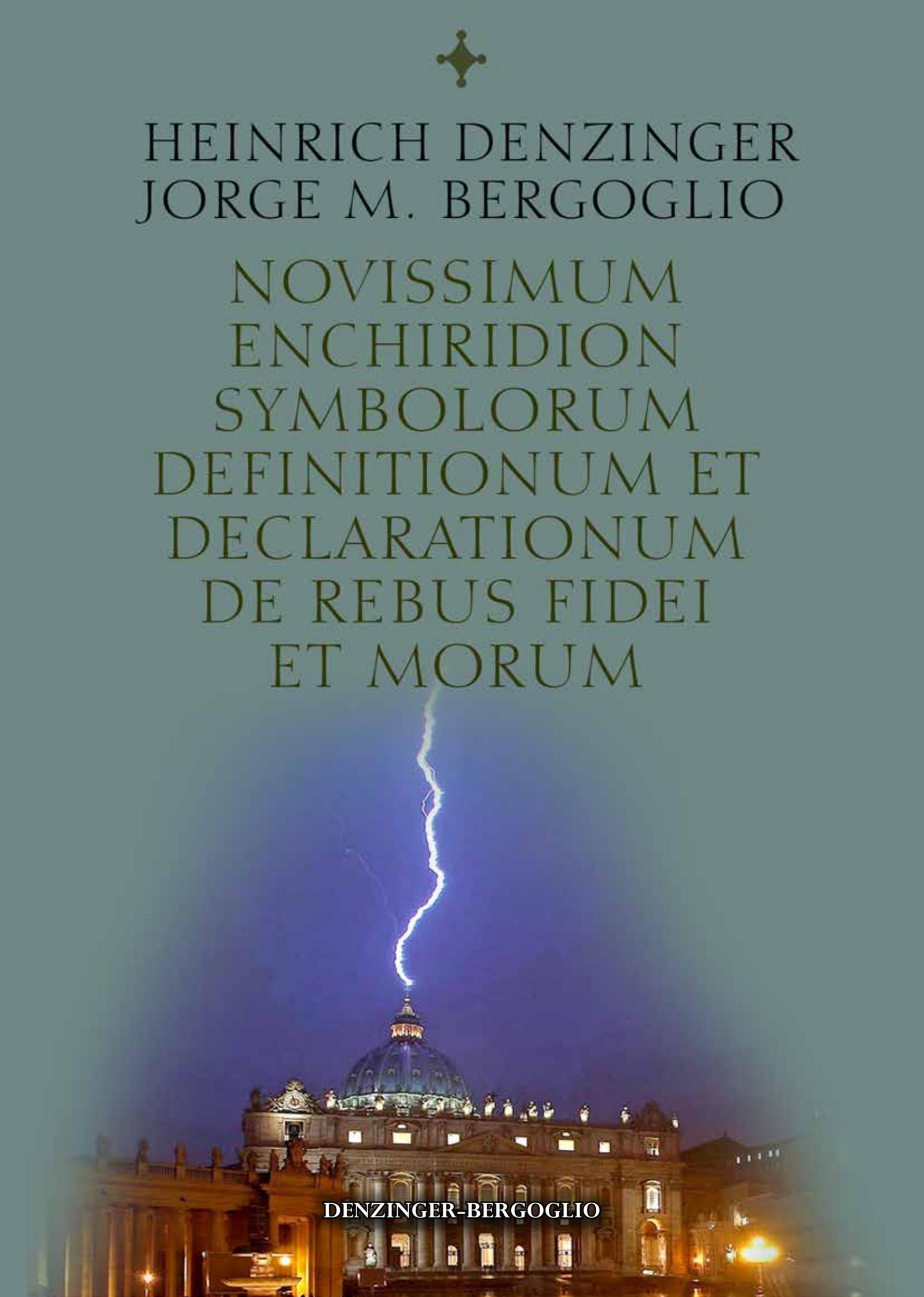




HEINRICH DENZINGER
JORGE M. BERGOGLIO

NOVISSIMUM
ENCHIRIDION
SYMBOLORUM
DEFINITIONUM ET
DECLARATIONUM
DE REBUS FIDEI
ET MORUM



DENZINGER-BERGOGLIO



HEINRICH DENZINGER
JORGE M. BERGOGLIO

THE MAGISTERIUM
OF THE CHURCH

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WHO ARE WE?

At the beginning of 2015, a group of diocesan priests, friends who share common concerns, met to discuss a way to respond to the wave of confusion confronted in our pastoral ministry, worsened by the constant misinformation that has caused a real upheaval in the flock, ever since the election of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio as Bishop of Rome, on March 13, 2013. It is what has been called 'Hurricane Jorge', or 'the Francis Effect'.

Faced with this new situation, we asked ourselves: Who is Francis? A prophet for our times? An instrument of God for the renovation of the Church? The initiator of a new springtime in the Faith? The new Pope, with his peculiar way of proffering teachings, leaves no one indifferent. Moreover, this situation is exacerbated by distorted versions that reach the faithful through the press and the media in general. We thus came to the conclusion that a compilation of Francis' principle teachings, contrasted with the Magisterium of the Church, would be of assistance for making accurate judgments, as well as for forming a criteria of analysis for Catholics. Consequently, the "Denzinger-Bergoglio" was born (in Spanish).

Behind the English version of the Spanish "Denzinger-Bergoglio" page is a group of priests, who received from our parishioners the same moving questions that had first led our Spanish brethren to start their page. Overjoyed by their inspired initiative, we were certain that it also responds to a deeply felt need on the part of millions of English-speaking faithful. And so, moved by pastoral care, we had individually written to those who run the Spanish page in order to press for an English version. Given the number of requests, we were put into contact with one another... With a little assistance, and a lot of prayer, 'The Denzinger-Bergoglio' came into existence! Together with the large feedback, our English version also soon received new collaborators from different anglophone countries. Though we normally have limited ourselves to translating the first-rate Spanish posts, critical issues that received more attention in the English world have also needed our particular care. And at the instance of many, after more than 50 translations of the Spanish posts the two blogs were united onto a single page.

Why "Denzinger-Bergoglio"?

Anyone who has studied theology is acquainted with the famous *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations on Faith and Morals*, normally referred to as the *Denzinger* in memory of the initiator of the illustrious work, Heinrich Denzinger. This outstanding synopsis of the Magisterium of the Church, presents the chief declarations and conciliar definitions, exposes condemned proposals, and defines the formulas and symbols of the genuine Catholic faith. In any of its several versions, it provides an authoritative presentation of the infallible teaching of the Church regarding faith and morals. Employing clear language, it outlines what one should believe and practice in order to be a devout Catholic.

We believe that the Magisterium of the Church, presented in this way, provides the sons and daughters of the Church with solid answers to the most pressing questions of the present day. Therefore, we make the words of Blessed Paul VI, our own: 'We may understand, then, why the Catholic Church, both yesterday and today, gives so much importance to the rigorous conservation of true Revelation, considering it an inviolable treasure, and

why it bears such a rigorous sense of its fundamental duty in defending and transmitting the doctrine of the faith in unequivocal terms; orthodoxy is its first concern; the pastoral Magisterium its primary and providential function; the apostolic teaching affirms in fact the canons of its preaching; and the mandate of the Apostle Paul, *Depositum custodi* [Guard what has been entrusted to you] (1Tm 6:20; 2Tm 1:14), constitutes such a commitment for it, that its violation would be a betrayal. The teaching Church does not invent its doctrine; it is a witness, it is an interpreter, a mediator; and regarding the truths pertaining to the Christian message, it could be called conservative, intransigent; to those who request it to make the faith easier, more adapted to the caprice of the changing mentality of the times, it responds together with the Apostles: “Non possumus, we cannot” (Acts 4:20) (Paul VI, General Audience, January 19, 1972)

Who are these priests?

“He who fears the Lord is never alarmed, never afraid.” says the book of Sirach (34: 14). However, to accomplish this undertaking and preserve our bishops from possible pressures, we have decided to remain relatively discreet, although those closest to us know us for this work.

Perhaps it is difficult for some to understand our desire for discretion, but the experiences of several of our acquaintances for having publically defended Catholic faith and morals, stimulated our desire to remain anonymous, above all to conserve our independence and capacity for action.

100 posts later...

After months of intense research, we have the pleasure of presenting our 100th study to the English speaking public, a landmark we would never have reached without the protection of God and the support of many Catholics from around the world who share these same concerns.

Many friends of the blog had suggested compiling our research and publishing it thematically, with the objective of facilitating access to this great source of magisterial teaching. Encouraged by the interest of readers, we began the editorial work, which resulted in the present study, rich in pastoral and academic value.

This compendium effectively attends the desires of many who will be able to consult it for their ministerial and catechetical works, their teaching missions or university studies, as well as in the doctrinal formation that all baptized persons should use to continually enrich their lives. By accessing the links, readers may visit the pages consulted for this study, giving them the opportunity to learn directly from the great teachers of the faith. Furthermore, the variety of topics will make this study interesting to scholars in many fields, with Francis’ pronouncements as a starting point.

With gratitude to the Lord and his Holy Mother for the blessings poured out throughout this study, we have the joy of being able to contribute in this way to the spreading of Catholic doctrine, as it has been consistently understood and preached, encouraged by the promise of Christ: *“If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”* (Jn 8:31-32).

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39. Pelagius I (60th)
40. Vigilius (59th)
41. Hormisdas (52nd)
42. Gelasius I (49th)
43. Simplicius (47th)
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45. Celestine I (43rd)
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48. Innocent I (40th)
49. Siricius (38th)

50. Damasus I (39°)
51. Marcellinus (29°)
52. Cornelius (21°)
53. Clement I (4th)
54. Peter (1st)

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17 ROMAN CONGREGATIONS

1. Congregation for Bishops
2. Congregation for the Clergy
3. Congregation for the Cause of Saints
4. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments
5. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
6. Congregation for Catholic Education
7. Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life
8. Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes
9. International Theological Commission
10. Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff
11. Pontifical Biblical Commission
12. Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue
13. Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace
14. Pontifical Council for the Family
15. Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations
16. Pontifical Council for Culture
17. Pontifical Council for Interpretation of Legislative Texts

25 FATHERS OF THE CHURCH AND SAINTS

1. Saint Ambrose (340-397)
2. Saint Augustine (354-430)
3. Athenagoras of Athens (2nd Century)
4. Saint Bede the Venerable (673-735)
5. Saint Basil the Great (330-379)
6. Saint Clement of Alexandria (150-215)

7. Saint Cyprian of Carthage (+258)
8. Saint Cyril of Alexandria (374-444)
9. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem (374-444)
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11. Saint Dionysius of Alexandria (+264)
12. Saint Fulgentius of Ruspe (460-533)
13. Saint Gregory Nazianzus (330-390)
14. 1Saint Gregory of Nyssa (335-394)
15. Saint Hilary of Poitiers (300-368)
16. Saint Ignatius of Antioch (+107)
17. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (130-202)
18. Saint Jerome (347-420)
19. Saint John Chrysostom (347-407)
20. Saint Justin of Rome (100/114-162/168)
21. Melito of Sardis (II Century)
22. Origen (+254)
23. Saint Pacian of Barcelona (365)
24. Polycarp of Symrna (69-155)
25. Saint Vincent of Lerins (+450)

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1. Saint Thomas of Aquinas (1225-1274)
2. Saint Anthony of Padua (1195-1231)
3. Saint Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787)
4. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)
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8. Synod of Arlés (475)
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11. Synod of Rome (382)
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13. Council of Elvira (300 – 306 AD)
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1. Liturgy of the Hours
2. Saint Francis of Assisi
3. Saint Ignatius of Loyola
4. Saint John Bosco



SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Are they trying to pass off a cat as rabbit?

Francisco and the Social Doctrine of the Church: 'I don't believe that I have said anything not found in the Church's social teaching'

The tale is told that once upon a time in Spain, the poor quality of the meals offered at way-side inns got to such a point that the guests, before tucking in, would say the verse: 'Si eres cabrito, mantente frito; si eres gato, salta del plato' – which loses its rhyme in translating as: 'If you are goat, continue roasted; but if you are cat, hop off my plate!' This humorous 'spell' probably never worked, but it did give origin to a typical Spanish saying: dar gato por liebre – 'to pass off a cat as rabbit'. The idea is quite simple: given that rabbits have a very close resemblance to cats, an unscrupulous innkeeper might succumb to the temptation of making a fast buck by passing off an inconvenient feline as prime roast hare! The saying is used to describe the malicious wile of those who offer goods and services of dubious quality as if they were the genuine article, under the facade of the most rigorous legality.

Does this situation have any application in the domain of ideas and doctrine? This is a question that forcefully comes to mind, and with increasing perplexity, when we analyze the ensemble of Francis' teachings with regards to Private Property and Free Market, the poor, and the Social Doctrine of the Church.

May each one judge on their own if these concerns which trouble us are well founded, because the last thing we would like to do to our readers is 'to pass off a cat as rabbit'!



“MILLIONS OF PEOPLE SUFFER AND DIE FROM HUNGER”

THE SOLUTION: A SOCIALIST AGRARIAN REFORM?

In his intervention in the First World Meeting of Popular Movements on October 28, 2014, Francis gave uncommon support to the advocates of Socialist agrarian reform who were present:

The other dimension of this already global process is hunger. When financial speculation manipulates the price of food, treating it as just another commodity, **millions of people suffer and die from hunger.** At the same time, tons of food are thrown away. This constitutes a genuine scandal. Hunger is criminal, food is an inalienable right. I know that **some of you are calling for agrarian reform in order to solve some of these problems,** and let me tell you that in some countries – **and here I cite the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church – ‘agrarian reform is, besides a political necessity, a moral obligation’** (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, §300) **It is not just me saying this, it is in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Please carry on your struggle for the dignity of the rural family, for water, for life, and so that everyone can benefit from the fruits of the earth.** (*Address to the participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements, October 28, 2014*)

TWO IMPORTANT POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Regarding these important words, certain aspects require emphasis:

I – ‘HUNGER IS CRIMINAL’, ‘FOOD IS AN INALIENABLE RIGHT’

In the first place, Francis does not specify in which countries there are millions suffering and dying from hunger. Does he perhaps refer to the thirty million Venezuelans who are victims of the Chavez-Maduro dictatorship, submerged in the worst crisis of scarcity of provisions in the history of their country, and already notified by Maduro that they should exchange their ration cards for a new digitalized system for the purchase of food products? (*Infobae – Spanish*), May 8, 2015 – *BBC English*). Without a doubt, digitalization is a great sign of progress... progress in the iron grip of the control and inspection of the security corps of the Bolivarian socialist regime. (*Univision, August 21, 2014*).

Or is Francis perhaps referring to the ten thousand unfortunate Cubans who truly suffer hunger and extreme poverty, *as declared by Archbishop Bruno Masaró* when he was Apostolic Nuncio to Cuba, *until the first months of 2015?* (*Martinoticias.com, August 24, 2014*)

Confirming the declarations of Archbishop Bruno Musaró, the UN, through *the World Food Program, has presented to Cuba a program for fighting against hunger* – euphemistically called ‘support to food security’ (sic) – by which seven provinces of the island will benefit, Pinar del Río, Matanzas, Las Tunas, Holguín, Granma, Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo. It is the ‘Country Program’ which will apply in the period from 2015-2018 (*Diary of Cuba, August 25, 2015*).

If ‘hunger’, in Francis’ words, ‘is criminal’, and ‘food is an inalienable right’, why, during his journey to Cuba (September 19-22, 2015) did he not make any allusion to this ‘crime’ to which Cubans have been submitted on a daily basis for already half a century?

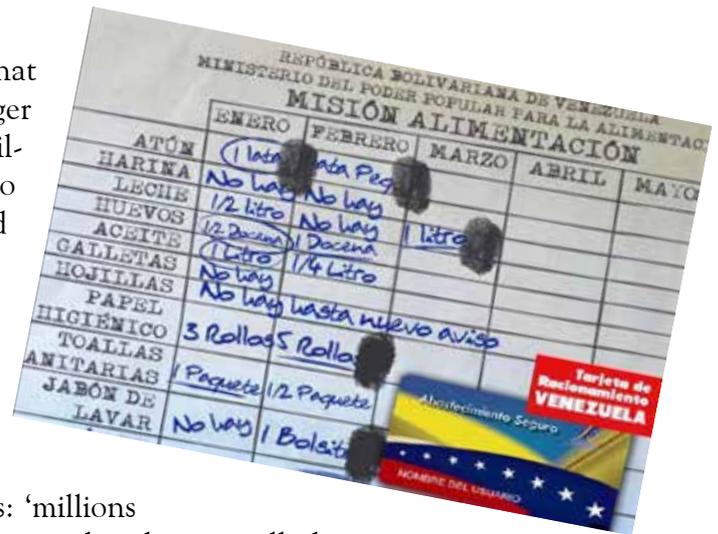
More accurate information about hunger in the world

Going back to the address that Francis gave to the members of ‘Popular Movements’, we believe that no one would consider it superfluous for the Bishop of Rome, speaking of a problem that involves technical issues, to at least present a report or a specialized study about the problem of hunger affecting the world. Actually, his categorical affirmation: ‘Millions die from hunger’, stated in a public address that should tend to add something to the Magisterium, requires adequate proof. Are there countries with a food deficit? Which are these countries? What are the causes of this deficit? How many millions of people die of hunger? Were these ‘millions of people’ calculated on the basis of daily, monthly or annual statistics? As we can see, so many questions, once asked, arouse much concern, and demand exact and satisfactory answers. Despite the fact that Francis didn’t provide any study or specialized report on the topic he broached, it is noteworthy that Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in its last report – published precisely in Rome in 2015 – partially answers these questions.

We say ‘partially’ because the UN report, entitled ‘Food Insecurity in the World, Meeting the 2015 international hunger targets: taking stock of uneven progress,’ analyzing the countries and areas affected by prolonged hunger crises, does not present data, nor statistics with regard to the ‘millions’ of human beings who ‘die of hunger’ (*FAO report*).

The forgotten famished...

In light of this specialized technical report, what are we to think of Francis' opinion about the hunger problem? With regards to his first affirmation: 'Millions of people SUFFER from hunger', there's no doubt about it. Since the population of Cuba and Venezuela are 11.2 million and 30.4 million respectively, subtracting all the workers of the government agencies responsible for maintaining these dictatorships, we already have 40 million brothers and sisters suffering from hunger.



But with regards to the second affirmation, which is serious because of its moral consequences: 'millions DIE of hunger', what is there to think of the FAO report that does not allude to such a mortality rate?

Could it be that the social statisticians and economists who prepared the FAO report were lacking in scientific and technical exactitude? Who would dare to affirm something so categorical and critical without the facts to support their judgment? Therefore the key question that should be asked is: Do demographic studies analyzing the problem of hunger as causing 'millions of deaths' exist or not? If they exist, what agency or center of studies carried them out? Are these studies reliable from a technical and scientific point of view? What is the data collected to determine the causes of this tragedy in humanity?

Until these studies are presented, unfortunately there will always be mysteries regarding Francis' categorical statements: Where do the millions die? How many millions are there? When did they die? What caused the hunger that caused their death?

The sad truth about hunger: its real causes

Although the specialists of the FAO in their above-mentioned report do not speak of 'millions dead by hunger', they do objectively mention a tragic happening: a famine that resulted in the deaths of more than 250,000 people in Somalia alone between 2010 and 2012. The cause of the famine? 'Natural disasters and conflicts' (page 38). Regarding this aspect it is important to recall that the specialists of the FAO indicate as the principle causes of food insecurity affecting certain countries two important factors. On one hand, violent conflicts and political instability (page 38-39), and on the other hand, natural disasters (page 40).

Among the countries identified in 2012 as having prolonged hunger crises are: Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Ivory Coast, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, Iraq, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe (see note 58 in the FAO report).

Consequently, these two factors, indicated by the report of the FAO, are causes of the food insecurity, the negative effects of which create 'environments in which a significant proportion of the population is acutely vulnerable to death, disease and disruption of livelihoods over a prolonged period of time' (page 37). This analysis does not coincide with the one and only cause of death pointed out by Francis in his address to the Popular Movements. Let's not forget that, in his opinion, it is simply the financial market: 'When financial speculation manipulates the price of food, treating it as just another commodity, millions of people suffer and die from hunger.'

Considering that Francis, on one hand, kept silence about the misery that Cubans have been

suffering for more than five decades, fruit of socialism, we ask whether hunger is or is not ‘criminal’, and whether food is ‘an inalienable right’? On the other hand, since he did not demonstrate in an unquestionable way his opinion about the cause that provokes ‘millions of deaths by hunger’, let each one judge for himself. Is it valid to ask ourselves the famous question found in the title of this study?

II – THE AGRARIAN REFORM WHICH FRANCIS DEMANDS VERSUS AGRARIAN REFORM FAVORED BY THE COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH (CSDC)

A second point to be highlighted is regarding Francis’ ‘acquaintances’¹. Let us recall that in the address we are analyzing, Francis declared:

I know that some of you desire an agrarian reform as a solution to some of these problems. [Which is to say, the] millions of people who suffer and die from hunger.

Francis then added:

‘And let me tell you that in some countries – and here I cite the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church – ‘agrarian reform is, besides a political necessity, a moral obligation’ (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, §300).

Has Francis read the whole Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church (CDSC)?

It is suggestive that once again we encounter an affirmation that requires some clarification. Furthermore, as we can see, the very citation used by Francis goes against his own argument. Number 300 of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, cited by Francis, actually does refer to agrarian reform. However, reading the document cited by the Compendium – and which Francis probably either did not read or did not wish to read entirely – points towards two important topics. These are far from and contradict the ideological principles on which is based the classical Socialist agrarian reform, and which is defended by the ‘Popular Movements’, specifically by the members of the MST-Brazil who gleefully listened to Francis’ address, and who now must feel especially encouraged to continue with their criminal activities...with the Pope’s support!

1) The CSDC promotes private property

No. 300 of the CSDC cites the document ‘*Towards a Better Distribution of Land. The Challenge of Agrarian Reform*’ (23 November 1997), no. 13, by the Pontifical Council for Justice and

¹ **Note:** Who are the people who are close to Francis? Considering the ensemble of 86 organizations that participated in the First World Meeting of Popular Movements, without a doubt the group with the most ‘drive, dedication and thirst for justice’ was the MST – Movimento sem Terra (Landless Workers Movement) of Brazil. Their revolutionary conquests in their ‘curriculum vitae’ total: 2,500 (illegal) occupations of land, 7.5 millions of hectares of land occupied, and 900 camping grounds (source: movimientospopulares.org). These are successes that would give pride to Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, as well as Ché Guevara, Chávez, the Castro brothers, Maduro, Evo, etc.

The leader of this movement, João Pedro Stédile, member of the organizational committee of the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, should be pleased with this papal mention that so clearly supports his faction, which stirs up the masses in various rural areas of Brazil. The Marxist ideology which inspires Stédile and his fight for the realization of a socialist agrarian reform was amply demonstrated in a previous study that we posted ([click here](#)). Just as an update, let’s take a look at this other document from 2012: VIDEO (Source: Youtube, March 2015)

Peace. This item explains how in developing countries, concentration of land ownership involves certain structural problems that are necessary to resolve:

- * Legislative deficiencies and delays regarding both recognition of land titles and in relation to the credit market
- * A lack of concern over agricultural research and training
- * Neglect of social services and infrastructures in rural areas

2) The CSDC promotes the opening of markets and to the benefits that globalization offers

The same no. 300 of the CSDC citing no. 35 of the *above-mentioned document*, concludes that agrarian reform is (as Francis cited): ‘a moral obligation more than a political necessity’.

