

Intelligence Report One: The Blessed Virgin Mary – Error on Both Sides of the Theological Spectrum

[New Era World News](#)

THERE HAS BEEN MUCH CONFUSION about the Virgin Mary, Fatima, and Her requested consecration of Russia and its subsequent conversion. Confusion is not a gift or fruit of the Holy Spirit; the Spirit is manifest in love and peace ([1 Corinthians 14:33](#), [Galatians 5:22](#)). Interestingly, the confusion has not come from outside the church, but from within, from extremists on both ends of the theological spectrum: ultra-liberals and ultra-conservatives. This is to be expected; false ideas are advanced by creating polar opposites that vie with each other giving the appearance that truth must be on one side or the other, when in fact, it is on neither. Because both perceive and focus on the error in the other, they remain incapable seeing their own.

“Why seest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye; and seest not the beam that is in thy own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam in thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” ([Matthew 7: 3-5](#)).

For example, a false idea such as *materialism* is advanced by opposing (apparently) antithetical ideas such as *atheistic communism* and *hedonistic capitalism*. What many people fail to realize is that **each of these is a form of materialism**, materialism that is advanced by placing them in opposition to each other and by making them somewhat attractive by filling

each with certain elements of the truth that are appealing to different types of people. Communism was forwarded by advocating justice for the working class, social cooperation, brotherhood, and economic equality. It was juxtaposed to capitalism that promoted private property, individual competition, frugality, and economic merit.

The positive elements of one appear excellent when placed in juxtaposition to the negative elements of the other, negative elements that ideologues of each fail to see or endeavor to conceal. The virtues of private property stand out when compared to economic sterility of communal property. The virtues of economic justice and universal employment stand out when juxtaposed to unemployment and worker exploitation etc. Both contain enough elements of truth to be attractive, but also contain disguised elements of error that make them detrimental. The negative elements in one position are avoided by focusing attention on the negative elements in the other.

Communists miss the negatives about communal property because they are so focused on the negatives of unregulated private property. Conversely, proponents of unregulated private property miss its short comings by over-focusing on the negative aspects of communal ownership. To further exacerbate the matter, other solutions or alternative world views are kept out of the discussion such that a person is forced to choose between two believing that they are the only viable solutions. Thus, no matter which way a person chooses, he or she will end up in error because both alternatives are flawed.

If this article does *not* seem to be about Fatima, Russia, and the Era of Peace, bear with the author, it is.

Lech Walesa, the past president and leader of Solidarity in Poland recognized this sociological verity in his autobiography, "*A Way of Hope*" in which he stated that prior to his meeting with the Primate of Poland, Cardinal

Stefan Wyszyński, Walesa thought there were only two solutions to the social problem, *i.e.*, communism versus capitalism. However, after speaking with the primate, he became aware of a new third way, a way he had never heard of before, "Solidarity" or Catholic Social Teaching.

As indicated above, **communism and capitalism are both different forms of materialism** – the one being ***atheistic materialism*** and the other, ***hedonistic materialism***. Because both are forms of materialism, neither is true. But proponents of each believe their own version to be true while representing the other as false, when in fact, both are false.

Saint Padre Pio, like Lech Walesa after his meeting with the primate, knew of a third way. Thus, when asked about communism and capitalism, Pio gave an unexpected response in which he stated that they are both "indescribably evil":

In the East they deny God from the head to the belly button (atheistic materialism or scientific socialism) while in the West they deny God from the belly button to the feet (hedonistic materialism or sexual, organs-pleasure).

To advance a false idea, such as materialism, the idea must be masked behind partial truths set in contra-distinction to a competing ideology. The advance of Capitalism was aided by continually alluding to the evils of Communism. Conversely, Communism advanced by continually pointing out the abuses of Capitalism. **No matter which one is the victor, materialism, a false idea, advances.** The two are juxtaposed, when in fact both are gravely erroneous and detrimental to human well being.

