

# 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.