However, the document concludes: ‘Since the failure to enact such reform is a hindrance in these countries to the benefits arising from the opening of markets and, generally, from the abundant growth opportunities offered by the current process of globalization’.

Therefore, no. 300 of the CSDC (in referring to numbers 13 and 35 of ‘Towards a Better Distribution of Land...’) promotes private property and at the same time an agrarian reform that has as its objective to take advantage of the benefits derived from ‘the opening of markets’, which is to say, the commercial transaction of goods or services, as well as, from the abundant growth opportunities offered by the current process of globalization.

Is that right? The market... Francis’ *bête noire*!!!

So now what? According to Francis’ teaching, wasn’t ‘financial speculation’, which is to say the buying and selling of products (in this case food) with the intention of reselling them for profit according to the fluctuation of prices, the cause of ‘millions of people suffering and dying from hunger’?

The CSDC: not a manual of ideological warfare, but rather defends the free market...

In other words, no. 300 of the CSDC read in its entirety, promotes an agrarian reform based on private initiative, insisting on the juridical and economic favoring of the rural land owner. At the same time, it encourages the land owner to obtain profit and grow economically... (a calamity for the so-called Popular Movements!) And worst of all, according to the ‘demonic’ structures of private capitalism, in other words free market and globalization.

In effect, the socialist agrarian reform promoted by the ‘Popular Movements’, (especially by the MST-Brazil, since it is a group with Marxist ideology), advocates *communitarianism* which denies any private economic growth. Following the Cuban model, the socialist state is the only landowner, and the only owner of goods produced – in short, the worn out Capitalism of the State. Is this what Leo XIII taught in his Encyclical *Rerum novarum* when he gave origin to the Social Doctrine of the Church? Was it a socialist economy that all the later Popes called for? Is communism what is taught by the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church?

Faced by this difference between the two ‘agrarian reforms’, what should we think when we read that Francis even added:

It is not just me saying this, it is in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. Please carry on your struggle for the dignity of the rural family, for water, for life, and so that everyone can benefit from the fruits of the earth.

With all due respect, and with no intention to offend, perhaps Francis should read the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, because what is written there does not coincide with his teachings, no matter how much he may insist that it does, as he did in a recent in-flight press conference on his way to the United States. Or are we being taken for a ride and receiving cats as rabbits?...

FRANCIS

The other dimension of this already global process is hunger. **When financial speculation manipulates the price of food, treating it as just another commodity, millions of people suffer and die from hunger.** At the same time, tons of food are thrown away. This constitutes a genuine scandal. **Hunger is criminal, food is an inalienable right. I know that some of you are calling for agrarian reform in order to solve some of these problems, and let me tell you that in some countries – and here I cite the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church – ‘agrarian reform is, besides a political necessity, a moral obligation’** (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, § 300).

It is not just me saying this, it is in the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church. **Please carry on your struggle for the dignity of the rural family,** for water, for life, and so that everyone can benefit from the fruits of the earth. (*Address to the participants in the First World Meeting of Popular Movements, October 28, 2014*)

I am sure that **I haven’t said anything more than what is contained in the Church’s social teaching.** On the other flight [returning from Latin America], one of your colleagues – I don’t know if she is here – said, **after I went to speak to the popular movements, ‘You held out a hand to this popular movement’** – something more or less like that – ‘but will the Church follow you?’ And my reply was: **‘I’m the one who follows the Church’.** I do not believe I was wrong there. I don’t believe that I have said anything not found in the Church’s social teaching. Things can be explained, and maybe an explanation could give the impression of being a little more ‘leftist’, but that would be an error of explanation. No, my teaching, on all of this, in *Laudato Si’*, on ‘economic imperialism’ and all these things, is that of the Church’s social teaching. And if I need to recite the Creed, I am ready to do it! (*In-flight press conference from Cuba to the United States, September 22, 2015*)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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I – THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH IS BORN OF ITS UNCHANGING AND UNCHANGEABLE DOCTRINE

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

In the Church's social doctrine, the Magisterium is at work in all its various components and expressions – this obligates the faithful to adhere to it

In the Church's social doctrine the Magisterium is at work in all its various components and expressions. Of primary importance is the universal Magisterium of the Pope and the Council: this is the Magisterium that determines the direction and gives marks of the development of this social doctrine. This doctrine in turn is integrated into the Magisterium of the Bishops who, in the concrete and particular situations of the many different local circumstances, give precise definition to this teaching, translating

it and putting it into practice (cf. Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens*, 3–5). The social teaching of the Bishops offers valid contributions and impetus to the Magisterium of the Roman Pontiff. In this way, there is a circulating at work that in fact expresses the collegiality of the Church's Pastors united to the Pope in the Church's social teaching. The doctrinal body that emerges includes and integrates in this fashion the universal teaching of the Popes and the particular teaching of the Bishops. **Insofar as it is part of the Church's moral teaching, the Church's social doctrine has the same dignity and authority as her moral teaching. It is authentic Magisterium, which obligates the faithful to adhere to it** (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2037). The doctrinal weight of the different teachings and the assent required are determined by the nature of the particular teachings, by their level of independence from contingent and variable elements, and by the frequency with which they are invoked (Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum Veritatis*, 16–17, 23). (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 80)

PIUS XI

The Social Doctrine of the Church comes from the desire that the unchanged and unchangeable teaching of the Church meet the new demands more effectively

It is not surprising, therefore, that many scholars, both priests and laymen, **led especially by the desire that the unchanged and unchangeable teaching of the Church should meet new demands and needs more effectively**, have zealously undertaken to develop, with the Church as their guide and teacher, a social and economic science in accord with the conditions of our time. And so, **with Leo's Encyclical pointing the way and furnishing the light, a true Catholic social science has arisen**, which is daily fostered and enriched by the tireless efforts of those chosen men whom We have termed auxiliaries of the Church. They do not, indeed, allow their science to lie hidden behind learned walls. As the useful and well attended courses instituted in Catholic universities, colleges, and seminaries, the social congresses and 'weeks' that are held at frequent intervals with most successful results, the study groups that are promoted, and finally the timely and sound publications that are disseminated everywhere and in every possible way. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 19-20, May 15, 1931)

PIUS XII

The Social Doctrine of the Church is based on Natural Law and on the Law of Christ, therefore it has no need to be retouched

It will be asked today of a Church which affirms it is a standard elevated above the nations, what is its contribution for the construction of social order. **The Catholic Church can, without presumption, affirm that in the course of her history she has given an enormous contribution to the perfection of social life;** and historical investigation gives witness to this for already some time. In fact, the Church does not close her eyes to the abysmal social disorders that the era of technology and capitalism has fomented. She has not thought she could resolve the social question of her own accord. **She can, however, show, and**

with her head held high, the values she has prepared and that she has ready to resolve them. One of these points is, precisely, her social doctrine, which is based, even in its smallest details on natural law and on the law of Christ. The social doctrine of the Church has given proof of it, showing itself to be greatly fruitful, and this occurs particularly among you in Germany. **There is therefore, no necessity to retouch, in its essential points, the social doctrine. It remains as it is, in full vigor.** The Church has always emphasized that to form a solid social order it is not sufficient to look to the material conditions, rather it is necessary, in addition, to cultivate the mentality: that is to say, direct the conscience toward a vision of order and moral strength that is absolutely valid, so as to always operate in conformity with the conscience. (Pius XII. *Message to the German Katholikentag, Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 48, p. 624-625, September 2, 1956)

The principles of the Catholic Social Doctrine are the most conformed to the natural and supernatural life of the human being

The number of those who take part in your Confederation would of itself be enough to prove its importance and to qualify it as the professional organization that is most powerful in this field. Since it contributes more than 60% of the agricultural production, how could it fail to influence amply in the social life of the country? For this reason, We are pleased to congratulate you, so much more so, to the measure that you carry out your labor with the purpose to put into practice **the principles of the social Catholic doctrine, which are the most conformed to the exigencies of natural and supernatural human life, and lead to seeking a solution to the problems that are constantly brought forth by the rapid economic evolution and the general conditions of human society.** In this way, respecting due order and the institutions, you contribute with the patient effort of every day, **to the construction of a world that is less arduous, less impregnated by materialism and less enslaved by the persistent angst to seek a purely egoistic interest.** (Pius XII. *Address to primary cultivators, Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 47, pg. 497, April 19, 1955)

Catholic Social doctrine is a sure guide to achieve order, peace and tranquility in the relations between the various social classes

But the difficulty in this mission in your case finds an incomparable support and an unbreakable pillar in the maturity, in the amplitude, in the solidity of the Catholic social doctrine which, drawing on the evangelical principles and always taking into consideration the fundamental premises of morality, no less than the inalienable rights of the human person, may always serve you as a sure guide along your difficult way. And with what confidence should a doctrine, whose excellence in practice we see every day, at least by the tremendous consequences brought on by forgetting it or willfully disregarding it! And wholly futile would it be to seek tranquility, peace and order among men, as long as this order, this peace and this tranquility do not begin in the very interior of the nations and especially in the relations between social classes. (Pius XII. *Address to the industry technicians of Barcelona*, September 6, 1956)

JOHN XXIII

The encyclical Rerum Novarum: an outstanding instance of charity in the Social Doctrine of the Church combining the precepts and practice of mutual love

Small wonder, then, that the Catholic Church, in imitation of Christ and in fulfilment of His commandment, relies not merely upon her teaching to hold aloft the torch of charity, but also upon her own widespread example. This has been her course now for nigh on two thousand years, from the early ministrations of her deacons right down to the present time. It is a charity which combines the precepts and practice of mutual love. It holds fast to the twofold aspect of Christ's command to give, and summarizes the whole of the Church's social teaching and activity. An outstanding instance of this social teaching and action carried on by the Church throughout the ages is undoubtedly that magnificent encyclical on the christianizing of the conditions of the working classes, *Rerum Novarum*, published seventy years ago by Our Predecessor, Leo XIII (*Acta Leonis XIII*, XI, 1891, p. 97-144). (John

XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et Magistra*, no. 6-7, May 15, 1961)

PAUL VI

The Church, founded on the Redeemer's love, has a social doctrine that spreads the the truth of the gospel so as to shed light on all areas of human activity

The Church's policy? This is it, in the words of the Second Vatican Council: 'The Church, founded on the Redeemer's love, contributes to the wider application of justice and charity within and between nations. By preaching the truth of the gospel and shedding light on all areas of human activity through her teaching and the example of the faithful, she shows respect for the political freedom and responsibility of citizens and fosters these values... It is always and everywhere legitimate for her to preach the faith with true freedom, to teach her social doctrine, and to discharge her duty among men without hindrance. She also has the right to pass moral judgments, even on matters touching the political order, whenever basic personal rights of the salvation of souls: make such judgments necessary' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 76). (Paul VI. *Address to the members of the Diplomatic Corps*, January 10, 1972)

The Church professes and teaches a stable and sure doctrine which emanates from God Himself

Modern man has greatly augmented his knowledge, but not always in the solidity of his thought, not always in the certainty of possessing the truth. On the other hand, here is precisely the distinguishing characteristic of the teaching of the Church. The Church professes and teaches a sure and stable doctrine. Meanwhile we should remember that the Church, before being a teacher, is a disciple. She teaches a doctrine that is sure, but a doctrine that she herself had to learn previously. The authority of the teaching of the Church does not emanate from wisdom of her own, nor of scientific and rational control over what she preaches to her faithful; but rather from the fact that she announces a word that emanates from the transcendent Thought of God. This is her strength and her light. What is the name for

this incomparable transmission of the Thought, of the Word of God? It is called faith. (Paul VI. *General audience*, August 2, 1978)

JOHN PAUL II

The Social Doctrine of the Church has a twofold dimension: constancy, for it remains identical in its inspiration, principles and directives; new, because it adapts to the changes in historical conditions

In this way I wish principally to achieve two objectives of no little importance: on the one hand, to pay homage to this historic document of Paul VI and to its teaching; on the other hand, following in the footsteps of my esteemed predecessors in the See of Peter, **to reaffirm the continuity of the social doctrine as well as its constant renewal.** In effect, **continuity and renewal are a proof of the perennial value of the teaching of the Church.** This twofold dimension is typical of her teaching in the social sphere. On the one hand **it is constant, for it remains identical in its fundamental inspiration, in its ‘principles of reflection,’ in its ‘criteria of judgment,’ in its basic ‘directives for action’** (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, Libertatis Conscientia* (March 22, 1986), 72; Paul VI, *Octogesima Adveniens* (May 14, 1971), no. 4), and above all in its vital link with the Gospel of the Lord. On the other hand, **it is ever new, because it is subject to the necessary and opportune adaptations suggested by the changes in historical conditions** and by the unceasing flow of the events which are the setting of the life of people and society. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 3, December 30, 1987)

BENEDICT XVI

Charity, which is the synthesis of the entire Law, is at the heart of the Church’s Social Doctrine

Charity is at the heart of the Church’s social doctrine. Every responsibility and every commitment spelt out by that doctrine is derived from charity which, according to the teaching of Jesus, is the synthesis of the

entire Law (cf. Mt 22:36–40). **It gives real substance to the personal relationship with God and with neighbour;** it is the principle not only of micro–relationships (with friends, with family members or within small groups) but also of macro–relationships (social, economic and political ones). (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 2, June 29, 2009)

The Social Doctrine of the Church is the proclamation of Christ’s love in society

This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church’s social teaching, which is caritas in veritate in re sociali: the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society. This doctrine is a service to charity, but its locus is truth. Truth preserves and expresses charity’s power to liberate in the ever–changing events of history. It is at the same time the truth of faith and of reason, both in the distinction and also in the convergence of those two cognitive fields. Development, social well–being, the search for a satisfactory solution to the grave socio–economic problems besetting humanity, all need this truth. What they need even more is that this truth should be loved and demonstrated. Without truth, without trust and love for what is true, there is no social conscience and responsibility, and social action ends up serving private interests and the logic of power, resulting in social fragmentation, especially in a globalized society at difficult times like the present. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 5, June 29, 2009)

The Social Doctrine of the Church argues on the basis of reason and natural law: it aims to purify reason and to attain what is just

Faith enables reason to do its work more effectively and to see its proper object more clearly. This is where Catholic social doctrine has its place: it has no intention of giving the Church power over the State. Even less is it an attempt to impose on those who do not share the faith ways of thinking and modes of conduct proper to faith. **Its aim is simply to help purify reason and to contribute, here and now, to the acknowledgment and attainment of what is just.** The Church’s social teaching argues on the basis of reason and natural law, namely, on the basis of what is in accord with the nature of

every human being. It recognizes that it is not the Church's responsibility to make this teaching prevail in political life. Rather, the Church wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Deus caritas est*, no. 28, December 25, 2005)

The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church helps to perceive the rich wisdom that comes from the experience with God, with Christ and from sincere acceptance of the Gospel

The commitment to build the city needs consciences that are led to God by love and for this reason are naturally oriented to the goal of a good life, structured on the primacy of transcendence. '*Caritas in veritate in re sociali*': I thus felt it appropriate to describe the social doctrine of the Church (cf. *ibid.*, no. 5), in accordance with its most authentic root – in Jesus Christ, the Trinitarian life that he gives us – and, with its full force, it can transfigure reality. **We are in need of this social teaching, to help our civilizations and our own human reason to grasp all the complexity of reality and the grandeur of the dignity of every person. Precisely in this regard, the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church is a help in perceiving the richness of the wisdom that comes from the experience of communion with the Spirit of God and of Christ and from sincere acceptance of the Gospel.** (Benedict XVI. *Message to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace*, November 3, 2010)

II – THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH DOES NOT DEPEND ON IDEOLOGIES. IT IS OPPOSED TO CLASS STRUGGLE, AND COMMUNIST DOCTRINES

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

The Social Doctrine of the Church does not depend on the different cultures or ideologies. It is not conditioned by history

nor runs the risk of fading away

It shows above all the continuity of a teaching that refers to the universal values drawn from Revelation and human nature. For this reason the Church's social doctrine does not depend on the different cultures, ideologies or opinions; it is a *constant teaching* that 'remains identical in its fundamental inspiration, in its principles of reflection', in its 'criteria of judgment', in its basic 'directives for action', and above all in its vital link with the Gospel of the Lord' (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 3). This is the foundational and permanent nucleus of the Church's social doctrine, by which it moves through history without being conditioned by history or running the risk of fading away. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 85)

PIUS XI

Catholics who leave much to be desired in the social-economic field do not sufficiently know the teachings of the Popes on these questions

To give to this social activity a greater efficacy, **it is necessary to promote a wider study of social problems in the light of the doctrine of the Church and under the aegis of her constituted authority.** If the manner of acting of some Catholics in the social-economic field has left much to be desired, this has often come about because they have not known and pondered sufficiently the teachings of the Sovereign Pontiffs on these questions. **Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to foster in all classes of society an intensive program of social education adapted to the varying degrees of intellectual culture.** It is necessary with all care and diligence to procure the widest possible diffusion of the teachings of the Church, even among the working-classes. The minds of men must be illuminated with the sure light of Catholic teaching, and their wills must be drawn to follow and apply it as the norm of right living in the conscientious fulfillment of their manifold social duties. **Thus they will oppose that incoherence and discontinuity in Christian life which We have many times lamented.** (Pio XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 55, March 19, 1937)

The Catholic Press can promote the Social Doctrine of the Church by denouncing the enemy, and warning against the insidious deceits of the communists

In this renewal the Catholic Press can play a prominent part. Its foremost duty is to foster in various attractive ways an ever better understanding of social doctrine. It should, too, supply accurate and complete information on the activity of the enemy and the means of resistance which have been found most effective in various quarters. It should offer useful suggestions and **warn against the insidious deceits with which Communists endeavor, all too successfully, to attract even men of good faith.** (Pio XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 56, March 19, 1937)

The Social Doctrine of the Church maintains a constant equilibrium of truth and justice, far removed from the errors of communists and the parties that follow them

This doctrine is equally removed from all extremes of error and all exaggerations of parties or systems which stem from error. It maintains a constant equilibrium of truth and justice, which it vindicates in theory and applies and promotes in practice, bringing into harmony the rights and duties of all parties. Thus authority is reconciled with liberty, the dignity of the individual with that of the State, the human personality of the subject with the divine delegation of the superior; and in this way a balance is struck between the due dependence and well-ordered love of a man for himself, his family and country, and his love of other families and other peoples, founded on the love of God, the Father of all, their first principle and last end. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 34, March 19, 1937)

Pius XII

The social program of the Church fights not to foment class struggle, but rather to guarantee to workers a secure and stable condition

If we must boast, we will say with Saint Paul (2Cor 11:30), who can show a social program

which is so solidly founded, so rich in content, so vast and at the same time so proportionate and just, as the Catholic Church? Who, since the proletariat of industry exists, has combated as has the Catholic Church in a loyal fight for the defense of the human rights of workers? **In a loyal fight: because it is the action to which the Church feels obliged before God and by the law of Christ; in a loyal fight, not to foment class struggle, but rather to guarantee to the group of workers a secure and stable condition, which other classes of people already enjoyed, so that the working class would take part in the social community with equal rights, similar to the other members.** (Pius XII. *Allocution Assai numerose, Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 37, 1945, p. 215, August 15, 1945)

He who intensifies social tension and abandons the solid basis of clear principles does not serve peace, but rather augments the disorientation of already confused intelligences

In times such as ours, in which errors are easily transformed into catastrophes, a Christian politician cannot – today, less than ever – intensify the internal social tensions, dramaticizing them, neglecting the positive points and allowing the true vision of what is reasonably possible to be lost. **Tenacity in the application of the Christian social doctrine is demanded of him, tenacity and confidence, greater than that which the enemies demonstrate in their errors.** If the Christian social doctrine, for more than a hundred years, has developed and become fruitful in the political practice of many peoples – unfortunately not of all – those who arrive too late have no right to lament that Christianity has today left some breach in the social field, which, according to what they say, should be filled by a revolution of the Christian consciences, as they call it. The breach is not in Christianity, but in the minds of the accusers. Being as it is, **the Christian politician does not serve the internal peace, nor consequently the external peace, when he abandons the solid basis of objective experience and of clear principles, and becomes a sort of charismatic herald of a new social land, contributing to augment the disorientation of the intelligences, already confused.** (Pius XII. *Radio message for Christmas*, December 24, 1953)

The exploiters of class struggle deceive by depicting the Catholic Church as an enemy of the disinherited of this world – in reply, true Christians cannot deviate one single step from the path of the Church’s Social Doctrine

To you, especially, is directed the invitation to collaborate without reserve in the advent of a public order which brings about, in a measure that is as high as possible, a healthy economy and social justice, **in such a way that the exploiters of class struggle be deprived of the possibility of enticing the disillusioned and disinherited of this world, depicting the Christian faith and the Catholic Church under the aspect not of an ally, but of an enemy.** By disposition of Divine Providence, the Catholic Church has elaborated and promulgated its social doctrine. It shows us the sure path, and no fear of losing temporal goods or benefits, of appearing less enthusiast of modern culture, or less patriotic or less social, could authorize true Christians to deviate, even one single step, from this path. (Pius XII. *Address to the Sacred College of Cardinals*, June 2, 1947)

To safeguard themselves from deception, workers should examine if programs are in accord, or contrast, with the principles of Christian social doctrine

To the farmers, as to all workers, there continually arrive suggestions and programs of all kinds from different quarters, such as to **confound their ideas**, in such a way that they often **are unable to distinguish what is just from injustice, what is upright from avarice, liberty from slavery**, in a word, their true well-being from generalized ruin. **In what way can you escape from such wiles, and distinguish truth from falsehood?** There is only one way: **make sure if these programs are in accord, or on the contrary, contrast, with the principles of Christian social doctrine.** This is, in effect, the steadfast touchstone, which deserves the full confidence of the honest worker, because it is the result of the most ample vision of reality; it is based on the order established by God, manifest by nature; it is apt to safeguard the dignity of the person, as the beginning and the end of human relations; **it does not bend to unilateral class interests; it respects the just hierarchy of values; it does not sacrifice**

one good for another, but rather tends to harmonize them all in justice and love. While affirming, then, the rights, while putting forward the needs, and while perfecting the programs of your class, **strive to not distance yourselves from the spirit of that doctrine**, from which you can learn what are the duties, but also the rights in a well-ordered society. (Pius XII. *Address to the participants of the Tenth Congress of the National Italian Confederation of Primary Agricultural Workers*, April 11, 1956)

PAUL VI

The Church indicates the sure way to distance oneself from deceitful illusions of false doctrines, destructive of upright human and social life