The situation is similar in the church. Two appealing but false ideas, schismatic ultra-liberalism and schismatic ultra-conservatism vie for loyalties. Each presents itself as sacrosanct and the other as unholy WHEN IN FACT BOTH ARE UNHOLY AND MEANT TO DISTURB AUTHENTIC GROWTH IN THE BODY OF

CHRIST. People line up to take either one of apparently two sides; an irreverent *Novos Ordo* Mass assisted by clowns and belly dancers or a reverent Tridentine Mass celebrated by schismatic clerics; head-veils or no veils, altar girls or altar boys, communion in the hands or on the tongue, priest facing the congregation or *ad orientem*, holding hands during the *Pater Noster* or standing singly etc. Interestingly, both can appear to be true and holy depending upon which lens a person is looking through. A dissenting liberal who disdains the coldness of an ultra-conservative misses his or her own schism. A dissenting ultra-conservative aghast at the irreverence of altar clowns and the schism of liberal nuns misses his or her own schism.

What they both miss is the authentic nature of the reform initiated by Vatican II. The conservative looks at altar clowns and, thinking that they are integral to the reform, falsely rejects the reform. The liberal, on the the hand, looks at the individualistic components of the Tridentine Mass and embraces the exaggerated communal dimensions of a false reform. Both miss the authentic reform intended by the Council Fathers. Neither side has correctly evaluated the reform; both sides miss their error by focusing on, and constantly complaining about, whatever displeases them on the other side. **The truth is, the authentic reform (the third way) intended by the Council has not yet been realized.** This led Saint John Paul II to bequeath the future implementation of the Council to the next generation in his "[Last Will and Testament](#)":

"Being on the threshold of the Third Millennium "in medio Ecclesiae," I wish once again to express gratitude to the Holy Spirit for the great gift of Vatican Council II, to which together with the whole Church – and above all with the entire episcopate – I feel indebted. I am convinced that once again and for a long time it will be given to the new generations to draw from the riches that this Council of the

20th century has lavished."

*"As a Bishop who has participated in the conciliar event from the first to the last day, **I wish to entrust this great treasure to all those who are or will be in the future called to realize it.** For my part, I thank the eternal Pastor who allowed me to serve this great cause in the course of all the years of my pontificate."*

Liberal Catholics tend to view things through the lens of progressive pastoral theology. Although necessary, as Pope Francis keeps pointing out, pastoral theology rooted in extreme affect of the heart and divorced from the dogmatic truths of the faith is a dangerous thing. Conservative Catholics, such as Cardinal Burke, tend to view things through the lens of traditional dogmatic theology leading to a disdain for affective modernism and an over-emphasis on intellectual virtue culminating in wisdom – a zeal for wisdom divorced from the theological requirements of charity.

The truth is that neither is correct (each is only partly correct); man is an integral being. Head and Heart, love and wisdom, must function together as an integral unity if there is to be an authentic expression of Catholicism. **Wisdom, no matter how great a good** (Aristotle even referred to it as the *Summum Bonum* – the greatest of all goods) **is deficient without Love.** In fact, wisdom is not only incomplete without love, it is inferior to love – it is meant to be consummate in love:

"IF I speak with the tongues of men, and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have

not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

*“Charity never falleth away: whether prophecies shall be made void, or tongues shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away... Now I know in part; but then I shall know even as I am known. And now there remain faith, hope, and charity, these three: but **the greatest of these is charity**” ([1 Corinthians 13: 1-13](#)).*

Like Communists and Capitalists, Ultra-Conservative Catholics and Ultra-Liberal Catholics each prosper by attacking the other, to the detriment of the Church. One emphasizes wisdom, the other love. The problem is that their cannot be authentic love without wisdom (garnered either by reason or faith or preferably both) and there cannot be authentic wisdom without love. Just as there cannot be true moral virtue without the integral presence of all four cardinal virtues; there cannot be true theological virtue without the presence of faith, hope, and love. **There are many counterfeit loves and counterfeit wisdoms corrupted by self-love and pride of life that manifest themselves in disobedience.**

Since schismatic ultra-liberalism and ultra-conservatism are both inauthentic expressions of true integral Catholicism, **their error (that is-the error in both) is detected by disobedience to ecclesial authority** – Ultras show their true color when it comes to obedience to authentic church teachings, which both sides twist and contort while hiding behind an assumed veil of feigned holiness or a veil of feigned love, a veil of reverence and piety or of evangelization by being a cool dude. Liberals, like Judas, hide behind the veil of helping and loving the poor. Ultra-

conservatives hide, like Jansenists, behind the veil of piety. We know what happened to Judas and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the faith exposes the veil of piety assumed by schismatic ultra-traditionalists:

According to the Holy Office: ["We must resist error even when it masquerade as piety."](#)

