like having the couple sleep in separate rooms) (making a house rule and vowing to stick to it) (vowing that they will always be fully dressed in front of each other; agreeing to have separate rooms etc.) **in the midst of great human limitations, can be more pleasing to God than a life which appears outwardly in order, but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties"** (that is, a life where everything is in order and abundantly provided for. One might be a life fully screwed up, dysfunctional family, unformed conscience, the whole thing, the other hardly a care). The practical pastoral care of ministers and of communities must not fail to embrace this reality."

FOOTNOTE THAT GOES WITH PARA 305:

"In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments. Hence, "I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber, but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy" (Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [24 November 2013], 44: AAS 105 [2013], 1038). I would also point out that the Eucharist "is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" (*ibid.*, 47: 1039)."

Christ is merciful, so merciful that he wants to excuse sinners. He did not come to condemn them but to forgive them. To the extent that a couple feels love and compassion coming at them from the Church community, they are all the more likely to open up and cooperate with their pastor. Of course, the pope is presuming that "small steps" in difficult situations are being made, that confession is taking place, and people are making a real effort to improve – like a

penitent homosexual trying to refrain from illicit relationships and going to confession, he or she might backslide, in fact, falls are expected. But to the extent that they are sincere, penitent and really trying, to that extent the mercy of God is showered over them, communion is denied to no one who has confessed and is sincerely trying to live a proper life.

Thus, Cardinal Ratzinger taught

*“If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that **objectively contravenes God’s law**. Consequently, they cannot receive Holy Communion as long as this situation persists. ... The faithful who persist in such a situation **may receive Holy Communion only after obtaining sacramental absolution** ... when for serious reasons, for example, for the children’s upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, **they take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence**, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples.”*

Pope John Paul II stated the same:

*“Reconciliation in the sacrament of Penance which would open the way to the Eucharist, can only be granted to those who, repenting of having broken the sign of the Covenant and of fidelity to Christ, are **sincerely ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradiction to the indissolubility of marriage**. This means, in practice, that when, for serious reasons, such as for example the children’s upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they **“take on themselves the duty to live in complete continence**, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples” ([Familiaris Consortio, 84](#)).*

Pope Francis, Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI all agree; civilly remarried divorcees must go to confession and strive

to be chaste (in mind and body) and have a valid and compelling reason for living together that precludes sexual encounter.

A priest leading people this way is exercising real pastoral care. **Sins are not being excused; sinners are being healed.**

Penitents are being chastised, but they are being chastised by wisdom in mercy and love.

These situations present real pastoral moments that should be cherished, moments that bring people closer to Christ and to His Church while at the same time gently putting discipline into the lives of penitent sinners in the context of mercy and love. If they fall, as expected they will, they are to be corrected, forgiven, and encouraged to take up the cross again. According to tradition, even Jesus fell three times and He told us to forgive [seventy seven times](#). He knows we all will fall, so why are we upset when a divorced and re-married couple fail at chastity when they are sincerely trying to attain it? More specifically, why is anyone upset when a divorced-remarried couple for the sake of the children vow to live with each other in chastity, frequent confession, regularly pray and sacrifice under the direction of a pastor who is leading them to spiritual perfection because they love and trust him who first showed mercy and compassion to them while gently guiding them and progressively leading them to the fullness of truth and communion?