It is for Us a great motive of joy to know that the episcopate, the Clergy and the Laity belonging to Catholic Action and to the *Cursillos de Cristiandad* are studying a way to contribute to a solution to the present crisis. And we are aware that, in the last years, you have given life to praiseworthy activities, socials, inspired on the Social Doctrine of the Church proclaimed by Our predecessors in the Roman pontificate. We bless, therefore, with all our heart, the studies that with true effort and proven seriousness you carry out, with an identical end, in the new Catholic University of *Santiago de los Caballeros*, of great hopes, and arisen with the promise of good success, under the very title of the fundamental Encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, of the Supreme Pontiff John XXIII, of venerable memory. Have the certainty – and instill it in as many as doubt – **that the Church, depositary of a message of salvation for all**, the message that Christ the Lord confided to her, **desires to offer her services** with a lively understanding of the conditions of your situation and your problems, so as to **indicate to you the sure way to be followed to find the peaceful solution in Christ: ‘The way, the truth and the life’ (Jn 14:6), distancing yourselves from deceitful illusions with which the false doctrines and the destroyers of upright human and social life could dazzle you.** (Paul VI. *Message to the people of the Dominican Republic*, June 17, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

Class struggle, the occupation of land, and public or private buildings, do not originate in the Social Doctrine of the Church

It is up to you, venerable Brothers, as the hierarchy of the people of God, to **promote the quest for new solutions that embody a Christian spirit. A vision of the economy and social problems in the perspective of the Church's social teaching, never fails to lead us to consider things from the standpoint of human dignity, which transcends the play of purely economic factors. Moreover, it helps people understand that to obtain social justice, more is required than the simple application of ideological schemes originating in the class struggle, such as the occupation of land, which I already criticized during my Pastoral Visit of 1991, and of public or private buildings, or, to quote one example, the adoption of extreme technical measures which could have far more serious consequences than the injustice they are intended to overcome, such as in the case of a unilateral failure to fulfil international obligations.** (John Paul II. *Address to a group of Bishops of Brazil on their ad limina visit*, no. 7, November 26, 2002)

The Social Doctrine of the Church is a source of unity and peace in dealing with the conflicts which inevitably arise in social and economic life

The Pope's approach in publishing *Rerum novarum* gave the Church 'citizenship status' as it were, amid the changing realities of public life, and this standing would be more fully confirmed later on. In effect, to teach and to spread her social doctrine pertains to the Church's evangelizing mission and is an essential part of the Christian message, since this doctrine points out the direct consequences of that message in the life of society and situates daily work and struggles for justice in the context of bearing witness to Christ the Saviour. **This doctrine is likewise a source of unity and peace in dealing with the conflicts which inevitably arise in social and economic life. Thus it is possible to meet these new situations without degrading the human person's transcendent dignity, either**

in oneself or in one's adversaries, and to direct those situations towards just solutions. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 5, May 1, 1991)

As it is based on Jesus Christ, the Social Doctrine of the Church cannot be presented as an ideology or 'third way' like other political and social proposals

Beginning with Jesus Christ, man's only salvation, it is possible to show the universal value of our Christian faith and anthropology and their importance in every aspect of life. In Christ, the human being is offered a specific, individual and supportive interpretation of his reality, open to transcendence. **Starting precisely from this anthropology, the Church's social doctrine cannot be presented as an ideology or 'third way' like other political and social proposals, but precisely as a specific moral theological knowledge that originates in God and is communicated to man** (cf. *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 41). In this mystery it finds the inexhaustible source for interpreting and guiding human events. The new evangelization, to which the whole Church is called, must therefore fully integrate the Church's social doctrine (cf. *ibid.*), to be in a better position to reach and question the European peoples in the concrete context of their problems and situations. (John Paul II. *Address to the participants in the European Congress on the Church's Social Doctrine*, no. 2, June 20, 1997)

The social doctrine of the Church excludes class struggle, which incites new forms of slavery, as foreign to the Gospel

The social doctrine of the Church inspires the Christian praxis in its noble struggle for justice, but it excludes, as foreign to the Gospel programmed class struggle which incites new forms of slavery. This social doctrine teaches that **odious discriminations with regard to work that men and women can do and to their just remuneration should not be created.** But it also teaches that a just family salary should permit the woman who is a mother to dedicate herself to her irreplaceable tasks of care and education of her children, without being obliged to seek outside of home a complementary remuneration to the detriment

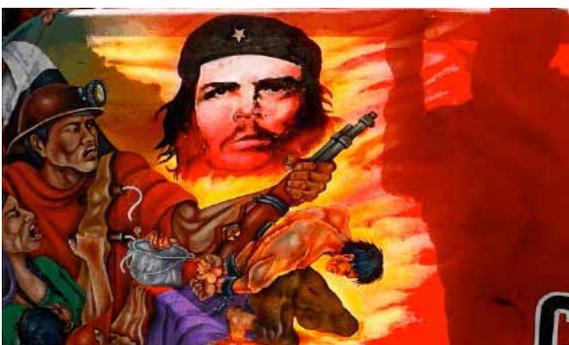
of her maternal functions, which should be socially reassessed for the good of the family and of society. (John Paul II. *Meeting with the world of labour at El Tunal Park*, Bogotá no. 5, July 3, 1986)

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**Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are (I):
An important contextualization to one of our studies**



‘The Holy Spirit, whom Christ the head pours out on his members, builds, animates, and sanctifies the Church’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 747). Ever since the beginning of Christianity, this sanctifying action has resulted, among numerous other aspects, in the fraternal help and assistance in favor of our brothers and sisters in need. Nonetheless, in this pastoral undertaking the Church has never meant stimulating rivalry, disputes or hatred toward those who possess a greater economic status, by having acquired such goods through their own efforts and the application of their talents and intellectual gifts or simply by inheritance. On the contrary, it was Pope Leo XIII, the Pope who inaugurated the social Encyclicals, who ardently condemned any incitement to envy, resentment and hatred between social classes promoted by anarchists, socialists and communists. Moreover, this ‘class struggle’ and ‘scientific discovery’ of Marx and Engels, was pointed out as the ‘motor’ behind all of the social complaints against the ‘exploitive bourgeoisie’, owners of capital, land and properties. This same ‘scientific discovery’ applied and developed later on by Lenin in the Revolution of 1917 in Russia and then numerous other countries, also received the condemnation of posterior Popes (*see here*).



Almost 100 years after the Russian Revolution, could the promoters of this ‘class struggle’ in favor of capitalism of the state demonstrate any kind of beneficial experience behind the Iron Curtain or the Bamboo Curtain? What nation among the dozens that were subjugated by the various facets of communism have prospered and been a model of well-being for humanity? Does even one exist? Is the Soviet Experience an example for the world? Or the savage experiment of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia? Or, today, the eternal dictatorship of the Castro brothers in Cuba? The hermetic ‘paradise’ of the Kim dynasty of North Korea? And the Bolivarian Revolution of Chávez and Maduro that has been able to ruin a country as rich in petroleum as Venezuela? Why do the utopian ideas of Marx and Lenin prophesying

social changes to establish an idyllic world always fail, causing poverty, misery and oppression? These are questions which the Popes, and most especially John Paul II and Benedict XVI, pointed out many times in diverse documents (*here is the study of the DzB-En*).



However, at times you would think that Francis wishes to relive these dreams, utopias and illusions, or at least that he doesn't worry too much about his image being used at the service of the same. Are we exaggerating? Let us analyze certain recent encounters organized with Francis' undeniable support: The World Meeting of Popular Movements. These events were promoted by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. The first occurred in Rome in October of 2014, and the second in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, in July of 2015. To better understand their goals, it will be helpful to take a careful look at the political and ideological profile of the principle leaders that figure in their organizing committees, and whose active participation have facilitated their coming out on stage. This contextualization helps us to better understand the words pronounced by Francis that will be published and studied in our *next entry*.

A SYNDICALIST, ACTIVIST AND BOLIVIAN COCA-CULTIVIST LEADER



Evo Morales, President of Bolivia and leader of the Movement toward Socialism (Movimiento Al Socialismo, MAS) participated in the first meeting in Rome, as was affirmed, 'not as president,' but rather 'in the capacity as an indigenous person and leader' (*Vatican Insider – Zenit*)

A 'BUSY' OCTOBER 28, 2014, IN THE VATICAN

Morales' visit to Rome in October of 2014, and the publicized encounter that took place with Francis at Casa Santa Marta, would provoke enigmas and perplexities, not only among the Bolivian Catholics, but even among their pastors. The spokesperson of the Vatican, Father Federico Lombardi, tried to downplay such misgivings, as has become habitual in these circumstances, minimizing their importance and doing everything possible to cover up their outcome: 'the visit to the Vatican by President Evo Morales, was due to his participation in the World Meetings of Popular Movements, organized by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, whose participants were received by the Pope this morning.' And he further emphasized that the visit wasn't 'organized through the usual diplomatic channels.' He added that the 'private and informal meeting' was an 'expression of affection and closeness to the people and the Church in Bolivia and support for the improvement of relations between the authorities and the Church in the country' (*Holy See Press Office -here in English*).

Strong words: "a sect..."

Why did Father Lombardi end his declaration referring to 'the improvement of relations between the authorities and the Church in the country'? As is well known, ever since he assumed power in 2006, Evo Morales hasn't ceased having conflicts and skirmishes with the Church. One of the most notable confrontations occurred in July of 2013, when Morales launched the preposterous idea of founding the 'Renewed Apostolic Catholic Church of the Pluri-National State.' As the bishop of Oruro, Monsignor Cristóbal Bialasik, declared: 'The government [of Morales] aims at dividing the faith of the Bolivians with the encouragement of this ideal which 'is not a Church but rather a sect' (*The Catholic Church refuses to recognize Evo Morales' officialist Church*)

Within this horizon of conflicts, a new incident had recently stirred the waters in the Bolivian political scene. Five days before the aforementioned encounter between Francis and Morales, on October 23, the president of the Chamber of Deputies and Militants of the Movement toward Socialism (Movimiento Al Socialismo, MAS), Marcelo Elío, harshly criticized Cardinal Julio Terrazas, Archbishop Emeritus of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, accusing him of assuming a 'right-wing', 'pro oligarchical', 'pro imperialist' position, 'distant from the Bible' (sic!). The Bolivian Episcopal Conference (CEB) supported Msgr. Julio Terraza lamenting and regretting the 'unjust attacks' proffered by the congressman Elío (*Church counters attacks of the president of Congress*).

Besides the former incident, with a certain level of presumption Elío himself had declared that the president Evo Morales would visit Francis. The Bolivian Episcopal Conference, ignorant of this proposal, limited itself to expressing, through its President Msgr. Scarpellini, that: 'With respect to the announcement concerning the trip of the President and the interview with the Pope in the Vatican next week, we have no official diplomatic confirmation regarding this possibility' (*Vatican Insider, October 18, 2014*).

Later, the same Italian media, the Vatican Insider, commented: 'Even until this Tuesday [October 28], the Episcopal Conference had it for sure that there would be no private encounter between Francis and Morales. But the encounter finally took place and fell like a bucket of cold water upon the Bolivian Bishops' (*Vatican Insider, October 28, 2014*).

The hermeneutic of the facts doesn't require much effort. The MAS congressman, Marcelo Elío, was simply 'playing with marked cards'. In other words, the political cupola of the Movimiento Al Socialismo was much better informed than the Bolivian Episcopal Conference itself, and inclusively – an unusual fact – than the Apostolic Nunciature of La Paz. It's logical: the Episcopal Conference and Nunciature, as institutions representative of the 'usual diplomatic channels,' were not adequate 'cards' for the 'diplomatic poker' that is being played in Casa Santa Marta. There, just as in the famous game of playing cards, the ones that don't match up, are put aside...In fact, as the News Agency Zenit

transmitted, it was the Government of Bolivia that communicated through a press release that the interview between Francis and Morales would take place in the afternoon of that Tuesday, October 28: “(...) the Pope and the leader ‘met for dinner at Casa Santa Marta’”. The encounter lasted 90 minutes. Moreover, it was expressed that ‘Francis and Morales shared a meal behind closed doors,’ and that ‘they said goodbye just as fraternally’ as when they had greeted each other that morning at the World Meetings of Popular Movements (*Zenit*, October 29, 2014).

In fact, the morning encounter had been extremely cordial.

Francis greets Evo Morales during the I World Meeting of Popular Movements. Rome, October 28, 2014



The press informed that after Francis’ address to the Popular Movements, Morales, in the same place, pronounced a conference entitled: ‘Pluri-Nationality, State and Popular Movements.’ Without forgetting to thank ‘brother Pope’, the exposition had as its central theme: **‘How to do away with Capitalism?’** In effect, Morales declared: ‘The great sin of humanism is capitalism, that is why in Bolivia the social movements propose to re-found democracy and politics to empower the poor and the people’ (*Vatican Insider*, October 28, 2014).

THE II WORLD MEETING OF POPULAR MOVEMENTS

II World Meeting of Popular Movements, July 9, 2015. Santa Cruz de la Sierra -Bolivia.



Nine months after October 28, 2014, at the closing of the second Meeting on July 9, 2015, Evo Morales, – this time occupying the position of proud host to the event – eagerly appeared before Francis and the world, his left fist held high, wearing a jacket of dubious elegance that displayed the face of Ché Guevara. (*Evo with the Che jacket*)

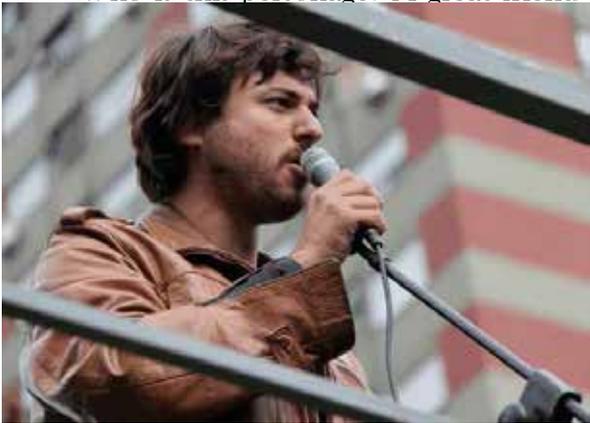
At the same time, in his speech, he once again repeated his dogma of political and ideological

theory: 'The sin of the human being is Capitalism, as long as capitalism and imperialism exist, the fight will continue [...]' ('While capitalism exists, the fight will continue') (For the first time, I feel like I have a pope: Pope Francis)

Nonetheless, the continuous train of revolutionary events that occurred during the Apostolic journey to Bolivia, reached their climax when Morales presented Francis with the blasphemous crucifix, figuring the hammer and sickle, together with its duplicate in a showy commemorative medalion...Really too much! Words fail us... (see the study)

THE ARGENTINE ACTIVIST JUAN GRABOIS

Who is this personage? A great friend of Francis from former times, he's a militant of Marxist affiliation, a promoter of agitations in peripheral neighborhoods and industries in Buenos Aires. As the leader of the 'Workers Confederation of Popular Economy' (CTEP in Spanish), Grabois figured officially as the only member of the organizing committee of the I World Meeting of Popular Movements. (News.Va, October 24, 2014 -English)



At the same time Cardinal Peter Turkson of

the PCJP participated together with four other directors in the

press conference of the presentation of the Second Meeting held in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia (*Popular Movements*)



MARX, MAO TSE TUNG, FIDEL CASTRO, CHÉ GUEVARA AND HUGO CHÁVEZ

Juan Grabois does not hide his admiration for the Russian Revolution of 1917 and its chief Vladimir Lenin, finding fulfilment in the expansion of communism around the world during many years, and considering as historic milestones the revolutions of Mao Tse Tung, Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara. Eager to achieve a society without classes, he considers the Zapatista rebellion of 1994 and the Bolivarian movement of Hugo Chávez as outstanding forerunners of the popular anti-capitalist waves that approach in the XXI century. In short, with nostalgia of Peron and Argentine Peronism (or justicialism), Grabois dreams of a utopia with great social changes, rebellions and 'popular governments', in Cuban or Venezuelan style. These ideological predecessors may come up in the study text that Grabois published together with his companion in the fight, *Emilio Pérsico*, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture of the Government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner and leader of the Evita Movement: '1. Our Reality. Book of formation for workers, militants, delegates and directors of popular movements.' On the cover of this book, a suggestive slogan may be read: 'For a society with neither slaves nor excluded persons. For an economy at the service of the people. For unity of workers and the humble. Without popular power there is no social justice!' (To download the books of *Emilio Pérsico* and *Juan Grabois*, enter the official site, clicking here) (*The Economist: It is unlikely that anyone like Grabois would have been let inside the Vatican's gates in the past*) (NEW! *Vatican Insider*, November 2, 2015: Grabois in the Vatican once again)

Pérsico and Grabois complete this eagerness to recruit and educate militants in favor of communism with three other books: '2. Our Organization'. '3. Our Objectives'. '4. Our Struggle'. Within this pro-Marxist tetralogy both authors propose Ché Guevara as a model of the generous militant given to the revolutionary cause (*Book 2, ch. 8, pg. 32*).

Moreover, they reveal the methods and tactics that should be put into practice in order to achieve what is defined as 'The Revolutionary Project. Our strategic objective' (*Book 3, ch. 10, pg. 33-37*). What is the goal they propose? It's very simple. Establish "the socialist economy for the XXI century" (pg. 35-37). In this section, the following projects of clearly communist bent may be read:

- **New Economic Justicialism or Peronism ('living well' or socialist economy for the XXI century):**

We want an economy at the service of the people, where the riches and the profits are distributed with justice, where salary is a source of dignity, where there is no exploitation or exclusion. **We want an economy where the principal recourses are in the hands of the popular government.** Our mines, our petroleum, our earth, our exterior commerce, our transport, our public service, our health, education and recreation are too important to be in the hands of the market. **We the workers can manage the great factories without the necessity of managers** as the recuperated companies have shown; we can distribute the food without the necessity of intermediaries that remain with the lion's share. We can cultivate the earth and take care of the environment if the earth is distributed in equal shares.

This economy does not go against individual initiative, it does not claim to eliminate all kinds of private property, but rather in the first place, to put the economy at the service of the people and not of money, to put property at the service of the community and not of individual profit. Perhaps in this way, some day, we will arrive at a society where 'each one contributes according to their capacity and each one receives according to his necessities.'

Nor does this deny the development of the individual character, which is very distinct from individualism. Our principle objective is so that all of the companions may enjoy their time to develop as peoples, to create, to love, to play, to have a good time, to share with family and friends, to enjoy art and culture, to enjoy sport, to contemplate the world, to know their homeland. **In many countries the development of a new economy – that is communitarian, christian, humanist, solidary – is being attempted. In Ecuador, Bolivia or Venezuela, in different ways, an advance towards a new economic order is being carried out,** where not money but human persons and families will be in the centre (*Book 3, ch. 10, pg. 35-37*).



As we see, Pérsico and Grabois form a very harmonious duet in which the ideology, desire to fight and give for the socialist cause is not lacking. The former, naturally, can't help but display a close friendship with Francis, which in these days, is worth more than any financing from the Kirchnerist

government... (*Evita capital movement*). But, Grabois does not let himself be outdone in love for Francis – with his profile on *Twitter*



THE MARXIST LEADER OF THE LANDLESS WORKERS MOVEMENT



Another member of the organizing committee of the II World Meeting of Popular Movements, is the director of the MST (*Landless Workers Movement – in Portuguese, Movimento Sem Terra*), João Pedro Stédile. The Marxist ideology that inspired Stédile is revealed in a farewell speech to a comrade in militancy, Vito *Giannotti*, deceased in July of 2015: ‘Gramsci’, ‘struggles of the working class’, ‘struggle of the masses’, ‘militancy’, ‘socialist ideals’, ‘social equality’, are some of the topics mentioned. (*We’ve lost a great comrade, Vito*). The desire to fight of these postulators is reflected in the telling symbol of the movement.



Without doubt, the MST is a group formed for decided and radical combat. In its magazine, no. 326 of December, 2014, it announces that for Brazil the year 2015 would be decisive: a year of great mobilization for Agrarian Reform.



Its editorial doesn't hide the fact that the 'retaking of the fight of the earth will give the tone to a new moment of class struggle.' And so that the militants and the activists of the MST do not forget their ideological mentors, on p. 14, they are reminded – not without a certain emotional nostalgia – that the Cuban Revolution of 1959 was undertaken by Fidel, Ché Guevara and Camilo Cienfuegos (*MST newspaper*).

It's also very informative to take a look at the abundant bibliography that the MST presents in favor of Socialist Agrarian Reform, pro-communist proselytism, class struggle and social agitation.



Stedile with Nicolás Maduro

THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF CHILDREN: IDEOLOGICAL OBJECTIVES OF THE MST



However, the studies aimed at the ideologization of children draw immediate attention: 'The development of education in Cuba', 'How to use the mystique of the MST with children?' 'How to create the school that we desire?', 'Fun and games for children', 'Childhood education: constructing a new child'; 'Pedagogy of the MST: accompaniment toward the schools'. To evaluate the strongly Marxist ideological content of these works and others similar to them, enter the official site of the MST to see *the complete library that they offer*.

The 'putting into practice' of these Marxist approaches directed toward children, can be proven by entering into the same official side of the MST in the section *SEM TERRINHA* (translation: Landless Children). It causes real disconcertion to perceive that the 'awareness' and the 'ideologization' in the MST of Brazil begins at an early age, as can be observed in the photograph obtained from the official site of the movement.



Francis greets Stedile during the I World Meeting of Popular Movements, Rome, October, 2014

UPDATE – A Venezuelan priest sends us this interesting document on the work carried out by Stedile on March 5, 2015, for the Bolivarian commemoration of the second year of the death of Hugo Chavez:

THE WORLD MOVEMENT OF CHRISTIAN WORKERS

The third member of the organizing committee of the II World Meeting of Popular Movements was the Spaniard Xaro Castelló, seen in the photograph between her friends Grabois and Stédile. She is the president of the World Movement of Christian Workers (MMTC in Spanish) and militant of the Workers' Brotherhood of Catholic Action (HOAC –in Spanish). Judging by the age group of its members and the worn out proposals it upholds, the latter certainly has its days counted.



The proposals of the MMTC were approved in an important General Assembly undertaken in July, 2013, in Haltern am See, Germany. On this occasion, Castelló was elected president of the Movement. On one hand, the MMTC manifested itself against the current economical model which



it denominated as ‘neo-liberal capitalist’, for in their opinion it impedes ‘the construction of a just, fraternal and sustainable society.’ On the other hand, it declared that ‘there are sufficient recourses for all, therefore it is necessary to undertake a redistribution of riches in a just manner.’ Moreover, it affirmed that ‘an adequate social protection is necessary so that people are not enslaved by a capitalistic system that is immoral. It is thus necessary to fight against this capitalist neo-liberal model.’