Scripture tells us the same; it also reveals how to spot error – error cannot hide forever behind a masquerade of piety nor can it hide behind ersatz love like Judas hid behind the purse whose contents he spent on himself. Both, supposedly antithetical errors, are revealed in the lack of peace, the tranquility of spirit that comes forth from wisdom and love nurtured by humility **and obedience**:

*"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 (ultra-conservatives) and good words (ultra-liberals), seduce the hearts of the innocent. **For your obedience is published in every place**. I rejoice therefore in you (not in them who are disobedient). But I would have you to be wise in good, and simple in evil. And the **God of peace crush Satan** under your feet speedily. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you" ([Romans 16: 17-20](#)).*

It is really quite simple: Those causing dissension by masquerading in piety while questioning the teaching authority of the Church and those causing dissension by masquerading in love but who in reality are serving their "own bellies" in fun and parties, these, both these, seduce the innocent *albeit* in diverse ways. **As communism and capitalism are both manifestations of materialism, schismatic ultra-liberalism and ultra-conservatism are both manifestations of dissension manifest in disobedience.** Sons and daughters of the Church are

not to be misled by the good deeds of others if they are done for selfish purposes, to be noticed and praised; nor are they to be fooled by outstanding intellectual speeches full of learning and apparent wisdom. How is anyone to know when a teaching is false or a deed is a counterfeit? Simple – if those who perform apparent good deeds and teach apparent wisdom cause dissension and are disobedient to the true shepherds of the flock.

The test on both sides – ultra-conservative and ultra-liberal – is peace manifest in a bond of unity and obedience.

Because there are so many problems in the modern world, gender confusion, homo-sexuality, disrespect, abortion, pornography etc. etc. it is easy to be down on the modern world. This is the strong card of the traditionalists: discontent with modernism and the ability to quote popes and encyclicals such as [Pope St. Pius X, Pascendi Dominici Gregis](#), Pope Pius IX, [Qui Pluribus](#) and the [Syllabus of Errors](#) and many other papal and church documents that condemn modernism and apparently confirm their position. Since Vatican II does not join them in their enthusiasm for condemnation of the modern world and instead follows the counsel of Saint Paul to “become all things to all men with the view of winning them to Christ, they reject Vatican II:

*“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, (whereas I was not without the law of God, but was in the law of Christ,) 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.** And I do all things for the gospel’s sake: that I may be made partaker thereof” ([1 Corinthians 9: 20-23](#)).*

Instead of stooping and becoming *all things to all*, schismatic traditionalist elitists tend to critique and criticize. When they are not joined in this endeavor by the bishops and Supreme Pontiff they then tend to dissent and then to name call even at times refusing to attend a Novus Ordo Mass. More and more they become self-righteous and then blame all the error they observe on the failure of the shepherds to correct the flock with a rod of iron. failing to realize that it is mercy that God wants not sacrifice they become very judgmental:

“Go then and learn what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners” ([Matt 9:13](#)).

If they understood this, the sacrifices that they make would be sacrifices out of love for the sins of those whom they abhor. **This is reparation sacrifice, the type of sacrifice most pleasing to God that Our Lady requested at Fatima and that Our Lord offered on the Cross.** If a person fasts and sacrifices exclusively for themselves, they have the wrong idea; fasting is a discipline and a form of charity. Properly understood, it is conducted as a discipline of the passions so that one might better serve God and neighbor. **Fasting is a means not an end – a means to better service and higher expressions of love.** Once the passions have been mastered, fasting becomes a form of love for others as do all other types of reparation acts and prayers. **A person genuinely advancing in the spiritual life will *not* be characterized by criticism of others but by love of others and a willingness to embrace the cross for them when they are too weak or ignorant to do it for themselves.** Anyone getting pumped on the idea that they fast and pray, or are smarter than others, is being infected with counterfeit ideas leading to pride and eventually to disobedience and then schism.

If not careful, the justice that many ultra-conservatives

clamor after and decree for others will be the justice they will receive for themselves. Slowly, such people tend to move away from unity with their bishops and become infallible authorities themselves thinking it a little matter to correct and teach the bishops and even the pope himself whom they deem a “heretic”.

Pope Francis, whom they abhor, refers to them as “legalists”; they are like pharisees whom the pope says just do not get it.

“The experience of forgiveness that embraces the whole human family is the grace that the apostolic ministry announces. The Church exists only as a tool to communicate to people the merciful plan of God. At the Council the Church felt the responsibility of being in the world as a living sign of the love of the Father... This moves the axis of the Christian conception of a certain legalism, which can be ideological...Some (think of certain replies to Amoris laetitia) still do not understand, or (want to see everything as) white or black.”