The MMTC advocated for change when it declared that ‘another political model is necessary and possible, centered on the defense of justice, the common good and giving the power to the people. We need a political community at an international level that develops politics and a just distribution of economic, social and cultural riches.’ In all, the MMTC, different than the MST of João Pedro Stédile and the CTEP of Juan Grabois, does not present any concrete proposal as a political and social alternative. But is there any doubt that this alternative for Xaro Castelló is socialism? (*HOAC, August 2, 2013*)

AN EMERGING IDEOLOGIST WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT OF EVO MORALES



The fourth member elected to participate in the committee of the II World Meeting of Popular Movements was the vice minister of Social Movements of the government of Evo Morales, Alfredo Rada. When consulted by the Bolivian press regarding Francis’ visit to Bolivia and his encounter with the Popular Movements, he didn’t hesitate declare that: “for us the Pope has arguments that renew the approaches of Liberation Theology, the Catholic Church has as its position the benefits of the people and the poor. These approaches coincide with those for which the Government works together within social movements. Therefore there are points of agreement with the vision of ‘Living Well’ that in Bolivia is constructed from the Executive class to the social movements” (Rada: *‘Francis’ proposals coincide ...*)



MONSIGNOR SÁNCHEZ SORONDO MANIFESTED HIS REJECTION

FOR PRIVATE CAPITALISM



Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, the Argentine Monsignor *Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo*, participated in the press conference that presented the I World Meeting of Popular Movements, formulating an important declaration. The *Vatican Insider* emphasized them in the following manner:

Responding to the journalists participating in the press conference, who had asked if there wasn't a risk that this Encounter would become politicized, Msgr. Sorondo insisted: 'if politicalization is necessary?' – of course!, not in the bad meaning of the word, not useless ideologization, but rather implying that it is important that the politicians know of these problems, which requires a certain pressure. (*Vatican Insider*, October 24, 2014)

But, of what does this 'certain pressure' directed to the politicians consist? Does Msgr. Sánchez Sorondo have an 'ideologization' in mind that would be useful? What might this 'ideologization' be? Should we conclude that Msgr. Sánchez Sorondo was referring to the 'pressures' and the 'ideologizations' that the political leaders who had organized the World Meeting of Popular Movements provide? Each of us can reach our own conclusions according to our own God-given intelligence. In his speech during the II World Meeting of Popular Movements, demonstrating an ideological harmony with the militants and activists that listened attentively to him, Msgr. Sánchez Sorondo revealed only some of the 'pressures' and 'ideologizations' that he has in mind.

An article of the official page of the Popular Movements, wished to take the greatest advantage of his talk: "The capitalist system works in function of money, in which an exclusion results – because it benefits the system, with the objective of profit, the exclusion of a part of society – which is a consequence of how the system of work is organized today...", insisted Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Archbishop of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences in the Vatican, during the talk this morning. At that moment, experiences of struggles, grievances and forms of organization were exposed, mentioning different places of Latin America, where the neoliberal politicians and the profit of the global market marginalizes men and woman workers, and entire families, condemning them to poverty and marginalization." (*Popular movements*, July 8, 2015)

COMING TO CONCLUSIONS

The 'review' undertaken here permits a visualization of the ideological thought of the principle militants and integrants of the organizing committees of the first and second World Meeting of Popular Movements. We have observed that the key words that enter into the dynamic dispute of these

movements are: Karl Marx, Lenin, Mao, Gramsci, Fidel, Ché Guevara, Hugo Chávez, Socialism, Communism, communitarianism, self-management, class struggle, justice, equality, anti-capitalism, anti-neoliberalism, unjust system, etc.

The official page of the Popular Movements, manifesting a joyful exultation for the results obtained in both events, presented the following article:

‘This is an unmatched experience...’ ‘I knew it would be beautiful, but never thought it would be like this...’ ‘I was surprised with the color, the voice of the people, their struggles, and now with the support of the Pope, we do no doubt have a path to follow, but better accompanied...’; these were some of the commentaries expressed at the closing plenary of the official opening on the first day at the II Meeting of Popular Movements that counted with the presence of Evo Morales, president of the Plurinational State of Bolivia. (*Popular movements*, July 7, 2015)

Faced with this colorful political and ideological background, the words that Francis directed to the participants of the first and second World Meeting of Popular Movements, which we will analyze in the *next entry*, acquire an unexpected scope. At the same time, they reveal ideologies never seen before in the Pontiff...Analyzing the second decade of the XXI century and specifically this Pontificate, Church historians will have a vast field of study. Who was Francis? What epithet will he be known by in future centuries?

Even in the IV century, Arnobius of Sicca, perplexed by the comportment of many of his contemporaries, affirmed: ‘cum quo aliquis iungitur, talis erit’, which translated freely corresponds to our popular expression: ‘Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are’.

Tell me who your friends are and I will tell you who you are: seems to be an infallible rule... Could this be true? Let each one judge for himself...

ADDENDUM TO THE ENGLISH DZB: SOME LINKS IN ENGLISH:

The Church and President Evo Morales have been at odds on various issues.

<http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pontiff-denounces-attack-on-bolivian-cardinal>

Evo Morales: Ten commandments against capitalism, for life and humanity

<http://climateandcapitalism.com/2013/01/15/evo-morales-ten-commandments-against-capitalism-for-life-and-humanity/>

Keep God in schools, Bolivians tell government

http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/keep_god_in_schools_bolivians_tell_government/

The World Meeting of Popular Movements holds encounter in Rome

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<http://www.news.va/en/news/world-meeting-of-popular-movements-the-excluded-ar>

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Bolivian President Evo Morales calls Pope Francis’ teachings ‘socialism’

<http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/07/10/president-evo-morales-calls-pope-francis-teachings-socialist/>

The Pope's message in Bolivia and to the world: Report by a Canadian participant:

<http://lifeonleft.blogspot.nl/2015/07/the-popes-message-in-bolivia-and-to.html>

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<http://en.denzingerbergoglio.com/many-grave-sins-were-committed-against-the-native-peoples-of-america-in-the-name-of-god-i-humbly-ask-forgiveness-not-only-for-the-offenses-of-the-church-herself-but-also-for-crimes-committed-against/>

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**Tell me who your friends are, and I will tell you who you are (II):
'It is strange but, if I talk about this, some say that the Pope is communist'**

As everyone knows, the famous saying 'When in Rome, do as the Romans do' insinuates an adaptation to the customs and culture of the places we visit, in order to feel more at ease and be more easily accepted by the inhabitants. This norm is applied, obviously, to those practices that do not offend good morals, for it is also true that as good Catholics we should never frequent places where this could occur. Even more so, places where our faith might be put at risk. In the previous entry of this study, we had taken a look at the protagonists of the two events of the World Meeting of Popular Movements celebrated in Rome and in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, under the auspices of Pope Francis and promoted by the Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace in collaboration with the Pontifical Academy for Social Sciences. In light of these considerations, any Catholic should have qualms to participate in such events, which are nothing less than turbulent political rallies. Nonetheless, even graver than the error of participating, would be letting oneself be influenced by the subversive ideas that were proclaimed during the varied speeches that took place.

Now, what would we think of someone who presents himself at such an encounter, and perhaps, inebriated by the incendiary revolutionary speeches, unites himself to them with his words? It would be bringing to the extreme a poor adaptation of the old saying: 'When in Rome...' And us, what do we chose? The revolutionary speeches of social leaders, or the words of the Magisterium?

FRANCIS

This meeting of grassroots movements is a sign, it is a great sign, for you have brought a reality that is often silenced into the presence of God, the Church and all peoples. **The poor not only suffer injustice, they also struggle against it! You are not satisfied with empty promises, with alibis or excuses. Nor do you wait with arms crossed for NGOs to help, for welfare schemes or paternalistic solutions that never arrive; or if they do, then it is with a tendency to anaesthetize or to domesticate...** and this is rather perilous. **One senses that the poor are no longer waiting. You want to be protagonists. You get organized, study, work, issue demands and, above all, practice that very special solidarity that exists among those who suffer, among the poor, and that our civilization seems to have forgotten or would strongly prefer to forget. Solidarity is a word that is not always well received. In certain circumstances it has become a dirty word, something one dares not say. However, it is a word that means much more than an occasional gesture of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all take priority over the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means fighting against the structural causes of poverty and inequality; of the lack of work, land and housing; and of the denial of social and labor rights. It means confronting the destructive effects of the empire of money: forced dislocation, painful emigration, human trafficking, drugs, war, violence and all those realities that many of you suffer and that we are all called upon to transform. Solidarity, understood in its deepest sense, is a way of making history, and this is what the popular movements are doing. This meeting of ours is not shaped by an ideology. You do not work with abstract ideas; you work with realities such as those I just mentioned and many others that you have told me about. You have your feet in the mud, you are up to your elbows in flesh-and-blood reality. Your**

carry the smell of your neighbourhood, your people, your struggle! We want your voices to be heard – voices that are rarely heard. No doubt this is because your voices cause embarrassment, no doubt it is because your cries are bothersome, **no doubt because people are afraid of the change that you seek.** However, without your presence, without truly going to the fringes, the good proposals and projects we often hear about at international conferences remain stuck in the realm of ideas and wishful thinking. **The scandal of poverty cannot be addressed by promoting strategies of containment that only tranquilize the poor and render them tame and inoffensive.** How sad it is when we find, behind allegedly altruistic works, the other being reduced to passivity or being negated; or worse still, we find hidden personal agendas or commercial interests. ‘Hypocrites’ is what Jesus would say to those responsible. **How marvelous it is, by contrast, when we see peoples moving forward, especially their young and their poorest members. Then one feels a promising breeze that revives hope for a better world. May this breeze become a cyclone of hope. This is my wish.** This meeting of ours responds to a very concrete desire, something that any father and mother would want for their children – a desire for what should be within everyone’s reach, namely land, housing and work. However, nowadays, it is sad to see that land, housing and work are ever more distant for the majority. **It is strange but, if I talk about this, some say that the Pope is communist. [...] Some of you said that this system cannot endure. We must change it.** We must put human dignity back at the centre and on that pillar build the alternative social structures we need. **This must be done with courage but also with intelligence, with tenacity but without fanaticism, with passion yet without violence.** And all of us together, **addressing the conflicts** without getting trapped in them, always seeking to resolve the tensions in order to reach a higher plane of unity, of peace and of justice. [...] Grassroots movements express the urgent need to revitalize our democracies, so often hijacked by innumerable factors. **It is impossible to imagine a future for society without the active participation of great majorities as protagonists, and such proactive participation overflows the logical procedures of formal democracy. Moving towards a world of lasting peace and justice calls us to go beyond paternalistic forms of assistance; it calls us to create new forms of participation that include popular movements and invigorate local, national and international governing structures with that torrent of moral energy that springs from including the excluded in the building of a common destiny.** And all this with a constructive spirit, without resentment, with love. (*Address to the participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*, October 28, 2014)

Several months ago, we met in Rome, and I remember that first meeting. In the meantime I have kept you in my thoughts and prayers. I am happy to see you again, here, as you discuss the best ways to overcome the grave situations of injustice experienced by the excluded throughout our world. Thank you, President Evo Morales, for your efforts to make this meeting possible. [...] Do we realize that that system has imposed the mentality of profit at any price, with no concern for social exclusion or the destruction of nature? If such is the case, I would insist, let us not be afraid to say it: **we want change, real change, structural change. This system is by now intolerable: farmworkers find it intolerable, laborers find it intolerable, communities find it intolerable, peoples find it intolerable ...** The earth itself – our sister, Mother Earth, as Saint Francis would say – also finds it intolerable. [...] Once capital becomes an idol and guides people’s decisions, once greed for money presides over the entire socio-economic system, it ruins society, it condemns and enslaves men and women, it destroys

human fraternity, it sets people against one another and, as we clearly see, it even puts at risk our common home, sister and mother earth. [...] **You, the lowly, the exploited, the poor and underprivileged, can do, and are doing, a lot.** I would even say that **the future of humanity is in great measure in your own hands, through your ability to organize and carry out creative alternatives, through your daily efforts to ensure the three 'L's' – do you agree? – (labor, lodging, land) and through your proactive participation in the great processes of change on the national, regional and global levels. Don't lose heart! Secondly, you are sowers of change. Here in Bolivia I have heard a phrase which I like: 'process of change'.** Change seen not as something which will one day result from any one political decision or change in social structure. We know from painful experience that changes of structure which are not accompanied by a sincere conversion of mind and heart sooner or later end up in bureaucratization, corruption and failure. There must be a change of heart. **That is why I like the image of a 'process', processes** where the drive to sow, to water seeds which others will see sprout, replaces the ambition to occupy every available position of power and to see immediate results. The option is to bring about processes and not to occupy positions. Each of us is just one part of a complex and differentiated whole, interacting in time: peoples who struggle to find meaning, a destiny, and to live with dignity, to 'live well', and in that sense, worthily. (*Address to the participants at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, July 9, 2015*)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

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Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

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I – AGITATION, HATRED TOWARD HIGHER CLASSES, REBELLION, THIRST FOR JUSTICE: INSTRUMENTS FOR STRUGGLE TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM

LEO XIII

Communists and socialists urge the popular passions on to lawlessness and sedition

For, the fear of God and reverence for divine laws being taken away, the authority of rulers despised, sedition permitted and approved, and the popular passions urged on to lawlessness, with no restraint save that of punishment, a change and overthrow of all things will necessarily follow. Yea, this change and overthrow is deliberately planned and put forward by many associations of communists and socialists. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Humanum genus*, no. 27, April 20, 1884)

PIUS X

When defending the cause of the poor avoid using language that might inspire aversion toward the upper classes of society

Finally, Catholic writers, when defending the cause of the proletariat and the poor, should avoid adopting language that might inspire aversion toward the upper classes of society. Refrain from speaking of vindication and justice, when in reality it is simply charity that is concerned, as has already been explained. Remember that Jesus Christ wished to unite all men within the bond of mutual love, which is the perfection of justice, and which includes the obligation of working for each other's reciprocal welfare. (Pius X. *Motu Proprio Fin dalla prima (Sillabo sociale)*, no. 19, December 18, 1903)

Christians may not foster enmities and dissensions between the classes of civil society

All who glory in the name of Christian, either individually or collectively, if they wish to remain true to their vocation, may not

foster enmities and dissensions between the classes of civil society. On the contrary, they must promote mutual concord and charity. The social question and its associated controversies, such as the nature and duration of labor, the wages to be paid, and workingmen's strikes, are not simply economic in character. Therefore they cannot be numbered among those which can be settled apart from ecclesiastical authority. (Pius X. *Encyclical Singulari quadam*, no. 3, September 24, 1912)

BENEDICT XV

The fallacies of the agitators drive the poor against the rich

Drawn up against those who possess property, whether by inheritance or by industry, stand the proletariat and the workers, inflamed with hatred and envy, because, although they are by nature the same, they do not occupy the same position as the others. Once they have been imbued with the fallacies of the agitators, to whose behests they are most docile, who will ever make them see that it does not follow that because men are equal by their nature, they must all occupy an equal place in the community? And further, who will ever make them see that the position of each one is that which each by use of his natural gifts -unless prevented by force of circumstances -is able to make for himself? And so the poor who strive against the rich as though they had taken part of the goods of others, not merely act contrary to justice and charity, but also act irrationally, particularly as they themselves by honest industry can improve their fortunes if they choose. It is not necessary to enumerate the many consequences, not less disastrous for the individual than for the community, which follow from this class hatred. We all see and deplore the frequency of strikes, which suddenly interrupt the course of city and of national life in their most necessary functions, we see hostile gatherings and tumultuous crowds, and it not infrequently happens that weapons are used and human blood is spilled. (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Ad Beatissimi apostolorum*, no. 12, November 1, 1914)

The enemies of the Church insidiously incite to make immoderate demands, fostering hatred amongst classes

Wherefore, while we exhort the rich to practice liberality and to be inspired more by fairness than by the rule; likewise we warn the proletarians, to zeal for their own Faith, which is put in danger if they exceed in their demands. For, here exactly is the insidiousness of the enemies, who stir on to make immoderate demands, even of Church; and when what is sought is not obtained, they to incite the multitude rebellion. It is consequently necessary to abstain from intemperance: **intemperance that is evident always if force is used, or if hatred amongst classes is fostered**, or if the many social differences that are willed by nature itself and by human fraternity are ignored, and when finally the end to all human life is placed in the conquest of ephemeral goods. (Benedict XV. *Letter Intelleximus ex iis*, June 14, 1920)

The poor should be wary of the enemies who teach to violate the rights of others

The poor and necessitated comprehend what a special love We harbor for them, as closer resemblances of the image of Jesus Christ. We fear, nonetheless, that at times when they revindicate their own rights, they let themselves be taken to the point of forgetting their own duties and overriding the rights of others, which religion demands be considered as sacred and inviolable, just as their own. It is true that the enemies teach the violation of the other people's rights; in this they find openly concord with those that they put all of man's happiness in this mortal life; but with respect to these the violated rights will eternally clamor. (Benedict XV. *Letter Intelleximus ex iis*, June 14, 1920)

The errors of Socialism should be overcome by brotherly love, which is not calculated to get rid of the differences of conditions and classes

It is not our intention here to repeat the arguments which clearly expose the errors of Socialism and of similar doctrines. Our predecessor, Leo XIII, most wisely did so in truly memorable Encyclicals; and you, Venerable Brethren, will take the greatest

care that those grave precepts are never forgotten, but that whenever circumstances call for it, they should be clearly expounded and inculcated in Catholic associations and congresses, in sermons and in the Catholic press. But more especially -and We do not hesitate to repeat it -by the help of every argument, supplied by the Gospels or by the nature of man himself, or by the consideration of the interests of the individual and of the community, let us strive to exhort all men, that in virtue of the divine law of charity they should love one another with brotherly love. Brotherly love is not calculated to get rid of the differences of conditions and therefore of classes - a result which is just as impossible as that in the living body all the members should have the same functions and dignity - but it will bring it to pass that those who occupy higher positions will in some way bring themselves down to those in a lower position, and treat them not only justly, for it is only right that they should, but kindly and in a friendly and patient spirit, and the poor on their side will rejoice in their prosperity and rely confidently on their help -even as the younger son of a family relies on the help and protection of his elder brother. (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Ad Beatissimi apostolorum*, no. 13, November 1, 1914)

Socialists present themselves as offering 'better conditions', employing acrimonious language to incite the multitudes to social revolution

Observe, therefore, how much damage is done to the interest of the workers, by those who, presenting themselves as attempting to better their conditions, show themselves to be attentive exclusively to the acquisition of those passing things and not only neglect to moderate the aspirations with the summons to Christian duties, but rather make every effort to urge them on against the rich with that acrimony of language that often is used by our enemies to incite the multitudes to social revolution. To remedy so great a danger, will be Your care, venerable brother; point out, as you already do, to those who dedicate themselves to promote the cause of the workers, that these, taking care to avoid the harshness of language used by the 'socialists', should carry out and action that is and a propaganda that

is totally imbued with the Christian spirit; without which they can cause great harm, and certainly will be of no good. (Benedict XV. *Letter Soliti nos*, March 11, 1920)

The distinction of social classes proceeds from nature, and so from the very will of God, since 'He himself made both small and great'

Those who are have less and who are of a lower social position must therefore understand well this truth: that the distinction of social classes proceeds from nature, and therefore from the very will of God, since 'He himself made both small and great' (Wis 6:7); and this works marvellously for the good of each individual and of the community. **They should be convinced, then, that while they may better their conditions through effort and favored by the generous, there will always exist for them – as for all human beings – no small portions of suffering.** Wherefore, if they wish to act wisely, they will not aspire to utopias beyond their reach, and will support with peace and moral strength the inevitable evils of this life, in the hope of the immortal goods. (Benedict XV. *Letter Soliti nos*, March 11, 1920)

PIUS XI

This organized and militant atheism works tirelessly through its agitators, promoting special expositions and conferences

The wicked were never lacking, nor even those who denied God; but they were relatively few, alone and isolated; and did not dare, or did not believe it opportune to openly reveal their evil thoughts, as the inspired Psalmist seems to insinuate, when he exclaimed: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'" (Ps 14:1). The impious, the atheist, as one within a multitude, denied God, the Creator, but in the intimacy of the heart. **Today, on the contrary, atheism has already invaded great multitudes of the people: with its organizations it penetrates even within the public schools, it is manifested in the theatres and in order to spread employs even the motion pictures, the phonograph, the radio; with its own typography it prints brochures in all languages; promotes special expositions and**

public manifestations; it has constituted its own political parties, and commercial and military institutions. This organized and militant atheism works tirelessly through its agitators, with conferences and illustrations, with all of the means of hidden and manifest propaganda, within all classes, in all of the streets, in every salon, affording to this its detrimental activity the moral authority of its own universities, and binding the incautious with the powerful chains of its organizing strength. Truly, in observing so much effort put at the service of such an iniquitous cause, the sad lament of Christ comes spontaneously to mind and lips: 'The sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light' (Lk 16:8). (Pius XI. *Encyclical Caritate Christi compulsi*, May 3, 1932)

Communists put the Holy Cross together with the symbols of modern imperialism, associating the war against God with the battle for bread, land possession, adequate salaries and respectable habitation

The chiefs and authors of all of this campaign of atheism, taking advantage of the current economic crisis, with an infernal dialectic, seek to convince the famished masses that God and religion are the cause of this universal misery. **The Holy Cross of Our Lord, symbol of humility and poverty, is put together with the symbols of modern imperialism, as though Religion was allied with those dark forces, which produce so many evils for mankind. In this way they attempt, and not without results, to link the war against God with the battle for daily bread, with the desire to possess one's own land, to have adequate salaries, respectable habitations, in short, a state of life that is appropriate for man.** The most legitimate and necessary desires, as well as the most brutal instincts, all serve for their anti-religious program; as though the divine order was in contradiction with the well-being of humanity and was not, on the contrary, its only and certain guardian; as though human forces with the means of modern technology, could combat the divine forces to introduce a new and better order of things. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Caritate Christi compulsi*, May 3, 1932)

The enemies of all order take advantage of the economic crisis to spread destructive delirium of their opinions

As we have affirmed, an economic crisis persists throughout the whole world, which the poor suffer with greater severity. [...] The workers and artisans suffer spiritually and materially because they lack not only what they could earn worthily, such as a just salary, but also the occupation and the work itself; hence, they find themselves doomed to unemployment. [...] But certainly there are those who wish to take advantage – of course, a very sad advantage and gain – of this constraint and necessity: the enemies of the public, civil and religious order. They plot to make war against human society, against holy religion and even against God. Without doubt, all know of the destructive delirium of their opinions, which they widely divulge; and the crimes committed a little while ago and even at a recent date demonstrate more than sufficiently that they work decidedly to advance their evil projects and designs; what has already occurred for some time and incessantly within the immense and desolate lands of Russia, what has occurred in Spain, what has occurred in Mexico, and ultimately, what has occurred in within the small and large nations of central Europe, all give clear evidence of what may be hoped for with the arrival – and where has it not already arrived, venerable brothers? – of the propaganda of such evil doctrines and its even more wicked influence. (Pius XI. *Allocution Iterum vos*, March 13, 1933, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 25 (1933), p. 12-13)

With the dialectical aspect of their materialism, Communists claim that conflict carries the world forward -class struggle becomes a ‘crusade’ for the progress of humanity

The doctrine of modern Communism, which is often concealed under the most seductive trappings, is in substance based on the principles of dialectical and historical materialism previously advocated by Marx, of which the theoreticians of bolshevism claim to possess the only genuine interpretation. [...] In such a doctrine, as is evident, there is no room for the idea of God; there is no difference between matter and spirit, between

soul and body; there is neither survival of the soul after death nor any hope in a future life. Insisting on the dialectical aspect of their materialism, the Communists claim that the conflict which carries the world towards its final synthesis can be accelerated by man. Hence they endeavor to sharpen the antagonisms which arise between the various classes of society. Thus the class struggle with its consequent violent hate and destruction takes on the aspects of a crusade for the progress of humanity. On the other hand, all other forces whatever, as long as they resist such systematic violence, must be annihilated as hostile to the human race. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 9, March 19, 1937)

The apostles of Communism take advantage of the needs of the poor to kindle their hearts to envy the rich

To priests in a special way We recommend anew the oft-repeated counsel of Our Predecessor, Leo XIII, to go to the workingman. We make this advice Our own, and faithful to the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church, We thus complete it: ‘Go to the workingman, especially where he is poor; and in general, go to the poor.’ The poor are obviously more exposed than others to the wiles of agitators who, taking advantage of their extreme need, kindle their hearts to envy of the rich and urge them to seize by force what fortune seems to have denied them unjustly. If the priest will not go to the workingman and to the poor, to warn them or to disabuse them of prejudice and false theory, they will become an easy prey for the apostles of Communism. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 61, March 19, 1937)

PIUS XII

Inequalities of culture, wealth and social position do not constitute any obstacle for the existence of an authentic spirit of community and fraternity

In a people worthy of this name, the citizen feels within himself the awareness of his personality, of his duties and his rights, of his own liberty united to the respect for the liberty and the

dignity of others. In a people worthy of this name, all of the inequalities, which have their origin not in the arbitrary, but rather from the very nature of things, inequalities of culture, wealth, social position – without injury, obviously, to justice and mutual charity – do not constitute, in reality, any obstacle for the existence and prevalence of an authentic spirit of community and fraternity. Moreover, these natural inequalities, far from undermining in any way civil equality, confer to it its legitimate meaning, that is, as regards the State, each citizen has the right to live his own personal life with dignity in the position and conditions in which the designs and the dispositions of Providence have placed him. (Pius XII. *Radio message Benignitas et humanitatis for Christmas, 1944*)

To expect the absolute equality of all would be the same as seeking to give identical functions to the diverse members of a single organism

In the second place it is necessary that you truly feel as brothers. This is not a mere guise: you are truly children of God and therefore you are truly brothers. Now, brothers are not born nor do they remain all equal: some are strong, others weak, some intelligent, others incapable; perhaps one is abnormal, and it could also happen that one become unworthy. It is therefore inevitable that there exist a certain material, intellectual and moral inequality, even within the same family. But, as nothing – not even contingencies, nor the use of free will – can destroy paternity and maternity, in the same way there should be intangibly and effectively maintained, within the limits of the just and possible, fraternity among the sons of the same father and mother. Apply this to your parish, which We desire to see transformed into a truly great family. **To expect the absolute equality of all would be the same as seeking to give identical functions to the diverse members of a single organism.** That said, it is necessary to make this fraternity work amongst yourselves, for it is only when you love one another, that men will recognize that you are a Christianly renovated parish. (Pius XII. *Speech to a group of parishioners from Marsciano, Perusa, June 4, 1953*)

The attempt to rupture the links between managers and workers is the pretension of blind and irrational despotism

We have just referred to the preoccupations of those who participate in industrial production. **Erroneous and fateful in its consequences is the prejudice, unfortunately very widespread, that sees in it an irreducible opposition of divergent interests. The opposition is only apparent. In the economic dominion there exists a community of activities and of interests between the managers and the workers. To ignore this reciprocal link, to work to rupture it, cannot be anything other than the result of the pretension of blind and irrational despotism. Company managers and workers are not irreconcilable enemies. They are cooperators in a common task.** They eat, we could say, at the same table, for in the end they live from the net and global utilities of the national economy. Each one of them receives his part, and under this aspect, the reciprocal relations do not put in any manner, one at the service of the other. (Pius XII. *Speech to the International Union of Catholic Associations, no. 2, May 7, 1949*)

JOHN XXIII

Anyone who ventures to deny that there are differences among social classes contradicts the very laws of nature and God's command

The harmonious unity which must be sought among peoples and nations also needs ever greater improvement among the various classes of individuals. Otherwise mutual antagonism and conflict can result, as we have already seen. And the next step brings rioting mobs, wanton destruction of property, and sometimes even bloodshed. Meanwhile public and private resources diminish and are stretched to the danger point.

On this point Pope Leo XIII made apt and appropriate comment: **'God has commanded that there be differences of classes in the human community and that these classes, by friendly cooperation, work out a fair and mutual adjustment of their interests'** (Letter *Permoti Nos*, 1895). For it is quite clear that 'as the symmetry of the human frame results from

suitable arrangement of the various parts of the body, so in a body politic it is ordained by nature that... the classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic. Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor labor without capital. Their mutual agreement will result in the splendor of right order' (Encyclical *Rerum novarum*, 1891). **Anyone, therefore, who ventures to deny that there are differences among social classes contradicts the very laws of nature. Indeed, whoever opposes peaceful and necessary cooperation among the social classes is attempting, beyond doubt, to disrupt and divide human society; he menaces and does serious injury to private interests and the public welfare.** As Our predecessor, Pius XII wisely said, 'In a nation that is worthy of the name, inequalities among the social classes present few or no obstacles to their union in common brotherhood. We refer, of course, to those inequalities which result not from human caprice but from the nature of things—inequalities having to do with intellectual and spiritual growth, with economic facts, with differences in individual circumstances, within, of course, the limits prescribed by justice and mutual charity' (Christmas Message, 1944). (John XXIII. *Encyclical Ad Petri cathedram*, no. 36-39, June 29, 1959)

PAUL VI

The illusion and danger for a Christian to enter into the practice of class struggle

While, through the concrete existing form of Marxism, one can distinguish these various aspects and the questions they pose for the reflection and activity of Christians, **it would be illusory and dangerous to reach a point of forgetting the intimate link which radically binds them together, to accept the elements of Marxist analysis without recognizing their relationships with ideology, and to enter into the practice of class struggle and its Marxist interpretations,** while failing to note the kind of totalitarian and violent society to which this process leads. (Paul VI. *Apostolic letter Octogesima Adveniens*, no. 34, May 14, 1971)

The Church cannot adhere to Marxist social and political movements: they hold false notions of man, of history, and the world

And then we have the sixth axiom, which is the most disputed and complex. **The Church does not adhere and cannot adhere to the social, ideological and political movements, which, taking their origin and strength from Marxism, have conserved its principles and negative methods, for an incomplete notion – proper to radical Marxism, and therefore false – of man, of history, of the world. Atheism, which it professes and promotes, is not in favor of the scientific conception of the universe and civilization, but rather consists in a blindness, from which man and society end up undergoing the gravest consequences in the long run. Materialism, which results from it, exposes man to experiences and temptations that are extremely harmful; extinguishes his authentic spirituality and his transcendent hope.** (Paul VI. *Homily to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, May 22, 1966)

Class struggle, promoted by false and dangerous ideologies, fatally leads to violence and oppression, conducing to an authoritarian and totalitarian system

Class struggle, erected within a system, violates and impedes social peace; and fatally leads to violence and to oppression, therefore in the abolition of liberty, conducing then to the instauration of a highly authoritarian and bluntly totalitarian system. With this, the Church does not neglect any of the opportunities for justice and toward the progress of the working class; and let it be again affirmed that in the Church, rectifying these errors and these deviations, does not exclude from its love any man or any worker. A known fact, therefore – inclusively through an existing historic experience that does not permit illusions but rather painful experience – is that through the ideological pressure and practices that they [Marxists] exert in the world of work, where they pretend to interpret the aspirations and promote grievances, generating in this way great difficulties and divisions. **We do not wish to dispute now, but rather remember that the same word, which today, you**

Christian Workers, give testimony of honor and gratitude, is that which adverts us to not put our confidence in false and dangerous ideologies. (Paul VI. *Homily to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, May 22, 1966)

JOHN PAUL II

Cases where the ‘option for the poor’ led to a ‘politicization’ of the consecrated life, leading to conflicts, violence and partisan choices

There have not been lacking cases in which this option [for the poor] has brought on a politicization of the consecrated life, not exempting violent and partisan options, with the manipulation of people and institutions for purposes absolutely foreign to the mission of the Church. It is therefore necessary to recall what was said in the Instruction *Libertatis conscientia*: ‘The special option for the poor, far from being a sign of particularism or sectarianism, manifests the universality of the Church’s being and mission. This option excludes no one. This is the reason why the Church cannot express this option by means of reductive sociological and ideological categories which would make this preference an option of a partisan and of a conflictual character’ (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation, no. 68) (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter to the Religious of Latin America on the V Centenary evangelization of the New World*, June 29, 1990)

BENEDICT XVI

Marxists reject true charity since they consider it a means of preserving the status quo and slowing down a potential revolution

Christian charitable activity must be independent of parties and ideologies. It is not a means of changing the world ideologically, and it is not at the service of worldly stratagems, but it is a way of making present here and now the love which man always needs. The modern age, particularly from the nineteenth century on, has been dominated by various versions of a philosophy of progress whose most radical

form is Marxism. Part of Marxist strategy is the theory of impoverishment: in a situation of unjust power, it is claimed, anyone who engages in charitable initiatives is actually serving that unjust system, making it appear at least to some extent tolerable. This in turn slows down a potential revolution and thus blocks the struggle for a better world. Seen in this way, charity is rejected and attacked as a means of preserving the status quo. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Deus Caritas est*, December 25, 2005)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The ‘marxist analysis’ proffers that an intolerable and explosive situation requires ‘effective action’: something that ‘cannot be put off’

Impatience and a desire for results has led certain Christians, despairing of every other method, to turn to what they call ‘marxist analysis.’ Their reasoning is this: an intolerable and explosive situation requires ‘effective action’ which cannot be put off. Effective action presupposes a ‘scientific analysis’ of the structural causes of poverty. Marxism now provides us with the means to make such an analysis, they say. Then one simply has to apply the analysis to the third-world situation, especially in Latin America. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on certain aspects of the ‘Theology of Liberation’, Ch. VII, no. 1-2, August 6, 1984)

A marxist axiom: class struggle is the fundamental law of history -to preach love for the poor is to maintain an illusion with bad faith to favor capitalism

It is not the ‘fact’ of social stratification with all its inequity and injustice, but the ‘theory’ of class struggle as the fundamental law of history which has been accepted by these ‘theologies of liberation’ as a principle. The conclusion is drawn that the class struggle thus understood divides the Church herself, and that in light of this struggle even ecclesial realities must be judged. The claim is even made that it would be maintaining an illusion with bad faith to propose that love in its universality can conquer what is the primary structural law of capitalism. (Congregation for the

Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation', Ch. VII, no. 2, August 6, 1984)

Another marxist axiom: the 'driving force of history' is class struggle, bringing about the 'self-redemption' of man -this is opposed to the faith of the Church

According to this conception, [Marxist] the class struggle is the driving force of history. History thus becomes a central notion. It will be affirmed that God Himself makes history. It will be added that there is only one history, one in which the distinction between the history of salvation and profane history is no longer necessary. To maintain the distinction would be to fall into 'dualism'. Affirmations such as this reflect historicist immanentism. Thus there is a tendency to identify the kingdom of God and its growth with the human liberation movement, and to make history itself the subject of its own development, as a process of the self-redemption of man by means of the class struggle. This identification is in opposition to the faith of the Church, as it has been reaffirmed by the Second Vatican Council. (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 9-17) (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, Ch. IX, no. 3, August 6, 1984)

A political policy conceived as a purely temporal messianism – their 'option for the poor' with class struggle, the driving force of history

Along these lines, some go so far as to identify God Himself with history and to define faith as 'fidelity to history', which means adhering to a political policy which is suited to the growth of humanity, conceived as a purely temporal messianism. As a consequence, faith, hope, and charity are given a new content: they become 'fidelity to history', 'confidence in the future', and 'option for the poor.' This is tantamount to saying they have been emptied of their theological reality. A radical politicization of faith's affirmations and of theological judgments follows inevitably from this new conception. The question no longer has to do with simply drawing attention to the consequences and political implications of the truths of faith, which are respected beforehand

for their transcendent value. In this new system, every affirmation of faith or of theology is subordinated to a political criterion, which in turn depends on the class struggle, the driving force of history. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, Ch. IX, no. 4-6, August 6, 1984)

Class struggle demands that the rich class is viewed an enemy to be fought. The love of neighbor is only for the 'new man', who arises out of the victorious revolution

As a result, participation in the class struggle is presented as a requirement of charity itself. The desire to love everyone here and now, despite his class, and to go out to meet him with the non-violent means of dialogue and persuasion, is denounced as counterproductive and opposed to love. If one holds that a person should not be the object of hate, it is claimed nevertheless that, if he belongs to the objective class of the rich, he is primarily a class enemy to be fought. Thus the universality of love of neighbor and brotherhood become an eschatological principle, which will only have meaning for the 'new man', who arises out of the victorious revolution. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, Ch. IX, no. 7, August 6, 1984)

The 'theologies of liberation' create disastrous confusion between the 'poor' of the Scripture and the 'proletariat' of Marx: fight for the rights of the poor within the ideological perspective of the class struggle

But the 'theologies of liberation', which reserve credit for restoring to a place of honor the great texts of the prophets and of the Gospel in defense of the poor, go on to a disastrous confusion between the 'poor' of the Scripture and the 'proletariat' of Marx. In this way they pervert the Christian meaning of the poor, and they transform the fight for the rights of the poor into a class fight within the ideological perspective of the class struggle. For them the 'Church of the poor' signifies the Church of the class which has become aware of the requirements of the revolutionary struggle as a step toward liberation and which celebrates

this liberation in its liturgy. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, Ch. IX, no. 10, August 6, 1984)

The 'theologies of liberation' seek to 'conscientize': the people must 'take conscience' that it is being oppressed in the light of the organized struggle for freedom

But the 'theologies of liberation' of which we are speaking, mean by 'Church of the People' a Church of the class, a Church of the oppressed people whom it is necessary to 'conscientize' in the light of the organized struggle for freedom. For some, the people, thus understood, even become the object of faith. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, Ch. IX, no. 12, August 6, 1984)

II – ECONOMIC FAILURE AND OPPRESSION: TYPICAL FRUITS OF COMMUNISM AND SOCIALISM

LEO XIII

Not only temporal possessions but also morality and religion threatened by the great error of socialism

At the very beginning of Our pontificate We clearly pointed out what the peril was which confronted society on this head, and We deemed it Our duty to warn Catholics, in unmistakable language, how great the error was which was lurking in the utterances of socialism, and how great the danger was that threatened not only their temporal possessions, but also their morality and religion. That was the purpose of Our encyclical letter *Quod Apostolici Muneris* which We published on the 28th of December in the year 1878. (Leon XIII. *Encyclical Graves de communi re*, January 18, 1901)

PIUS XI

The Communist doctrines are full of illusions and have shown to be incapable

of giving the worker a true and lasting material and spiritual wellbeing

Your paternal solicitude should care for with singular attention, the industrial workers as well as the farmers; they are the predilect of Our heart because they are in a social situation that Our Lord chose for himself during his earthly life, and because the conditions of their material life subject them to greater sufferings, since they are often deprived of the sufficient means for a worthy life of a Christian and of that tranquility of spirit which is born of a secure future. In their great majority, they unfortunately lack the spiritual and moral comforts that could sustain them in their anguish. Moreover, their situation exposes them to be more easily accessible to those whose doctrines claim, of course, to be inspired for the good of the worker and of the humble in general, but which are full of fateful errors, since they combat the Christian Faith – which assures the bases of rights and of social justice – and reject the spirit of fraternity and charity inculcated by the Gospel, which is the only element that can guarantee a sincere collaboration among the classes. On the other hand, such communist doctrines, founded upon pure materialism and the uncontrolled desire for earthly goods – as though they were capable of fully satisfying man – and because they absolutely forego the eternal goal, in practice they have shown to be full of illusions and incapable of giving the worker a true and lasting material and spiritual wellbeing. (Pius XI. *Apostolic letter*, January 18, 1939, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1942)

PIUS XII

Capitalism of the State (Communism) always ends up compressing and subduing the workers within a giant work machine

The social revolution boasts of elevating the working class to power: a vain affirmation and mere appearance of an impossible reality! In fact you observe that the working people remain tied, subjugated and constrained by the might of capitalism of the State; which compresses and subdues everything, the family no less than the conscience, transforming workers into a giant machine

of work. No differently from other systems and social orders, that it claims to combat, it concentrates, organizes and constrains all into a terrible instrument of war, that demands not only blood and health, but also the goods and prosperity of the people. And if the chiefs go haughtily after this or that advantage or betterment obtained in the ambit of work – agitating it and spreading it with noisy bragging – such a material advantage can never be a worthy recompense for the renunciation imposed on each one, that injure the rights of the person, liberty in the direction of the family, in the exercise of the profession, in the condition of citizen, and especially in the practice of religion and ultimately in the life of conscience. **No, your salvation is not in the revolution**, dear sons and daughters; and it is against **an authentic and sincere Christian profession**, the propensity – of thinking only of your own benefit and material advantage, that seems, nonetheless, each time more uncertain – toward a revolution that proceeds from injustice and civil insubordination, and to be sadly guilty of the blood of co-citizens and the destruction of common goods. (Paul XII. *Address to the representation of the workers of Italy*, June 13, 1943)

Marxism promises workers the factories and the peasants the earth -but after having sowed hatred, they impoverish the poor and make terror reign

Be it through the ability with which it masks its tactic and hides its strategy, be it due to the fear that it has known how to instill, as well as for the hope that it has awakened. **Atheistic Marxism has penetrated among you and is still very firm in its position.** Our heart is upset and tears come to Our eyes each time that we ask how is it possible that there still exists such consent and so much obstinacy within a considerable part of the best groups of workers. Is it possible that in this point nothing is able to open their eyes, nothing serves to move their hearts? They wish to remain with the enemies of God, they wish to strengthen the ranks, cooperating, in this way, to worsen the chaos of the modern world. Why? **Individuals and people have wished to lead them along the evil path, for they have promised a better distribution of goods, proclaiming at the same time a desire to save liberty, protect the family, assuring**

that the people will have power, the workers the factories and the peasants the earth. And if, on the contrary, after having sown hatred, provoked subversion and fomented discord, they arrive at power, they impoverish the poor and make terror reign. This is what is happening these days among the distressed Hungarian people, as documented by the evidence of blood, which shows with the evidence of blood how far those who hate God can go. (Pius XII. *Discourse to a pilgrimage of workers from Terni*, no. 2, November 18, 1956)

The Church rejects Communism as a social system in virtue of natural law and Christian doctrine

In the Christmas radio message last year we presented the Church's thought regarding this theme and now we intend to confirm it still once more. **We reject communism as a social system in virtue of Christian doctrine, and we should particularly affirm the foundations of natural law.** For the same reason, we equally reject the opinion that the Christian should see communism today as a phenomenon or a phase in the course of history, as an almost necessary evolutive 'moment' of the same and, consequently, accept it as decreed by Divine Providence. (Pius XII. *Christmas radio message*, Col cuore aperto, December 24, 1955)

JOHN PAUL II

Communism: a failed utopia. Capitalism: at the level of its basic principles is conformed to natural law, and so according to social doctrine of the Church, though its abuses are condemnable. The third way between them is another utopia

Q: You once told the Polish to 'seek a path hitherto unexplored'. Is this a call for a third way between capitalism and socialism?

A: **I fear that this third way is another utopia.** On one hand, we have **Communism which is a utopia that, put into practice, has proved to be a tragic failure.** On the other hand, there is **Capitalism which in its practical dimension, at the level of its basic principles is acceptable according to social doctrine of the Church, as it conforms in various aspects to natural law.** This is the opinion expressed by Pope Leo

XIII. Unfortunately, abuses take place – diverse forms of injustice, exploitation, violence and arrogance – that some make of this practice, which is in itself acceptable, and then we arrive at a form of brutal capitalism. The abuses of Capitalism are to be condemned. (John Paul II. *Interview with the journalist Jas Gawronski*, published in 'La Stampa', November 2, 1993)

In the name of justice and equality Marxism violated the liberty and the dignity of the individual and civil society: making him a slave

We have a long and painful history behind us, and feel the overwhelming need to look ahead to the future. Historical memory, however, must accompany us, because we can treasure the experience of these endless decades, in which inclusively **your country [Lithuania] has felt the weight of an iron dictatorship that in the name of justice and equality, violated the freedom and dignity of individuals and of civil society. How could this happen?** The analysis would be complex. However, it seems that among no lesser of the important reasons is the militant atheism in which Marxism was inspired: an atheism offensive inclusively to man, by taking away the most solid foundation and guarantee of his dignity. To this error others are added such as the materialistic concept of history, a harshly conflicting vision of society, the 'messianic' role attributed to the single political party, lord of the State. Everything converges so that **this system, born of the presumption of freeing man, ends up making him a slave.** (John Paul II. *Speech to the academic and intellectual world*, University of Vilnius, Lithuania, September 5, 1993)

The economic failure of communism resulted in a tragic utopia -the pretension of building a new world without God has proven illusory

What for years was impossible, today has become reality. What elements contributed and contribute to explain the point to which we have arrived? 'Warsaw, Moscow, Budapest, Berlin, Prague, Sofia, Bucharest, to name only the Capitals, have become almost like the steps of a pilgrimage to freedom' (Speech to the Diplomatic Corps, January 13, 1990). **Apparently, it all started with the economic**

collapse. This was the land chosen to build a new world, a new man, guided by the prospect of wellbeing; but with an existential project severely limited to the earthly horizon. This hope was a tragic utopia, because some essential aspects of the human person were neglected and denied: his uniqueness, the fact of being unrepeatable, his irrepressible yearning for freedom and truth, and his inability to feel happiness when excluding a transcendent relationship with God. This dimension of the person may be denied for a certain time, but not perennially rejected. The pretension of building a world without God has proven illusory. And it could not be otherwise! Only the timing and modality [of this proof] remained unknown. The suffering of the persecuted for justice (cf. Mt 5:10), the solidarity of all those who have united in the commitment to the dignity of man, the desire for the supernatural inherent in the human soul, and the prayer of the righteous contributed to help return to the path of freedom in the truth. (John Paul II. *Speech at the Welcoming Ceremony at Prague International Airport*, April 21, 1990)

The course of world history itself is showing the fallacy of the solutions proposed by Marxism

The course of world history itself is showing the fallacy of the solutions proposed by Marxism. This theoretical and pragmatic system methodically exacerbates divisions among people, and pretends to resolve the human questions within a horizon that is closed to the transcendent. In the opposite regard, the contemporary experience of the more developed countries reveals other serious defects: a vision of life based only on material well being and a selfish freedom that thinks it is unlimited. By their contrast these considerations offer dear directions for your future. There is no true progress without the integral truth about the human being, which Christians know is found only in Christ. Certainly we should want prosperity combined with the necessary overcoming of economic and cultural diversity and the total integration of all the regions of our vast geography in a broad program of progress and development. However, all this will be fragile and precarious if it is not combined with a deeper Christianization of our earth. (John Paul II. *Speech to the President of the Republic of Chile*, no. 4, April 22, 1991)

BENEDICT XVI

Marxist panacea: collectivization of the means of production as the remedy for all social problems