Newera agrees with the pope. The greatest reason being **that we are living in the Hour of Mercy**. The whole universe is impregnated with the echo of the Divine Logos: “Mercy-Mercy-Mercy” and of His Mother who is asking for reparation from her children for the sins of others, asking penance from those who love God for those who are steeped in sin: “Penance-Penance-Penance”. Our Lord and Our Lady are asking for love, mercy, compassion and sacrifice for sinners and the ultra-conservatives are calling for their heads, calling for punishment, divine retribution, and chastisement while the ultra-liberals are condoning their sin and often participating in it. **The pope is correct, they don’t get it;** both are disobedient and dissenters.

When this whole ultra right-left paradigm is telescoped onto the question of the Virgin Mary, two attractive but egregious

versions of the Mother of God appear. Both ultra liberals and ultra conservatives have a version of the Virgin Mary for the rest of the Church. On the liberal side we find the credulous Medjugorje crowd and on the Conservative side we find the Fatima “nuts”. Overly convinced of the rightness of their position, **both proceed to manifest their error in pride, dissension and disobedience** as will be discussed over the next few articles.

Because both ideas about our Lady are in error, the best way to advance the error is to juxtapose one to the other: liberal to conservative and conservative to liberal. **The faithful are left to choose between Ultra-Conservative Fatima know it-alls and Liberal Medjugorje do-gooders, while the authentic *Message of Fatima* gets lost amid a river of confusion**, a river hemmed in by error on either bank – the East Bank of Ultra-Conservatism or the West Bank of Ultra-Liberalism.

“And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the woman, water as it were a river; that he might cause her to be carried away by the river. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river, which the dragon cast out of his mouth” ([Revelation 12:15-16](#)).

The purpose of this Intelligence Report is to break down the river walls thereby diffusing the tumultuous flow of confusion spewing from the deceptive mouth of Satan who is a cunning liar and the Father of liars ([John 8:44](#)), liars who assist him in his furtive plan to carry the Virgin Mary away in the river of cunning deception.

End Part One

THE FULL INTELLIGENCE REPORT ON THIS TOPIC WILL BE RELEASED ON THE FIRST SATURDAY OF FEBRUARY 2017

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 prescind 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 300)*

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).**”*

There 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 can 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?

Pope Francis and the Ultra Conservatives – Francis is Right – “They Don’t Get It”

RECENTLY FOUR CARDINALS (Carlo Caffarra, Raymond Burke, Walter Brandmüller, Joachim Meisner) presented Pope Francis and Cardinal Gerhard Müller, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with a series of five questions or “*dubia*” (or *doubts*) requesting that he clarify certain sections of his recent Apostolic Exhortation, [*Amoris Laetitia*](#) (The Joy of Love) which, they claim has caused “*grave disorientation and great confusion*” in the Church.

The central issue revolves around the admissibility of divorced and remarried couples to Holy Communion. The four cardinals assert that *Amoris Laetitia* seems to contradict earlier papal teachings, specifically *Familiaris Consortio* given by Pope John Paul II. Specifically, they point out concern with Chapter Eight paragraphs 300-305, which they claim are being used by some bishops to permit divorced and remarried couples to receive the sacraments in violation of perennial Church teaching.

Pope Francis is accused of being fuzzy, unclear and dogmatically in error. The real problem really is that people who are making such allegations, for the most part, “don’t get it”.

The Church just passed through a “Year of Mercy”. Presently, the entire universe is resounding with the echo of Divine Logos: “Mercy-Mercy-Mercy” and of His Mother who is asking for reparation from her children for the sins of others, asking penance from those who love God for those who are steeped in sin. Our Lord and Our Lady are asking for love, mercy, compassion, and sacrifice for sinners while Catholic ultra-conservatives are calling for their heads, calling for punishment, divine retribution, alienation and chastisement. The pope is correct, they “don’t get it”. But neither do the ultra-liberals who make excuses for sins, condone them, militantly embrace their own sin and that of others and refuse to ask for forgiveness – they don’t get it either.