Marxism had seen world revolution and its preliminaries as the panacea for the social problem: revolution and the subsequent collectivization of the means of production, so it was claimed, would immediately change things for the better. This illusion has vanished. In today's complex situation, not least because of the growth of a globalized economy, the Church's social doctrine has become a set of fundamental guidelines offering approaches that are valid even beyond the confines of the Church: in the face of ongoing development these guidelines need to be addressed in the context of dialogue with all those seriously concerned for humanity and for the world in which we live. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Deus caritas est*, no. 27, December 25, 2005)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Communism: in the name of the liberation of the people, keeps whole nations in conditions unworthy of mankind

A major fact of our time ought to evoke the reflection of all those who would sincerely work for the true liberation of their brothers: millions of our own contemporaries legitimately yearn to recover those basic freedoms of which they were deprived by totalitarian and atheistic regimes which came to power by violent and revolutionary means, precisely in the name of the liberation of the people. This shame of our time cannot be ignored: while claiming to bring them freedom, these regimes keep whole nations in conditions of servitude which are unworthy of mankind. Those who, perhaps inadvertently, make themselves accomplices of similar enslavements betray the very poor they mean to help. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, Ch. XI, no. 10, August 6, 1984)

III – ILLUSIONS, UTOPIAS AND FANTASIES OF A 'BETTER WORLD' ARE ALWAYS PROPAGATED BY MARXISTS, SOCIALISTS AND COMMUNISTS

LEO XIII

Socialists make foolish promises to the people, so as to advance toward the fulfillment of the most criminal proposals

This lamentable moral consternation was the seed of restlessness within the popular classes, discontent and rebelliousness in spirits; consequently the agitations and frequent disorders, that were the prelude of graver storms. The miserable conditions of such a great part of the population, certainly worthy of redemption and of remedy, consequently served admirably for the intents of the expert agitators, and especially of the socialist factions, who, by means of foolish promises to the people advanced toward the fulfillment of the most criminal proposals. (Leo XIII. *Apostolic Letter*, Annum ingressi, Acte Sancta Sedis, 34, 1901-1902, p.520)

Working on the poor man's envy, socialists vainly contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all

To remedy these wrongs the socialists, working on the poor man's envy of the rich, are striving to do away with private property, and contend that individual possessions should become the common property of all, to be administered by the State or by municipal bodies. They hold that by thus transferring property from private individuals to the community, the present mischievous state of things will be set to rights, inasmuch as each citizen will then get his fair share of whatever there is to enjoy. But their contentions are so clearly powerless to end the controversy that were they carried into effect the working man himself would be among the first to suffer. They are, moreover, emphatically unjust, for they would rob the lawful possessor, distort the functions of the State, and create utter confusion in the community. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Rerum novarum*, no. 4, May 15, 1891)

Many attempt to spread the hideous deformities of communism and socialism, under the pretext of helping the multitude

Hence we have reached the limit of horrors, to wit, communism, socialism, nihilism, hideous deformities of the civil society of men and almost its ruin. And yet too many attempt to enlarge the scope of these evils, and under the pretext of helping the multitude, already have fanned no small flames of misery. The things we thus mention are neither unknown nor very remote from us. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Diuturnum illud*, no. 23, June 29, 1881)

PIUS X

Jesus exhorted love of our neighbor without instilling sentiments of rebellion – He did not respect false ideas, however sincere they might have appeared

We wish to draw your attention, Venerable Brethren, to this distortion of the Gospel and to the sacred character of Our Lord Jesus Christ, God and man, prevailing within the Sillon and elsewhere. As soon as the social question is being approached, it is the fashion in some quarters to first put aside the divinity of Jesus Christ, and then to mention only His unlimited clemency, His compassion for all human miseries, and His pressing exhortations to the love of our neighbor and to the brotherhood of men. True, Jesus has loved us with an immense, infinite love, and He came on earth to suffer and die so that, gathered around Him in justice and love, motivated by the same sentiments of mutual charity, all men might live in peace and happiness. But for the realization of this temporal and eternal happiness, He has laid down with supreme authority the condition that we must belong to His Flock, that we must accept His doctrine, that we must practice virtue, and that we must accept the teaching and guidance of Peter and his successors. Further, whilst Jesus was kind to sinners and to those who went astray, He did not respect their false ideas, however sincere they might have appeared. He loved them all, but He instructed them in order to convert them and save them. Whilst He called to Himself in order to comfort them, those who toiled and suffered, it was not to preach to them

the jealousy of a chimerical equality. Whilst He lifted up the lowly, it was not to instill in them the sentiment of a dignity independent from, and rebellious against, the duty of obedience. Whilst His heart overflowed with gentleness for the souls of good-will, He could also arm Himself with holy indignation against the profaners of the House of God, against the wretched men who scandalized the little ones, against the authorities who crush the people with the weight of heavy burdens without putting out a hand to lift them. He was as strong as he was gentle. He reproved, threatened, chastised, knowing, and teaching us that fear is the beginning of wisdom, and that it is sometimes proper for a man to cut off an offending limb to save his body. Finally, He did not announce for future society the reign of an ideal happiness from which suffering would be banished; but, by His lessons and by His example, He traced the path of the happiness which is possible on earth and of the perfect happiness in heaven: the royal way of the Cross. These are teachings that it would be wrong to apply only to one's personal life in order to win eternal salvation; these are eminently social teachings, and they show in Our Lord Jesus Christ something quite different from an inconsistent and impotent humanitarianism. (Pius X. *Apostolic letter Notre Charge Apostolique*, August 15, 1910)

The true friends of the people are neither revolutionaries, nor innovators

Let not these priests be misled, in the maze of current opinions, by the miracles of a false Democracy. Let them not borrow from the Rhetoric of the worst enemies of the Church and of the people, the high-flown phrases, full of promises; which are as high-sounding as unattainable. Let them be convinced that the social question and social science did not arise only yesterday; that the Church and the State, at all times and in happy concert, have raised up fruitful organizations to this end; that the Church, which has never betrayed the happiness of the people by consenting to dubious alliances, does not have to free herself from the past; that all that is needed is to take up again, with the help of the true workers for a social restoration, the organisms which the Revolution shattered, and to adapt them, in the same Christian spirit

that inspired them, to the new environment arising from the material development of today's society. Indeed, **the true friends of the people are neither revolutionaries, nor innovators: they are traditionalists.** (Pius X. *Apostolic letter Notre Charge Apostolique*, August 15, 1910)

BENEDICT XV

The cause of justice and truth is not defended with violence nor with disorder

As such, we insistently beseech the citizens of Bergamo in the name of their special affection and adhesion toward this Apostolic See, **that they do not allow themselves to be fooled by the charms of those who with fallacious promises intend to tear away from their hearts the avidity of the faith in order to stir them on to brutal violence and devastation. Neither with violence nor with disorder is the cause of justice and truth defended, because these are arms which end up wound above all those who employ them.** (Benedict XV. *Letter Soliti Nos*, March 11, 1920)

The Church, unlike the adversaries, doesn't offer deceitful things -She is affectionate mother of the rich and the poor

So, may the workers continue faithful to the teachings of **the Church, even though it seems to give less than the adversaries, for it doesn't offer excessive and deceitful things, but only just and lasting things.** Workers should remember that though the Church is the mother of all, towards them, as we have said, she has a predilection; and that, if at times she defends the rich, she doesn't defend them inasmuch as they are rich, **but rather because they have been unjustly assailed.** In a similar manner, the rich must obey the Church, confiding in her maternal affection and her impartiality. (Benedict XV. *Letter Intelleximus ex iis*, June 14, 1920)

PIUS XI

Communism, long since rejected scientifically and proved erroneous by experience, spreads by making the most

extravagant promises to the working classes

How is it possible that such a system, long since rejected scientifically and now proved **erroneous by experience**, how is it, We ask, that such a system could spread so rapidly in all parts of the world? The explanation lies in the fact that too few have been able to grasp the nature of Communism. **The majority instead succumb to its deception, skillfully concealed by the most extravagant promises.** By pretending to desire only the betterment of the condition of the working classes, by **urging the removal of the very real abuses chargeable to the liberalistic economic order, and by demanding a more equitable distribution of this world's goods (objectives entirely and undoubtedly legitimate), the Communist takes advantage of the present world-wide economic crisis to draw into the sphere of his influence even those sections of the populace which on principle reject all forms of materialism and terrorism.** And as every error contains its element of truth, the partial truths to which We have referred **are astutely presented according to the needs of time and place, to conceal, when convenient, the repulsive crudity and inhumanity of Communistic principles and tactics.** Thus the Communist ideal wins over many of the better minded members of the community. These in turn become the apostles of the movement among the younger intelligentsia who are still too immature to recognize the intrinsic errors of the system. **The preachers of Communism are also proficient in exploiting racial antagonisms and political divisions and oppositions. They take advantage of the lack of orientation characteristic of modern agnostic science in order to burrow into the universities, where they bolster up the principles of their doctrine with pseudo-scientific arguments.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 15, March 19, 1937)

The Communists' perfidious tactic: worming their way even into the Church by inviting collaboration from Catholics in the realm of so-called humanitarianism

On this point We have already insisted in Our Allocution of May 12th of last year, but We believe it to be a duty of special

urgency, Venerable Brethren, to call your attention to it once again. In the beginning Communism showed itself for what it was in all its perversity; but very soon it realized that it was thus alienating the people. **It has therefore changed its tactics, and strives to entice the multitudes by trickery of various forms, hiding its real designs behind ideas that in themselves are good and attractive.** Thus, aware of the universal desire for peace, the leaders of Communism pretend to be the most zealous promoters and propagandists in the movement for world amity. Yet at the same time they stir up a class-warfare which causes rivers of blood to flow, and, realizing that their system offers no internal guarantee of peace, they have recourse to unlimited armaments. **Under various names which do not suggest Communism, they establish organizations and periodicals with the sole purpose of carrying their ideas into quarters otherwise inaccessible. They try perfidiously to worm their way even into professedly Catholic and religious organizations.** Again, without receding an inch from their subversive principles, they invite Catholics to collaborate with them in the realm of so-called humanitarianism and charity; and at times even make proposals that are in perfect harmony with the Christian spirit and the doctrine of the Church. Elsewhere they carry their hypocrisy so far as to encourage the belief that Communism, in countries where faith and culture are more strongly entrenched, will assume another and much milder form. It will not interfere with the practice of religion. It will respect liberty of conscience. There are some even who refer to certain changes recently introduced into soviet legislation as a proof that Communism is about to abandon its program of war against God. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 57, March 19, 1937)

The poor, while trying to better their condition, should always remain 'poor in spirit'

But the poor too, in their turn, while engaged, according to the laws of charity and justice, in acquiring the necessities of life and also in bettering their condition, should always remain 'poor in spirit' (Mt 5: 3), and hold spiritual goods in higher esteem than earthly property and pleasures. Let them

remember that the world will never be able to rid itself of misery, sorrow and tribulation, which are the portion even of those who seem most prosperous. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 45, March 19, 1937)

PIUS XII

The false pastors, who boast of friendship with the people, call the good bad, and the bad good

The Church, custodian and teacher of truth, while asserting and courageously proposing the rights of the working people, on repeated occasions, combating error, has had to take care to **not be fooled by the illusions of the specious and vain theories of future well-being and the deceitful solicitations and enticements of the false masters of social prosperity, who call the good bad, and the bad good and, boasting of being the friendship of the people, do not permit between capital and work and between the employers and the worker, those mutual agreements that maintain and promote social harmony and the progress for the common good.** You have already heard these friends of the people, in the squares, in the strongholds, in the congresses; you know of the promises contained in their pamphlets; you have listened to their songs and hymns; but by such words, when have the facts ever answered or have the hopes smiled with reality? Falsities and disillusion have tasted from them and still taste both individuals and the people, who lent them their faith and followed them by paths which, far from improving, worsened and deteriorated life conditions and material and moral progress. **These false pastors insinuate that salvation should emerge from a revolution, which changes the social consistency or is clothed in nationalist character.** (Paul XII. *Address to the representation of the workers of Italy*, June 13, 1943)

The 'People' live a life of their own; the 'masses' are an easy plaything in the hands of the manipulators who know how to take advantage of their instincts

The State does not contain in itself and does not mechanically unite within a determined territory, an amorphous agglomeration of

individuals. It is, and in reality should be, the organic and organizing unity of a true people. **People and amorphous multitude, or, as is often said, masses, are two different concepts.** The people live and act with a life of their own; the mass is of itself inert and cannot act if not from exterior influence. The people live of the plenitude of the life of the individuals, each one of which – in his own place and own way – is a person aware of his own responsibility and of his own convictions. **The masses, on the contrary, await the exterior impulse, and are an easy plaything in the hands of anyone who knows how to take advantage of their instincts and impressions; ready to follow, time and again, today this, tomorrow that other flag.** From the exuberance of the life of a true people, life is diffused, abundant and rich, for the State and in all of its organs, instilling in them, with an incessantly renovated vigor, the awareness of its own responsibility, of the true sense of the common good. **From the elementary strength of the masses, easily managed and taken advantage of, the State can also be served: in the ambitious hands of only one or of many, whom egoistic tendencies have artificially brought together, the State itself can – with the support of the masses, reduced to nothing other than a simple machine – impose its caprice on the better part of the true people; common interest is consequently gravely injured during a long time period, and the wound is frequently very difficult to heal.** From this, another conclusion clearly follows: **the masses, as We have now defined them, are the capital enemy of true democracy and of its ideal of liberty and equality.** (Pius XII. *Radio Message Benignitas et humanitas* no. 2, Christmas, 1944)

JOHN PAUL II

An erroneous ideal: the only hope to improve society is to promote conflict and hatred between social groups, in the utopia of a society without classes

Participating as priest, bishop and Cardinal, within the life of numerous university youth, within youth groups, during excursions through the mountains, in circles of reflection and prayer, I learned that **a youth begins to age dangerously when he lets himself be tricked by the easy and comfortable principle that**

‘the end justifies the means’; when he starts believing that the only hope to improve society is to promote conflict and hatred between social groups, in the utopia of a society without classes, that soon reveals itself as the creator of new classes. I became convinced that only love brings together that which is different and brings about unity in diversity. The words of Christ ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you’ (Jn 13: 34), then seemed to me, beyond their incomparable theological profundity, to be the seed and principle of the only radical transformation to be appreciated by a young person. The seed and principle of the only revolution that does not betray man. Only true love constructs. (John Paul II. *Mass for Brazilian youth in Belo Horizonte*, July 1, 1980)

The error of interpreting the problem of the poor in a Marxist key: misguided ideology and utopias that succumb to violence

There have been cases in which **an erroneous interpretation of the problem of the poor in a Marxist key** ‘has led to a misconception and an anomalous praxis of the option for the poor and the vow of poverty’, which becomes devoid of significance by the lack of reference to the poverty of Christ and disconnected from the measure which is theological life. **Consecrated life must be, therefore, firmly entrenched in the theological virtues, so that faith does not give in to the mirage of ideology, hope is not confused with utopias, universal charity, which reaches the limit of love of enemies, does not succumb to the temptation of violence.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter to the men and women Religious of Latin America on the V Centenary of the evangelization of the New World*, no. 20, June 29, 1990)

The communist utopia dragged many into a lie that deeply wounded human nature: they sacrificed family, energies and even human dignity

The backflow of atheistic Marxism-Leninism, as a totalitarian political system in Europe is far from resolving the tragedies caused in these three quarters of a century. All who have been affected by this totalitarian system in one way or another, its leaders and supporters

as well as its most staunch adversaries, have become its victims. **Those who have sacrificed their family, their energies and their dignity to the communist utopia are beginning to realize they have been dragged into a lie that has deeply wounded human nature.** Others have found a freedom for which they were unprepared and the use of such remains hypothetical, since they live in precarious political, social and economic conditions and are experiencing a confused cultural situation, with a sanguinary reawakening of nationalist rivalries. In its conclusion the pre-Synod Symposium asked: to where and to whom will those whose utopian hopes have recently evaporated turn to? The spiritual void that threatens society is above all a cultural void. It is the moral conscience, renewed by the Gospel of Christ, which can truly fulfill it. (John Paul II. *Speech to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture*, January 10, 1992)

Faith based on Revelation and the Magisterium preserves evangelization from human utopias: a social transformation with violence leading to class struggle

Vatican Council II, recalling the text of the First Letter of Saint John that we mentioned here, shows us the dynamism of evangelization in the words of Saint Augustine, in which he stresses that love should guide the whole process of evangelization, so that the whole world, by the proclamation of salvation, may by listening, believe, and by believing hope, and by hoping, love. **Faith that is based on Revelation and the Magisterium of the Church preserves evangelization from the temptation of human utopias: Christian hope does not confuse salvation with ideologies of any kind; charity, that must encourage the work of evangelization, preserves the evangelical proclamation from the temptation of pure strategy of a social transformation or sudden violence that leads to class struggle.** (John Paul II. *Letter on the occasion of the XV General Ordinary Assembly of the Conference for the Religious of Brazil*, July 11, 1989)

Communism: a very great injustice, a destructive utopia which did not achieve

‘the paradise of absolute justice’

This message of *Divine Mercy*, the message of the Merciful Christ, came from this land, also passing through your city, and went spreading worldwide. This message has prepared entire generations so that they can confront the **very great injustice organized on behalf of a destructive utopia that would have achieved on earth ‘the paradise of absolute justice.’** (John Paul II. *Homily during the Beatification of Mother Boleslawa Lament*, June 5, 1991)

Systems that auto-proclaimed themselves as scientific social renovations proved to be tragic utopias. Faith in Christ has shown that, far from being the opium of the people, it is the best guarantee and the stimulus of their liberty

A common sentiment seems to dominate the great human family today. All wonder what future must be built on peace and solidarity, in this transition from one cultural era to another. **The great ideologies have shown their failure in the face of the harsh trail of events. Systems, that auto-proclaimed themselves to be a scientific social renovation, or even the redemption of man by himself, myths of man’s fulfillment by means of revolution, have been revealed to the eyes of the world for what they were: tragic utopias which entailed a regression without precedent in the tormented history of humanity. In the midst of their brethren, the heroic resistance of Christian communities against inhuman totalitarianism has aroused admiration. Today’s world rediscovers that, far from being the opium of the people, faith in Christ is the best guarantee and the stimulus of their liberty.** (John Paul II. *Speech to the participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture*, no. 2, January 12, 1990)

BENEDICT XVI

Marx’s real error is materialism – it was and still remains an endless source of fascination. But it is not possible to redeem man only through the economy

With great precision, albeit with a certain

onesided bias, Marx described the situation of his time, and with great analytical skill he spelled out the paths leading to revolution—and not only theoretically: by means of the Communist Party that came into being from the Communist Manifesto of 1848, he set it in motion. **His promise, owing to the acuteness of his analysis and his clear indication of the means for radical change, was and still remains an endless source of fascination. Real revolution followed, in the most radical way in Russia. Together with the victory of the revolution, though, Marx’s fundamental error also became evident.** He showed precisely how to overthrow the existing order, but he did not say how matters should proceed thereafter. He simply presumed that with the expropriation of the ruling class, with the fall of political power and the socialization of means of production, the new Jerusalem would be realized. Then, indeed, all contradictions would be resolved, man and the world would finally sort themselves out. Then everything would be able to proceed by itself along the right path, because everything would belong to everyone and all would desire the best for one another.

Thus, having accomplished the revolution, Lenin must have realized that the writings of the master gave no indication as to how to proceed. True, Marx had spoken of the interim phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessity which in time would automatically become redundant. **This ‘intermediate phase’ we know all too well, and we also know how it then developed, not ushering in a perfect world, but leaving behind a trail of appalling destruction.** Marx not only omitted to work out how this new world would be organized—which should, of course, have been unnecessary. His silence on this matter follows logically from his chosen approach. His error lay deeper. He forgot that man always remains man. He forgot man and he forgot man’s freedom. He forgot that freedom always remains also freedom for evil. He thought that once the economy had been put right, everything would automatically be put right. His real error is materialism: man, in fact, is not merely the product of economic conditions, and it is not possible to redeem him purely from the outside by creating a favourable economic environment. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spes salvi*, no. 20-21, November 30, 2007)

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The hammer and sickle with Christ crucified: 'For me it wasn't an offense'

The figure of the Good Shepherd, ready to confront the wolf so as to protect and save his sheep even at the cost of his own life (Jn 10:11-12) is an eloquent and very moving image. It was created by Our Lord Jesus Christ himself to describe his own sentiments, it also expresses the pastoral zeal that every Bishop should have for the competent fulfillment of his mission, in collaboration with his priests and under the authority of the Supreme Pontiff, 'teaching, sanctifying, and governing' (*Vatican Council II. Decree Christus Dominus, no. 11*).



Analyzing the history of the Church, from the turbulent days of Pius IX until the end of the pontificate of Benedict XVI, it becomes clear that the Roman Pontiffs, faithful to their mission of 'teaching, sanctifying, and governing' the flock that was confided to them by Jesus Christ, didn't hesitate to condemn the errors of Marxism in a decisive manner, alerting as to the grave disorder that the adherence to its doctrine would bring to the economic and social order. The suffering experienced by the nations that were and are in the iron grip of communist or socialist parties is patently obvious: hunger, tyranny, slavery and oppression. Recent history confirms that the condemnations of Pius IX, Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, Pius XI, Pius XII, John XXIII, and Paul VI, in their position as pastors and official teachers, are entirely warranted. Despite this, history also confirms that, in the ecclesiastical field, Karl Marx never ceased to exercise a certain fascination. This allure degenerated into the so-called 'Theology of Liberation', which John Paul II, in close collaboration with Cardinal Ratzinger, denounced and condemned: 'The first great challenge we addressed was the Theology of Liberation, which was spreading in Latin America. It was the common opinion, be it in Europe or in North America, that it was about support to the poor and, therefore, a cause that should certainly be approved. But it was an error.' (*Benedict XVI. Interview about John Paul II, March 7, 2014*)

The Marxist ideology and its three derivatives, 'Socialism', 'Communism', and 'Liberation theology', came to the mind of millions of the faithful throughout the five continents, when they watched the confusing episodes that occurred during Francis' Apostolic Journey to the Republics of Bolivia, Ecuador and Paraguay this past July.

Which was the most commented upon of these events? Without doubt, the symbolically calculated gift that Evo Morales, the President of Bolivia, and head director of the Bolivian 'Movimiento al Socialismo' (Movement Toward Socialism), gave to Francis: a Crucifix, redesigned with the communist symbols, the hammer and the sickle. Moreover, to manifest his friendship and the

closeness that unites him to the Bishop of Rome, Morales distinguished him with significant decorations. The most symbolic had the figure of the same polemical crucifix engraved on a showy medal.

It really was a strange episode. Trying in vain to 'decipher' it, the press hastened to declare that Francis had affirmed with displeasure before this crucifix with the hammer and sickle 'That's not right'.



However, the spokesperson of the Vatican, Father Federico Lombardi, beleaguered by the press, began to clear things up. First, by saying that ‘he personally wasn’t offended by Morales’ gift”; and that ‘the sense of it was about an open dialogue, not about a specific ideology’ (*sic!*)

Finally, if anyone still had a doubt, Francis himself hastened to dissipate all speculation during the flight back to Rome when asked by the press about the shameful gift.

What did Francis say about the ideology of this strange crucifix? Did he criticize it? Praise it? Was Francis really offended with these gifts offered by the Bolivian Socialist president? What should we conclude from his words?