The Holy Father is the Vicar of Christ – His representative on earth. As such, he is expected to mirror the wishes, will, and desires of his King. And it is the King’s will, at this special moment of human history, that mercy be the theme of His Church, that mercy be showered over all the earth from the rising of the sun until its setting in every clime and place. Jesus, Himself, revealed to Saint Faustina that this gift of mercy is His last gift to the Church before He returns in glory as the world’s judge.

Until that time, between now and then, He desires Mercy, especially mercy for the greatest sinners. Thus, He further revealed to Saint 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."

Pope Francis is keenly aware of God's mercy and of His desire to extend it everywhere, especially toward hardened sinners. He is acting accordingly as the Vicar of Christ; he expects Catholic clergy and laity to do the same. God wants forgiveness, mercy and compassion, not judgment, severity and legalism.

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](#)).

With this Message of Mercy ingrained in mind, it is easy to unravel the confusion. We are living in an Hour of Mercy. Mercy is the universal theme of the Church being announced and lived by its universal shepherd. The pope is *not* in error; he has *not* forgotten or rejected earlier church teaching about the sanctity of marriage and the sinfulness of illicit union.

However, **he is teaching as a pastor**, as a "Good Shepherd", the good shepherd who has "come to save that which was lost", the good shepherd who leaves ninety-nine righteous people and goes in search of the one that is lost because **it is the will of the Father than none of his sheep be lost:**

"What think you? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them should go astray: doth he not leave the ninety-nine in

the mountains, and go to seek that which is gone astray? And if it so be that he find it: Amen I say to you, he rejoiceth more for that, than for the ninety-nine that went not astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” ([Matthew 18: 12-14](#))

Now, if no one goes after them, the stray and sinning sheep, but instead reject, criticize, judge and in their self-righteousness ostracize them, how are they to be saved? The pope unlike the self-righteous Pharisees who murmur, saying: [“This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them”](#), is willing to embrace a sinner with mercy and compassion; mercy and compassion are slow to judge but quick to love.

If the first thing a person does *vis a vis* a hardened sinner is judge, the relationship is over. **The quickest way to the mind is through the heart – it does not work the other way for most people**, especially people who have been conditioned by a culture of sin, by a constant barrage of propaganda and manipulation, psychological warfare by means of association etc. In such a world as this, there are many sheep gone astray and they need a shepherd. If clergy and lay evangelists act with a judgmental attitude, few will be evangelized.

Modern men and women are like sheep in desperate need of a wise and loving friend to shepherd them; however, they often remain without a shepherd because the shepherds on the extreme left are often too blinded by concupiscence and irascibility to properly lead anyone, while those on the ultra-conservative right are often too busy satisfying themselves intellectually and too judgmental to have compassion.

What is the attitude of Jesus the Good Shepherd? When He looked upon the vast throng of lost humanity, He had **COMPASSION ON THEM**” because they were lost and in agony –

being lost in deep sin is not fun!

“And seeing the multitudes, he had compassion on them: because they were distressed” ([Matthew 9:36](#)).

It was then that He said to His apostles, “[The harvest indeed is great, but the labourers are few](#)”.

Francis is acting like a good laborer in the Hour of Mercy. He is acting like St. John Bosco, a saint who did get it, a saint who reached out to the street boys, the gang-bangers, of Northern Italy and beyond when no one else, including many clergy, wanted anything to do with them – too upsetting to a comfortable life-style, too filthy to bring home – too risky to deal with – too impure to mingle with their cultural refinement. St. John Bosco had many adages, a man full of folk-wisdom. One of his many: **“The time is long, but the cure is sure”**. Dealing with sin requires time and patience, patience that grows out of love and mercy. With love, with mercy, over time healing can occur; it does not occur (in most people) by a quick intellectual fix following some sage advice from a counselor – this is for relatively advanced people, which a sinner – lost in sin – is not.

At this time in human history, a time of MERCY, the Church must do its evangelical work pastorally. To fail pastorally is to fail as a shepherd. Shepherds *pastor* sheep, they do not discuss philosophical and theological treatises with them. Clergy formation involves much detailed philosophical and theological formation and deep intellectual growth. *The proper place for this type of discussion is the seminary*. It is hoped that before a man leaves a seminary that he makes a connection between his intellectual formation and the pastoral care he must give to his sheep. Intellectual learning is intended to facilitate his work as a pastor. A college professor is *not* a pastor. Many clergy and laity, usually among the ultra-conservative, the crowd accusing Pope

Francis of heresy etc., have failed to make the transition. They act as if they were still in the seminary; instead of love, mercy and compassion for sinners they are deeply dissatisfied with the state of things and want to lecture people about their faults and especially about the faults, short-comings and theological errors of the pope and bishops; indeed they want to lecture the pope himself. Instead of seeing a soul to be saved, they see a sinner to be disciplined and a pope to be castigated for not being more severe.