To apply a hermeneutic – as Francis himself counseled in the same interview – or an appropriate interpretation of the facts and the posterior explanations offered, it’s a good idea to embark on another study, enriched with the teachings of the Magisterium of the Church (*see the earlier study*). What did the former popes teach about Socialism, Marxism and Theology of Liberation? What should the position of a Catholic be regarding these ideological currents?

FRANCIS

[Question by Aura Miguel]: Your Holiness, **What did you think when you saw the hammer and sickle with the Christ on it**, given to you by President Evo Morales? And where did this object end up?

[Francis:] **One could categorize it as a kind of protest art. [...] which in some cases can be offensive.** [...] Let’s do the hermeneutic of that time: Espinal was an enthusiast of this Marxist analysis of reality, but also of a theology that uses Marxism. From this, he came up with this art piece. [...] It was his life, it was his thought. He was a special person, with so much human geniality, who fought in good faith. Under this kind of hermeneutic, I understand this work. **For me it wasn’t an offense, but I had to apply this hermeneutic**, and I am telling you this so that there aren’t any misguided opinions.

[Asked if he left it there the Pope replies:] **No, it’s traveling with me.** (*In-flight press conference from Paraguay to Rome, July 13, 2015*)

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I – SOCIALISM: A HARMFUL IDEOLOGICAL SYSTEM THAT DESTROYS HUMAN LIBERTY

Pius IX

Socialism and Communism: wicked theories and perverted teachings

You are aware indeed, that the goal of this most iniquitous plot is to drive people to overthrow the entire order of human affairs and to draw them over to the wicked theories

of this Socialism and Communism, by confusing them with perverted teachings. But these enemies realize that they cannot hope for any agreement with the Catholic Church, which allows neither tampering with truths proposed by faith, nor adding any new human fictions to them. **This is why they try to draw the Italian people over to Protestantism, which in their deceit they repeatedly declare to be only another form of the same true religion of Christ, thereby just as pleasing to God.** (Pius IX. *Encyclical Nostis et nobiscum*, no. 6, December 8, 1849)

LEO XIII

Hideous deformity of civil society and its ruin

Hence we have reached the limit of horrors, to wit, **Communism, Socialism, nihilism, hideous deformities of the civil society of men and almost its ruin.** And yet too many attempt to enlarge the scope of these evils, and under the pretext of helping the multitude, already have fanned no small flames of misery. The things we thus mention are neither unknown nor very remote from us. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Diuturnum illud*, no. 23, June 29, 1881)

Socialism and Communism: lawlessness and overthrow of all things

For, the fear of God and reverence for divine laws being taken away, the authority of rulers despised, sedition permitted and approved, and the popular passions urged on to lawlessness, with no restraint save that of punishment, a change and overthrow of all things will necessarily follow. Yea, this change and overthrow is deliberately planned and put forward by many associations of communists and socialists. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Humanum genus*, no. 27, April 20, 1884)

The pest of Socialism

Finally, all have witnessed with what solemn words and great firmness and constancy of soul our glorious predecessor, **Pius IX**, of happy memory, both in his allocutions and in his encyclical letters addressed to the bishops of all the world, fought now against the wicked attempts of the sects, now openly by name against the pest of Socialism, which was already making headway. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod Apostolici muneris*, no. 3, December 28, 1878)

Socialists labor unceasingly to bring about revolution, to pervert and destroy liberty

The empire of God over man and civil society once repudiated, it follows that religion, as a public institution, can have no claim to exist, and that everything that belongs to religion will be treated with complete indifference. Furthermore, with ambitious designs on

sovereignty, tumult and sedition will be common amongst the people; and when duty and conscience cease to appeal to them, there will be nothing to hold them back but force, which of itself alone is powerless to keep their covetousness in check. **Of this we have almost daily evidence in the conflict with socialists and members of other seditious societies, who labor unceasingly to bring about revolution.** It is for those, then, who are capable of forming a just estimate of things to decide whether such doctrines promote that true liberty which alone is worthy of man, or rather, pervert and destroy it. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Libertas praestantissimum*, no. 16, June 20, 1888)

Socialism: abominable sect. Labor hard that the children of the Catholic Church never favor it

Moreover, labor hard that the children of the Catholic Church neither join nor favor in any way whatsoever this abominable sect; let them show, on the contrary, by noble deeds and right dealing in all things, how well and happily human society would hold together were each member to shine as an example of right doing and of virtue. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod Apostolici muneris*, no. 11, December 28, 1878)

Our duty: warn Catholics regarding the great errors lurking in Socialism

At the very beginning of Our pontificate We clearly pointed out what the peril was which confronted society on this head, and We deemed it **Our duty to warn Catholics, in unmistakable language, how great the error was which was lurking in the utterances of Socialism, and how great the danger was that threatened not only their temporal possessions, but also their morality and religion.** That was the purpose of Our encyclical letter *Quod Apostolici Muneris* which We published on the 28th of December in the year 1878; but, as these dangers day by day threatened still greater disaster, both to individuals and the commonwealth, We strove with all the more energy to avert them. This was the object of Our encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of the 15th of May, 1891, in which we dwelt at length on the rights and duties which both classes of society – those namely,

who control capital, and those who contribute labor – are bound in relation to each other; and at the same time, We made it evident that the remedies which are most useful to protect the cause of religion, and to terminate the contest between the different classes of society, were to be found in the precepts of the Gospel. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Graves de communi re*, no. 2, January 18, 1901)

Socialism: evil growth that must be uprooted

But it is to be lamented that those to whom has been committed the guardianship of the public weal, deceived by the wiles of wicked men and terrified by their threats, have looked upon the Church with a suspicious and even hostile eye, not perceiving that the attempts of the sects would be vain if the doctrine of the Catholic Church and the authority of the Roman Pontiffs had always survived, with the honor that belongs to them, among princes and peoples. For, **'the church of the living God, which is the pillar and ground of truth,'** (1Tim 3:15) **hands down those doctrines and precepts whose special object is the safety and peace of society and the uprooting of the evil growth of Socialism.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod Apostolici muneris*, no. 4, December 28, 1878)

BENEDICT XV

Socialism: error that must be exposed with the greatest care

It is not our intention here to repeat the arguments which clearly expose the errors of Socialism and of similar doctrines. Our predecessor, Leo XIII, most wisely did so in truly memorable Encyclicals; and you, Venerable Brethren, will take the greatest care that those grave precepts are never forgotten, but that whenever circumstances call for it, they should be clearly expounded and inculcated in Catholic associations and congresses, in sermons and in the Catholic press. (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Ad beatissimi apostolorum*, no. 13, November 1, 1914)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Pius XI described Communism as 'intrinsically perverse'

With the Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris*, on atheistic Communism and Christian social doctrine, Pope Pius XI offered a systematic criticism of Communism, describing it as 'intrinsically perverse', and indicated that the principal means for correcting the evils perpetrated by it could be found in the renewal of Christian life, the practice of evangelical charity, the fulfilment of the duties of justice at both the interpersonal and social levels in relation to the common good, and the institutionalization of professional and interprofessional groups. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 92, May 26, 2006)

II – THE INCOMPATIBILITY OF SOCIALISM WITH THE DOGMAS OF THE CHURCH IS TOTAL

LEO XIII

Socialists distort the Gospel to suit their own purposes

For, indeed, although the socialists, stealing the very Gospel itself with a view to deceive more easily the unwary, have been accustomed to distort it so as to suit their own purposes, nevertheless so great is the difference between their depraved teachings and the most pure doctrine of Christ that none greater could exist: 'for what participation hath justice with injustice or what fellowship hath light with darkness?' (2Cor 6:14) (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod Apostolici muneris*, no. 5, December 28, 1878)

PIUS XI

A vain hope: the principles of Christian truth modified to meet Socialism half-way

Yet let no one think that all the socialist groups or factions that are not communist have,

without exception, recovered their senses to this extent either in fact or in name. For the most part they do not reject the class struggle or the abolition of ownership, but only in some degree modify them. Now if these false principles are modified and to some extent erased from the program, **the question arises, or rather is raised without warrant by some, whether the principles of Christian truth cannot perhaps be also modified to some degree and be tempered so as to meet Socialism half-way and, as it were, by a middle course, come to agreement with it. There are some allured by the foolish hope that socialists in this way will be drawn to us. A vain hope!** Those who want to be apostles among socialists ought to profess Christian truth whole and entire, openly and sincerely, and not connive at error in any way. If they truly wish to be heralds of the Gospel, let them above all strive to show to socialists that socialist claims, so far as they are just, are far more strongly supported by the principles of Christian faith and much more effectively promoted through the power of Christian charity. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 116, May 15, 1931)

Socialism, even when ‘tempered’ and ‘modified’ is always Socialism – it cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church – and is utterly foreign to Christian truth

But what if Socialism has really been so tempered and modified as to the class struggle and private ownership that there is in it no longer anything to be censured on these points? Has it thereby renounced its contradictory nature to the Christian religion? This is the question that holds many minds in suspense. And numerous are the Catholics who, although they clearly understand that Christian principles can never be abandoned or diminished seem to turn their eyes to the Holy See and earnestly beseech Us to decide whether this form of Socialism has so far recovered from false doctrines that it can be accepted without the sacrifice of any Christian principle and in a certain sense be baptized. That We, in keeping with Our fatherly solicitude, may answer their petitions, We make this pronouncement: **Whether considered as a doctrine, or an historical fact, or a movement, Socialism, if it remains truly Socialism, even**

after it has yielded to truth and justice on the points which we have mentioned, cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 117, May 15, 1931)

Socialist and Christian: contradictory terms

If Socialism, like all errors, contains some truth (which, moreover, the Supreme Pontiffs have never denied), it is based nevertheless on a theory of human society peculiar to itself and irreconcilable with true Christianity. **Religious Socialism, Christian Socialism, are contradictory terms; no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 120, May 15, 1931)

JOHN XXIII

The opposition between Communism and Christianity is fundamental

Pope Pius XI further emphasized the fundamental opposition between Communism and Christianity, and made it clear that no Catholic could subscribe even to moderate Socialism. The reason is that Socialism is founded on a doctrine of human society which is bounded by time and takes no account of any objective other than that of material well-being. Since, therefore, it proposes a form of social organization which aims solely at production, it places too severe a restraint on human liberty, at the same time flouting the true notion of social authority. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 34, May 15, 1961)

PAUL VI

Socialist currents that attract some Christians: incompatible with faith

Some Christians are today attracted by socialist currents and their various developments. They try to recognize therein a certain number of aspirations which they carry within themselves in the name of their faith.

They feel that they are part of **that historical current** and wish to play a part within it. Now this historical current takes on, under the same name, different forms according to different continents and cultures, even if it **drew its inspiration, and still does in many cases, from ideologies incompatible with faith**. Careful judgment is called for. Too often Christians attracted by Socialism tend to idealize it in terms which, apart from anything else, are very general: a will for justice, solidarity and equality. They refuse to recognize the limitations of the historical socialist movements, which remain conditioned by the ideologies from which they originated. (Paul VI. *Apostolic letter Octogesima adveniens*, no. 31, May 14, 1971)

III – MARXISM: THE HEIGHT OF REBELLION AGAINST THE HOLY SPIRIT

PIUS XII

Atheistic Marxism masks its tactic and hides its strategy

We have often observed that the enemy of the human race is one and multiple. Today it presents itself with a well defined face and with a well known name. It spreads in a wide front, and combats without exclusion of means nor sparing blows; the zone of Terni finds itself among those who suffer most from the attack. Be it through the ability with which **it masks its tactic and hides its strategy**, be it through the fear that it has known to instill, or by the hope that it has awakened, **atheistic Marxism has penetrated among you and is still very firm in its position**. Our heart is upset and tears come to Our eyes each time that we ask how is it possible that there still exists such consent and so much obstinacy within a considerable part of the best groups of workers. Is it possible that in this point nothing is able to open their eyes, nothing serves to move their hearts? They wish to remain with the enemies of God, they wish to strengthen the ranks, cooperating, in this way, to worsen the chaos of the modern world. Why? Individuals and people have wished to lead them along the evil path, for they have promised a better distribution of goods, proclaiming at the same time a desire to save liberty, protect the family, assuring that the people will have power, the

workers the factories and the peasants the earth. And if, on the contrary, after having sown hatred, provoked subversion and fomented discord, they arrive at power, they impoverish the poor and make terror reign. This is what is happening these days among the distressed Hungarian people, as documented by the evidence of blood, which shows how far those who hate God can go. (Pius XII. *Address to a pilgrimage of workers from Terni*, no. 2, November 18, 1956)

PAUL VI

Marxist analysis leads to a society that is totalitarian and violent

While, through the concrete existing form of Marxism, one can distinguish these various aspects and the questions they pose for the reflection and activity of Christians, **it would be illusory and dangerous** to reach a point of forgetting the intimate link which radically binds them together, **to accept the elements of Marxist analysis without recognizing their relationships with ideology, and to enter into the practice of class struggle and its Marxist interpretations, while failing to note the kind of totalitarian and violent society to which this process leads**. (Paul VI. *Apostolic letter Octogesima adveniens*, no. 34, May 14, 1971)

The Church does not adhere to Marxist social and political movements

And then we have the sixth axiom, which is the most disputed and complex. **The Church does not adhere and cannot adhere to the social, ideological and political movements, which, taking advantage of their origin and strength from Marxism, have conserved principles and negative methods, for an incomplete notion – proper to radical Marxism, and therefore false – of man, of history, of the world**. Atheism, which it professes and promotes, is not in favor of the scientific conception of the universe and civilization, but rather consists in a blindness from which man and society end up undergoing the gravest consequences in the long run. **Materialism**, in which it results, exposes man to extremely negative experiences and temptations; it **extinguishes his authentic**

spirituality and his transcendent hope. (Paul VI. *Homily to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Rerum novarum*, May 22, 1966)

False and dangerous ideologies promote class struggle

Class struggle, made into a system, violates and impedes social peace; fatally results in violence and abuse, therefore in the abolition of liberty, leading then to the founding of a highly authoritarian system, which tends toward totalitarianism. With this the Church does not miss any of the opportunities for justice and the progress of the working class; more so the Church, rectifying these errors and these deviations, does not exclude from its love any man or worker. Known facts therefore, inclusively through an existing historic experience, that does not allow for illusions; but rather by painful things, through ideological pressure and practices, that take place in the world of work, which intend to interpret the aspirations and promote grievances, generating in this way great difficulties and divisions. We do not wish to dispute now, but rather remember that the same word which today you Christian Workers, give testimony of honor and gratitude, is that which adverts us to not put our confidence in false and dangerous ideologies. (Paul VI. *Homily to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Rerum novarum*, May 22, 1966)

Atheistic Marxism is condemned by the Church

Nor is it to be believed that this pastoral solicitude, which has become a prevalent program in the Church today, absorbing its attention and engaging its care, implies a change in judgment regarding the errors spread in our society and already condemned by the Church, as for example, atheistic Marxism: to seek to apply healthy and accurate remedies for a contagious and lethal disease does not mean changing one's opinion of it, but rather combating it not only in theory, but also in practice; it means giving therapy following the diagnosis; that is, doctrinal condemnation, followed by salvific charity. (Paul VI. *Address to the priests participating in the 13th Pastoral Orientation Week*, September 6, 1963)

JOHN PAUL II

Marxism: clearest expression of resistance to the Holy Spirit

Unfortunately, the resistance to the Holy Spirit which Saint Paul emphasizes in the interior and subjective dimension as tension, struggle and rebellion taking place in the human heart, finds in every period of history and especially in the modern era its external dimension, which takes concrete form as the content of culture and civilization, as a philosophical system, an ideology, a program for action and for the shaping of human behavior. It reaches its clearest expression in materialism, both in its theoretical form: as a system of thought, and in its practical form: as a method of interpreting and evaluating facts, and likewise as a program of corresponding conduct. The system which has developed most and carried to its extreme practical consequences this form of thought, ideology and praxis is dialectical and historical materialism, which is still recognized as the essential core of Marxism. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Dominum et vivificantem*, no. 56, May 18, 1986)

Marxism: a system, born of the presumption of freeing man, that ends up making man a slave

We have a long and painful history behind us, and feel the overwhelming need to look ahead to the future. Historical memory, however, must accompany us, because we can make something of the experience of these endless decades, in which inclusively your country [Lithuania] has felt the weight of an iron dictatorship that in the name of justice and equality, violated the freedom and dignity of individuals and of civil society. How could this happen? The analysis would be complex. However, it seems that among no lesser of the important reasons is the militant atheism in which Marxism was inspired: an atheism inclusively offensive to man whose dignity is rooted to the most solid foundation and guarantee. To this error others are added such as the materialistic concept of history, a harshly conflicting vision of society, and the 'messianic' role attributed to the single political party, lord of the State. Everything converges so that this system, born of the presumption of freeing man, ends

up making him a slave. (John Paul II. *Address to the academic and intellectual world*, University of Vilnius, Lithuania, September 5, 1993)

Marxism: a totalitarian conception of the world

Today, when many countries have seen the fall of ideologies which bound politics to a totalitarian conception of the world – Marxism being the foremost of these – there is no less grave a danger that the fundamental rights of the human person will be denied and that the religious yearnings which arise in the heart of every human being will be absorbed once again into politics. This is the risk of an alliance between democracy and ethical relativism, which would remove any sure moral reference point from political and social life, and on a deeper level make the acknowledgement of truth impossible. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 101, August 6, 1993)

Atheistic Marxism-Leninism: a lie that has deeply wounded human nature in for 75 years

The backflow of atheistic Marxism-Leninism, as a totalitarian political system in Europe is far from resolving the tragedies caused in these three quarters of a century. All who have been affected by this totalitarian system in one way or another, even the leaders and their supporters as its staunch adversaries, have become its victims. Those who have sacrificed their family, their energies and their dignity for the communist utopia are beginning to realize they have been dragged into a lie that has deeply wounded human nature. Others have found a freedom for which they were unprepared and the use of such remains hypothetical, since they live in precarious political, social and economic conditions and are experiencing a confused cultural situation, with a violent reawakening of nationalist rivalries. In its conclusion the pre-Synod Symposium asked: to where and to whom will those whose utopian hopes have recently disappeared turn? The spiritual void that threatens society is above all a cultural void. It is the moral conscience, renewed by the Gospel of Christ, which can truly fulfill it. (John Paul II. *Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture*, no. 3, January 10, 1992)

Marxism: a theoretical and pragmatic system that pretends to resolve human questions with false solutions

The course of world history itself is showing the fallacy of the solutions proposed by Marxism. This theoretical and pragmatic system methodically exacerbates divisions among people, and pretends to resolve the human questions within a horizon that is closed to the transcendent. In the opposite regard, the contemporary experience of the more developed countries reveals other serious defects: a vision of life based only on material well being and a selfish freedom that thinks it is unlimited. By their contrast these considerations offer dear directions for your future. There is no true progress without the integral truth about the human being, which Christians know is found only in Christ. Certainly we should want prosperity combined with the necessary overcoming of economic and cultural diversity and the total integration of all the regions of our vast geography in a broad programme of progress and development. However, all this will be fragile and precarious if it is not combined with a deeper Christianization of our earth. (John Paul II. *Address to the President of the Republic of Chile*, no. 4, April 22, 1991)

Atheistic Marxism arrived at the extreme consequences of its materialistic postulations

I see, above all, the deep and splendid stratum of Christianity, the spiritual and Christian movement which has also had its 'contemporary' apogee, always alive and present, as I said earlier. But also in this ensemble there has appeared other, notorious, currents of a powerful eloquence and negative effectiveness: on the one hand, there is the rationalist, illuminist, scientific inheritance of the so called secularist 'liberalism' in the nations of the West, which has brought the radical negation of Christianity; on the other hand, there is the ideology and practice of atheistic 'Marxism', which has arrived, it could be said, at the extreme consequences of its materialistic postulations in the various existing denominations. In this 'glowing crucible' of the contemporary world, Christ wants to be present again, with all of the eloquence of his Paschal mystery. (John Paul II. *Address to the citizens of the city of Turin*, no. 3-4, April 13, 1980)

Against all Marxist reductionism, the Church bears witness to the truth about God

The Twentieth Century has also entered the history of the Church and perhaps especially in Poland as a time of new challenges. After a thousand years of Christianity, Poland had to accept the challenge, contained in the ideology of the Marxist dialectic, which qualifies every religion as an alienating factor for men. We are aware of this challenge; I myself have lived it here, in this land. The Church is living through this in different parts of the globe. This is a profound challenge. According to materialist anthropology, religion is considered a factor which deprives man of the fullness of his humanity. Man himself, with religion would deprive himself, alone, of the fullness of humanity, renouncing what is immanently and fully 'human' in favor of a God who in accordance with the assumptions and premises of the materialistic system would be just 'a product' of man. This challenge can be destructive. However, after years of experience, we cannot help but verify that this can also be a challenge that has profoundly encouraged Christians to undertake efforts in the search for new solutions. In this sense it becomes, in some way, a creative challenge: an eloquent testimony of the II Vatican Council is there. The Church has accepted the challenge; it has perceived therein one of these providential 'signs of the times' and through these 'signs' – with a new depth and strength of conviction – it has borne witness to the truth about God, Christ and man, against all 'reductionism' of epistemological or systematic nature, and against all materialist dialectic. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Poland*, no. 4, June 14, 1987)

CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER

Marxism's great deception: change becomes destruction

God's glory and peace on earth are inseparable. Where God is excluded, there is a breakdown of peace in the world; without God, no orthopraxis can save us. In fact, there does not exist an orthopraxis which is simply just, detached from a knowledge of what is good. The will without knowledge is blind and so action, orthopraxis,

without knowledge is blind and leads to the abyss. Marxism's great deception was to tell us that we had reflected on the world long enough, that now it was at last time to change it. But if we do not know in what direction to change it, if we do not understand its meaning and its inner purpose, then change alone becomes destruction – as we have seen and continue to see. (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. *Lecture at the Bishops' Conference in Benevento (Italy) on the topic: 'Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity'*, June 2, 2002)

BENEDICT XVI

Marx and Communism: a road towards all-encompassing change

The nineteenth century held fast to its faith in progress as the new form of human hope, and it continued to consider reason and freedom as the guiding stars to be followed along the path of hope. Nevertheless, the increasingly rapid advance of technical development and the industrialization connected with it soon gave rise to an entirely new social situation: there emerged a class of industrial workers and the so-called 'proletariat', whose dreadful living conditions Friedrich Engels described alarmingly in 1845. For his readers, the conclusion is clear: this cannot continue; a change is necessary. Yet the change would shake up and overturn the entire structure of bourgeois society. After the bourgeois revolution of 1789, the time had come for a new, proletarian revolution: progress could not simply continue in small, linear steps. A revolutionary leap was needed. Karl Marx took up the rallying call, and applied his incisive language and intellect to the task of launching this major new and, as he thought, definitive step in history towards salvation – towards what Kant had described as the 'Kingdom of God'. Once the truth of the hereafter had been rejected, it would then be a question of establishing the truth of the here and now. The critique of Heaven is transformed into the critique of earth, the critique of theology into the critique of politics. Progress towards the better, towards the definitively good world, no longer comes simply from science but from politics – from a scientifically conceived politics that recognizes the structure of history and society and thus points out the road towards

revolution, towards all-encompassing change. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spe salvi*, no. 20, November 30, 2007)