Correction and discipline should and must be forthcoming, but they work better after a relationship has been established on the basis of mercy and love. In the last analysis, [love is greater than knowledge, love alone endures for eternity.](#)

Saint Francis de Sales understood this well: **“More bees are attracted by a spoonful of honey than by a barrel of vinegar.”**

Some people, for whatever reason, just do not get this – do not get the intersection of learning and knowledge with love and mercy, the intersection of dogmatic and pastoral theology, the intersection of heart and mind.

Then, infected by this inability, they proceed to read papal teachings such as *Amoris Laetitia*. Because they “don’t get it”, they approach the document as if it were an *intellectual exercise*, when in fact, it is a *pastoral exhortation*.

They just cannot put the whole thing together. Like some Protestants who cherry-pick scriptures picking passages that support their point and neglecting or ignoring others that do not support their position, they act like the others do not exist.

Practical and Speculative Intellect- Have the Clergy forgotten Their Philosophical Education?

Every priest and many lay men and women have studied

philosophy, but afterward many forget what they learned or fail to apply it to their service of others. Every priest and student of classical and scholastic philosophy has learned (or should have learned) the difference between the “speculative intellect” (SI) and the “practical intellect” (PI). In short, the SI begins its work by grasping first principles and reasoning from them to reach logical conclusions that must be accepted if the principles are true and the logic is correct (logical deduction from premise to conclusion: A-B therefore C). The PI operates differently; it is not involved in deductive logic, a purely intellectual exercise. Rather, the PI involves the intellect in its *application mode*, that is when the intellect applies truths grasped by the SI to everyday practice. The SI operates in the intellectual realm of acquired wisdom, the realm of dogmatic truths that are discovered by the intellect BEFORE they are afterward applied outside the mind to practical everyday reality, where theory must meet practice if it is to be successful. The SI operates interiorly, the PI must operate in the real exterior world. The mind and the world are two very different places.

The PI does *not* begin with logical first principles, it begins with the end or the conclusion reached by the SI as a result of reasoning to conclusions from principles, discursive logic. A logical conclusion or end is the last thing discovered by the SI, but it is the first principle of the PI, which must make prudential judgments about which means are to be chosen to reach a desired end. The human mind *necessarily ascends* to a logical conclusion derived by way of the SI, but the means derived by the PI to achieve a derived end are only probable. No one necessarily ascends to them because many other means may be discovered, some better than others, some faulty some not – no one knows for sure if the means they choose will actually result in the acquisition of the end – they are only probably sure. Thus, for the SI the end is last in the order of acquisition (the end or fruit of as long train of thought), but for the PI, the end is first in the order of operation

because without the end no one would know where they were going or how to derive means to get there.

Thus, the work of the practical intellect begins with the end and is calculative and probable while that of the SI begins with first principles to discover an end and it is rational and certain of its conclusions. That is, the SI necessarily ascends to its conclusions in order to avoid a logical contradiction. The SI begins with first principles to reach certain conclusions, but the PI begins with ends to reach probable conclusions.

For example, if after an exhaustive study of the human soul, the SI determines that human beings should pursue happiness as an end then it is up to the PI to determine just how the end of happiness should be achieved. To achieve happiness, the PI must first know what happiness is and then figure out how among a world of constant change and flux that happiness can actually be attained. Because **circumstances are always changing, what works in one time or place might *not* work in another. Even if the SI discovers necessary truths, no progress can be made toward their attainment if the PI is deficient.** Knowing that happiness is an end to be achieved is a “black and white” issue – it is clear. But knowing how to achieve happiness in a given place or time among an endless array of possibilities and constantly shifting contingencies is a very difficult exercise. It is this later that Pope Francis is concerned about; nothing is black and white in the practical realm of constantly shifting contingencies i.e., the pastoral realm. Even if a priest, or lay evangelist, is certain of the highest truths, this certainty is practically useless unless the PI is capable of making prudential judgments about how best to achieve these truths in diverse environments and among diverse people and cultures.

Clearly knowing the truth, knowing black and white dogma is necessary but insufficient for the work of evangelization, which is the major work of the Church!

Pastoral theology depends upon the PI as much as it depends on the SI, perhaps moreso. Pastors must deal with constantly changing realities and shifting situations that effect how they might or might not succeed given a set of unique circumstances. Moreover, before a practical or prudential judgement can be made, facts must be gathered, the greater the quantity and quality of the information the better. Clearly, it is a mortal sin to divorce, remarry, and receive the Eucharist. This much is black and white. However, there are subjective and mitigating circumstances that might alter the judgement if they were known.

In the case of human moral decision making, the acquisition of facts presupposes proper relationships, making prudential or practical judgments requires information and knowledge of unique circumstances. Pope Francis is coming from this perspective, the pastoral perspective of the PI, while those who are confused are coming at the question dogmatically from the black and white understanding of the SI.

The latter *only* works in the classroom, in the university or seminary where truths are being ascertained and acquired. **The real world, however, is not a place of truth acquisition, it is a place of truth implementation,** implementation of truths previously acquired in the classroom. A parish is not a seminary; it is a place of practical reality where souls must be served and saved among a constantly shifting array of unique circumstances. If a pastor fails to acquire this information because he fails at relationships, his parish will most likely fail and his sheep, will be poorly served. He cannot treat them as a pedagogue teaching theology lessons; first the heart must be reached. This requires *mercy* and *compassion*, especially in a time as far gone as the present.

Practical decisions – pastoral decisions are *not* black and white. Priests must realize that they are no longer in the seminary. Moral casuistry (application of speculative or dogmatic truths to everyday contingencies) is always probable.

While theological truths are unchanging and universal, their application is ever-changing and relative. Thou shall not kill is a black and white clear moral precept. However, what about self-defense, what about soldiers defending their country, what about the mitigating circumstances of killing in the heat of passion versus pre-meditated murder etc. Things become quite complex when the move is made from speculative black and white principles to the grey area of their application – the realm of pastoral theology.

“Some priestly formation programs run the risk of educating in the light of overly clear and distinct ideas, and therefore to act within limits and criteria that are rigidly defined ... and that set aside concrete situations.”

In short, people complaining that they are confused want everything to be black and white as Pope Francis asserts.

“In life, not everything is black over white or white over black. No! The shades of gray prevail in life. We must teach them (seminarians) to discern in this gray area” ([National Federation of Priests Councils](#)).

No one can make a practical moral judgement without first acquiring the facts of a case (the gray area). But no one can adequately acquire the facts from a person living in sin if he or she does not first dismiss and overlook many faults and repulsive behaviors, which enable him to withhold judgement and enter into a relationship necessary for the acquisition of information and to make correct assessment of the state of a soul. If instead, a priest makes snap judgments based on black and white dogmatic truths pertaining to right and wrong behavior, relationships will be strained and end prematurely, or fail to develop at all, in which case there is no hope of conversion, the very purpose of evangelization.

Many rigid ultra-conservatives are looking at Francis’

teachings through the lens of dogmatic theology rather than through the lens of mercy and compassion, pastoral theology, which is often very confusing. Unfortunately, practical pastoral decisions are rarely black and white. Dealing with divorced and remarried couples is a pastoral issue. It certainly involves the application of black and white speculative or dogmatic principles, but no case is the same; shifting circumstances require prudential insight because sometimes circumstances that appear objectively sinful might be morally licit, such as the case of divorced-remarried couples living together chastely as brother and sister. If a Christian fails to acquire practical knowledge of the facts, in this case, a chaste living arrangement, but quickly jumps to a black and white conclusion thereby condemning an innocent couple, he or she sins not only against justice, but also against charity. It is necessary to see both with the eyes of the intellect and with the eyes of the heart. One **without** the other is always deficient. **Speculative wisdom must be united to and enlightened by emotive love** because:

*“Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices **with** the truth” ([1 Corinthians 13: 4-6](#)).*

Priestly learning does not involve education alone – it involves education and formation. EDUCATION in knowledge, understanding, and wisdom, and FORMATION in self mastery, mercy and love. Without the later, priests and laity alike are “confused” and tend to see everything in “black and white.” The remedy is growth in mercy and love as Pope Francis continually stresses!

END OF PART ONE – TO BE CONTINUED

PART TWO WILL EXAMINE THE ALLEGED DIFFICULTIES WITHIN “AMORIS
LAETITIA” IN LIGHT OF WHAT WAS PRESENTED IN PART ONE