Marx's real error is materialism

With great precision, albeit with a certain onesided bias, Marx described the situation of his time, and with great analytical skill he spelled out the paths leading to revolution – and not only theoretically: by means of the Communist Party that came into being from the Communist Manifesto of 1848, he set it in motion. His promise, owing to the acuteness of his analysis and his clear indication of the means for radical change, was and still remains an endless source of fascination. Real revolution followed, in the most radical way in Russia. **Together with the victory of the revolution, though, Marx's fundamental error also became evident.** He showed precisely how to overthrow the existing order, but he did not say how matters should proceed thereafter. **He simply presumed that with the expropriation of the ruling class, with the fall of political power and the socialization of means of production, the new Jerusalem would be realized.** Then, indeed, all contradictions would be resolved, man and the world would finally sort themselves out. Then everything would be able to proceed by itself along the right path, because everything would belong to everyone and all would desire the best for one another. Thus, having accomplished the revolution, Lenin must have realized that the writings of the master gave no indication as to how to proceed. True, Marx had spoken of the interim phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessity which in time would automatically become redundant. This 'intermediate phase' we know all too well, and we also know how it then developed, **not ushering in a perfect world, but leaving behind a trail of appalling destruction. Marx not only omitted to work out how this new world would be organized – which should, of course, have been unnecessary. His silence on this matter follows logically from his chosen approach. His error lay deeper. He forgot that man always remains man. He forgot man and he forgot man's freedom.** He forgot that freedom always remains also freedom for evil. He thought that once the economy had been put right, everything would automatically be put right. **His real error is materialism: man,**

in fact, is not merely the product of economic conditions, and it is not possible to redeem him purely from the outside by creating a favourable economic environment. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spe salvi*, no. 20-21, November 30, 2007)

Marxism: illusory panacea that promised the remedy for all social problems

Marxism had seen world revolution and its preliminaries as the panacea for the social problem: revolution and the subsequent collectivization of the means of production, so it was claimed, would immediately change things for the better. This illusion has vanished. In today's complex situation, not least because of the growth of a globalized economy, the Church's social doctrine has become a set of fundamental guidelines offering approaches that are valid even beyond the confines of the Church: in the face of ongoing development these guidelines need to be addressed in the context of dialogue with all those seriously concerned for humanity and for the world in which we live. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Deus caritas est*, no. 27, December 25, 2005)

John Paul II reclaimed for Christianity the impulse of hope which had faltered before Marxism

When Karol Wojtyła ascended to the throne of Peter, he brought with him a deep understanding of the difference between Marxism and Christianity, based on their respective visions of man. This was his message: man is the way of the Church, and Christ is the way of man. With this message, which is the great legacy of the Second Vatican Council and of its 'helmsman', the Servant of God Pope Paul VI, John Paul II led the People of God across the threshold of the Third Millennium, which thanks to Christ he was able to call 'the threshold of hope'. Throughout the long journey of preparation for the great Jubilee he directed Christianity once again to the future, the future of God, which transcends history while nonetheless directly affecting it. **He rightly reclaimed for Christianity that impulse of hope which had in some sense faltered before Marxism and the ideology of progress. He restored to Christianity its true face as a religion of hope, to be lived in history in an 'Advent' spirit,**

in a personal and communitarian existence directed to Christ, the fullness of humanity and the fulfillment of all our longings for justice and peace. (Benedict XVI. *Homily on the Beatification of the Servant of God John Paul II*, May 1, 2011)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The philosophical assumptions of Marxist anthropology are erroneous

In every instance these theories must be tested for their degree of certitude, inasmuch as they are often no more than conjectures and not infrequently harbor explicit or implicit ideological elements that rest on debatable philosophical assumptions or on an erroneous anthropology. This is true, for instance, of significant segments of analyses inspired by Marxism and Leninism. Anyone who employs such theories and analyses should be aware that these do not achieve a greater degree of truth simply because theology introduces them into its expositions. In fact, theology ought to recognize the pluralism that exists in scientific interpretations of society and realize that it cannot be fettered to any concrete sociological analysis. (International Theological Commission, *Human development and Christian Salvation*, no. II, 2, 1976)

IV – LIBERATION THEOLOGY: A ‘FACILE MILLENARIANISM’ INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE CATHOLIC FAITH

JOHN PAUL II

The preferential option for the poor does not mean considering the poor as in a class struggle

Within the perspective of almost half a millennium of evangelization, the Church in Latin America faces this important task, which is rooted in the Gospel. There is no doubt that the Church must be entirely faithful to her Lord, putting this option into practice, offering its generous contribution to the work of ‘social liberation’ of the dispossessed multitudes, in order to achieve a justice that corresponds to the dignity of all as men and children of God. **But this important and urgent task must be**

undertaken in a line of fidelity to the Gospel, which prohibits the use of methods of hatred and violence:

– It is to be undertaken by maintaining a preferential option for the poor that is not, as I myself have said on several occasions, exclusive and excluding, but open to all who want to leave sin and convert in their heart;

– It must be undertaken without this option meaning a consideration of the poor as a class, as in a class struggle, or as a Church separate from the communion and obedience to Her Pastors established by Christ; – It must be undertaken by considering man in his earthly and eternal vocation;

– It must be undertaken without the necessary effort of a social transformation exposing man to fall under systems that deprive him of his liberty and subject him to programs of atheism, such as practical materialism that plunder him of his interior and transcendent wealth;

– It must be undertaken, knowing that the first liberation to be pursued by man is the liberation from sin, the moral evil that dwells in his heart, which is the cause of ‘social sin’ and oppressive structures.

These are a few basic points of reference, which the Church cannot forget in her evangelizing and promotional activities. They must be present in practice and in theological reflection, in accordance with the indications of the Holy See’s recent Instruction regarding ‘Some aspects of Liberation Theology’, issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. (John Paul II. *Homily*, during the Mass on the Fifth Century of Evangelization in the Americas, no. 5, October 11, 1984)

Solidarity with the poor need not be jeopardized by ideologies foreign to the faith

On your part, given the full certainty – to the members of your dioceses who work with a spirit in favor of the poor – that the Church wishes to maintain its preferential option for them and encourages the efforts of those who, faithful to the directives of the hierarchy, give themselves generously to the needy as an inseparable part of their mission. In this way, the necessary clamor for justice and the

necessary preferential solidarity with the poor, need not be jeopardized by ideologies foreign to the faith, as if they have the secret of true efficacy. This urgent call for integral evangelization has also as a reference point the other problems that you yourselves have presented to me in your reports, and that have as the center of your concerns the moral decadence in many areas of public life. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Peru on their ad limina visit*, no. 4-5, October 1984)

The dangerous uncertainty created among the faithful regarding 'Liberation Theology'

At the same time, transforming hearts is also the only force able to effectively change structures, to found and encourage the cause of the authentic dignity of man and establish the civilization of love. This love, the center of Christianity, raises man and brings him, in and through Christ, to the endless fullness of his life in God, while also raising the same earthly realities. **Therefore we cannot accept a humanism without at least an implicit reference to God, nor a materialist dialectic which would be the practical denial of God.** On this theological basis you will have to base your general service to the faith as pastors and guides of the faithful. From this you will have to clarify the doubts of your faithful on issues related to their ecclesial journey. **In this regard I cannot refrain from mentioning the dangerous uncertainty created in some of your situations – although less frequently than in other places – regarding some currents of Liberation Theology. In this work of clarification the norms contained in the Instruction on the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will help you.** And so that in your country the commitment and encouragement toward the preferential option for the poor become fully ecclesial, I recommend that you apply the criteria I gave during my recent visit to the Dominican Republic. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Bolivia on their ad limina visit*, no. 2, December 7, 1984)

The danger of an uncritical adoption in theology of Marxist ideas

In accomplishing its specific task in service of the Roman Pontiff's universal Magisterium,

the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith has more recently had to intervene to re-emphasize the danger of an uncritical adoption by some liberation theologians of opinions and methods drawn from Marxism. In the past, then, the Magisterium has on different occasions and in different ways offered its discernment in philosophical matters. My revered Predecessors have thus made an invaluable contribution which must not be forgotten. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Fides et ratio*, no. 54, September 14, 1998)

The danger of attempts to build a supposedly Christian hegelianism or Marxism

It is from this kind of synthesis that you find yourselves, together with your faithful, in the situation of all cultures. There is room here for many diverse and more or less legitimate doctrinal positions. You are certainly aware of a danger: of allowing a philosophy and theology of 'Africanity' to be constituted, which would be solely autochthonous without any real and profound relation to Christ; in which case, Christianity would be nothing other than a verbal reference, an element introduced and artificially included. Medieval Europe also knew some Aristotelians who were Christian only by name, such as the Averroists that Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure had to vigorously combat. **In modern times, one can see the same danger in attempts to build a supposedly Christian hegelianism or Marxism.** (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Zaire on their ad limina visit*, no. 6, April 30, 1983)

BENEDICT XVI

Liberation Theology: an experience of facile millenarianisms

[Journalist]: As regards my colleague's question, there are still many exponents of liberation theology in various parts of Brazil. What is the specific message to these exponents of liberation theology?

[Benedict XVI]: I would say that with the changes in the political situation, the situation of liberation theology is also profoundly different. It is now obvious that

these facile millenarianisms – which as a consequence of the revolution promised the full conditions for a just life immediately – were mistaken. Everyone knows this today. The question now concerns how the Church must be present in the fight for the necessary reforms, in the fight for fairer living conditions. Theologians are divided on this, especially the exponents of political theology. With the Instruction published at that time by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, we sought to carry out a task of discernment. In other words, we tried to rid ourselves of false millenarianisms and of an erroneous combination of Church and politics, of faith and politics; and to show that the Church's specific mission is precisely to come up with a response to the thirst for God and therefore also to teach the personal and social virtues that are the necessary conditions for the development of a sense of lawfulness. (Benedict XVI. *In-flight interview*, journey to Brazil, May 9, 2007)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The ideological aspects of Marxism are predominant among in the thought of many 'theologians of liberation'

In the case of Marxism, in the particular sense given to it in this context, a preliminary critique is all the more necessary since the thought of Marx is such a global vision of reality that all data received from observation and analysis are brought together in a philosophical and ideological structure, which predetermines the significance and importance to be attached to them. The ideological principles come prior to the study of the social reality and are presupposed in it. Thus no separation of the parts of this epistemologically unique complex is possible. **If one tries to take only one part, say, the analysis, one ends up having to accept the entire ideology.** That is why it is not uncommon for the ideological aspects to be predominant among the things which the 'theologians of liberation' borrow from Marxist authors. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, VII, no. 6, August 6, 1984)

It is illusory and dangerous to enter into the practice of class struggle and of its Marxist interpretation

The warning of Paul VI remains fully valid today: Marxism as it is actually lived out poses many distinct aspects and questions for Christians to reflect upon and act on. However, it would be **'illusory and dangerous to ignore the intimate bond which radically unites them, and to accept elements of the Marxist analysis without recognizing its connections with the ideology, or to enter into the practice of class-struggle and of its Marxist interpretation while failing to see the kind of totalitarian society to which this process slowly leads.'** (Paul VI. *Octogesima Adveniens*, no. 34, 1971) (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, VII, no. 7, August 6, 1984)

'Class struggle' and 'severe social conflict': Marxist ideas which are incompatible with the Christian conception of humanity and society

It is true that Marxist thought ever since its origins, and even more so lately, has become divided and has given birth to various currents which diverge significantly from each other. **To the extent that they remain fully Marxist, these currents continue to be based on certain fundamental tenets which are not compatible with the Christian conception of humanity and society. In this context, certain formulas are not neutral, but keep the meaning they had in the original Marxist doctrine. This is the case with the 'class-struggle.'** This expression remains pregnant with the interpretation that Marx gave it, so it cannot be taken as the equivalent of 'severe social conflict', in an empirical sense. Those who use similar formulas, while claiming to keep only certain elements of the Marxist analysis and yet to reject the analysis taken as a whole, maintain at the very least a serious confusion in the minds of their readers. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, VII, no. 8, August 6, 1984)

Atheism and the denial of the human person, his liberty and rights, are at the core of the Marxist theory

Let us recall the fact that **atheism and the denial of the human person, his liberty and rights, are at the core of the Marxist theory. This theory, then, contains errors which directly threaten the truths of the faith regarding the eternal destiny of individual persons. Moreover, to attempt to integrate into theology an analysis whose criterion of interpretation depends on this atheistic conception is to involve oneself in terrible contradictions.** What is more, this misunderstanding of the spiritual nature of the person leads to a total subordination of the person to the collectivity, and thus to the denial of the principles of a social and political life which is in keeping with human dignity. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, VII, no. 9, August 6, 1984)

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For the Church, the option for the poor is a theological category. I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives

‘Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!’ These were the last words pronounced by Madame Roland, one of the vital participants of the French Revolution, before she lay her head on the block to be guillotined. The phrase became legendary for so clearly expressing how certain concepts are subject to manipulation, for this woman was being condemned in the name of the same false ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity that she had formerly defended.

Each epoch has certain omnivalent catchphrases which, when shrewdly employed, serve to provoke the masses and to move those human interests under whose shadow revolutions lurk. If in those days the amulet-word was ‘liberty’, in our days it doesn’t seem exaggerated to affirm it as ‘poverty’.

Throughout two thousand years, the Church has always stood out for its love and maternal care toward the needy, so much so that many Pontiffs spoke of a ‘preferential option’ for the poor. However, the connotation of this difficult human condition seems to be suffering a strange metamorphosis... What does the Magisterium teach us regarding the poor? Why does the Church show concern for the poor, and how has it always understood this arduous human predicament? Should the Church be poor? In what manner?

FRANCIS

How I would like a Church which is poor and for the poor! (Address to representatives of the communications media, March 16, 2013)

For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor ‘his first mercy’. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have ‘this mind... which was in Jesus Christ’ (Phil 2:5). Inspired by this, the Church has made an option for the poor which is understood as ‘a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness.’ This option – as Benedict XVI has taught – ‘is implicit in our Christian faith in a God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty.’ **This is why I want a Church which is poor and for the poor. They have much to teach us.** Not only do they share in the *sensus fidei*, but **in their difficulties they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them. The new evangelization is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives** and to put them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way. **We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them.** (*Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 198)

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I – WHO WILL SAVE US? CHRIST OR POVERTY?

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The ultimate normative principle: the truth revealed by God himself. To place the poor as the point of departure is a misrepresentation of the faith

In his book 'Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View', Father Sobrino affirms: 'Latin American Christology...identifies its setting, in the sense of a real situation, as the poor of this world, and this situation is what must be present in and permeate any particular setting in which Christology is done' Further, [...] '**the Church of the poor...is the ecclesial setting of Christology because it is a world shaped by the poor**' [...] While such a preoccupation for the poor and oppressed is admirable, in these

quotations the 'Church of the poor' assumes the fundamental position which properly belongs to the faith of the Church. It is only in this ecclesial faith that all other theological foundations find their correct epistemological setting. **The ecclesial foundation of Christology may not be identified with 'the Church of the poor', but is found rather in the apostolic faith transmitted through the Church for all generations.** The theologian, in his particular vocation in the Church, must continually bear in mind that theology is the science of the faith. Other points of departure for theological work run the risk of arbitrariness and end in a misrepresentation of the same faith. [...] theological reflection cannot have a foundation other than the faith of the Church. [...] **Thus the truth revealed by God himself** in Jesus Christ, and transmitted by the Church, **constitutes** the ultimate normative principle of theology. Nothing else may surpass it. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Notification on the works of Fr. Jon Sobrino, S.J., no. 2,11. November 26, 2006)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

Material poverty is not holy in itself

In truth, **not all poverty is holy**, nor is all richness criminal. (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Expositon on the Gospel of Saint Luke. Book VIII*, no. 13: PL 15,1769)

Not all the poor are blessed

Not all the poor are blessed for poverty is of itself neutral: there can be evil or good people who are poor. (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Expositon on the Gospel of Saint Luke. Book V*, no. 53: PL 15, 1650)

JOHN PAUL II

The poor of the Beatitudes are not indigents

It should be remembered that **even in the Old Testament the 'poor of the Lord'** (cf. Ps 74: 19; 149: 4ss) were mentioned as an object of divine benevolence (Is 49:13; 66:2). **This did not refer simply to those who were in a state of indigence, but rather the humble who sought God and put themselves with confidence under his protection.** These dispositions of humility and confidence clarify the expression that the Evangelist Matthew employed in the version of the Beatitude: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' (Mt 5:3). **Poor in spirit are all of those who do not put their confidence in money or in material goods, but rather, on the contrary, open themselves to the Kingdom of God. But it is precisely this, the value of the poverty that Jesus praised and counseled as an option of life, that could include a voluntary renunciation of goods, and precisely in favor of the poor. It is a privilege of some to be chosen and called by him to follow this path.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 4, November 30, 1994)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSE OF SAINTS

A needy person could be selfish and cling on to the only coin that he possesses

The famous passage of the Beatitudes from

Matthew's Gospel, [...] is addressed first of all to the 'poor in spirit', a biblical expression that refers to those who have a free heart and free hands. **The Gospel category, so to speak, of the poor in spirit does not refer merely to the needy, since it is possible to possess nothing and yet be selfish, clinging to the only coin in one's possession. On the contrary, this category denotes those who detach themselves from concrete and private things, who do not base their security and trust on goods, success, pride or the cold idols of gold and power but are rather open to God and to their brethren.** (Congregation for the Cause of Saints. *Homily of Cardinal José Saraiva Martins for the Beatification of Sister Giuseppina Nicoli*, February 3, 2008)

JOHN PAUL II

The rich in God are always blessed with Heaven, whether possessing earthly goods or lacking them

Poor in spirit are those who, lacking earthly goods, know how to live with human dignity, the values of a spiritual poverty rich in God; and those who, possessing earthly goods, live an interior detachment and the communication of goods with those who suffer necessity. The kingdom of heaven is of the poor in spirit. This is the recompense that Jesus promised them. There is nothing more that can be promised. (John Paul II. *Homily during the Mass for youth in the Hipodrome of Monterricono*, no. 10, February 2, 1985)

PIUS XI

All, rich or poor, must keep their eye fixed on heaven

All Christians, rich or poor, must keep their eye fixed on heaven, remembering that 'we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come' (Heb 13:14). The rich should not place their happiness in things of earth nor spend their best efforts in the acquisition of them. Rather, considering themselves only as stewards of their earthly goods, let them be mindful of the account they must render of them to their Lord and Master, and value them as precious means that

God has put into their hands for doing good; let them not fail, besides, to distribute of their abundance to the poor, according to the evangelical precept (Lk 11:41). [...] But the poor too, in their turn, while engaged, according to the laws of charity and justice, in acquiring the necessities of life and also in bettering their condition, should always remain 'poor in spirit' (Mt 5:3), and hold spiritual goods in higher esteem than earthly property and pleasures. Let them remember that the world will never be able to rid itself of misery, sorrow and tribulation, which are the portion even of those who seem most prosperous. Patience, therefore, is the need of all, that Christian patience which comforts the heart with the divine assurance of eternal happiness. [...] Only thus will be fulfilled the consoling promise of the Lord: 'Blessed are the poor!' (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 44-45, March 19, 1937)

LEO XIII

Whether we have riches in abundance, or are lacking in them, virtue alone will be followed by the rewards of everlasting happiness

God has not created us for the perishable and transitory things of earth, but for things heavenly and everlasting; He has given us this world as a place of exile, and not as our abiding place. As for riches and the other things which men call good and desirable, **whether we have them in abundance, or are lacking in them – so far as eternal happiness is concerned – it makes no difference; the only important thing is to use them aright.** [...] From contemplation of this divine Model, it is more easy to understand that the true worth and nobility of man lie in his moral qualities, that is, in virtue; that virtue is, moreover, the common inheritance of men, equally within the reach of high and low, rich and poor; and that **virtue, and virtue alone, wherever found, will be followed by the rewards of everlasting happiness.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Rerum novarum*, no. 21, 24, May 15, 1891)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Poverty at one time leads to blasphemy,

at another to wisdom – according to the disposition of the user

For there are some things good, some evil, some between the two. The good are chastity, and humility, and the like, which when a man chooses he becomes good. But opposed to these are the evil, which when a man chooses he becomes bad; and there are the neutral, as riches, which at one time indeed are directed to good, as to almsgiving, at other times to evil, as to covetousness. And in like manner poverty at one time leads to blasphemy, at another to wisdom, according to the disposition of the user. (Saint John Chrysostom quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea in Lk 12:16-21*)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Perfection consists not in poverty but in following Christ

Perfection consists, essentially, not in poverty, but in following Christ, according to the saying of Jerome (*Super Mt 19:27*): "Since it is not enough to leave all, Peter adds that which is perfect, namely, 'We have followed Thee,'" while poverty is like an instrument or exercise for the attainment of perfection. Hence in the Conferences of the Fathers (Col 1:7) the abbot Moses says: 'Fastings, watchings, meditating on the Scriptures, poverty, and privation of all one's possessions are not perfection, but means of perfection.' Now the privation of one's possessions, or poverty, is a means of perfection, inasmuch as by doing away with riches we remove certain obstacles to charity; and these are chiefly three. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 188, a. 7)

Perfection can also coexist with great opulence: Abraham was rich

The perfection of the Christian life does not essentially consist in voluntary poverty, but voluntary poverty conduces instrumentally to the perfection of life. Hence it does not follow that where there is greater poverty there is greater perfection; indeed the highest perfection is compatible with great wealth, since Abraham, to whom it was said (Gen 17:1): 'Walk before Me and be perfect,' is stated to have been rich (Gen 13:2). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 185, a. 6)

Nothing prevents a vice from arising out of poverty

And since neither riches, nor poverty, nor any external thing is in itself man's good, but they are only so as they are ordered to the good of reason, **nothing prevents a vice from arising out of any of them, when they do not come within man's use in accord with the rule of reason.** Yet they are not to be judged evil in themselves; rather, the use of them may be evil. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*. III, 134, 6)

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

Involuntary poverty in itself is not blessed. The poor who are covetous: this poverty does not save, their affections condemn

But not every one oppressed with poverty is blessed, but he who has preferred the commandment of Christ to worldly riches. For many are poor in their possessions, yet most covetous in their disposition; these poverty does not save, but their affections condemn. For **nothing involuntary deserves a blessing**, because all virtue is characterized by the freedom of the will. **Blessed then is the poor man as being the disciple of Christ.** (Saint Basil the Great quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea In Lucam* 6:20-23)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Church receives from Christ the truth of salvation that she offers to mankind

This truth which comes from God has its centre in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. **From him, who is 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (Jn 14:6), the Church receives all that she has to offer to mankind.** Through the mystery of the Incarnate Word and Redeemer of the world, she possesses the truth regarding the **Father and his love for us**, and also the truth concerning man and his freedom. Through his Cross and Resurrection, **Christ has brought about our Redemption, which is liberation in the strongest sense of the word, since it has freed us from the most radical evil, namely sin and the power of death.** (Congregation for

the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Libertatis conscientia on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, no. 3, March 22, 1986)

By the power of his Paschal Mystery, Christ has set us free

The Son of God who has made himself poor for love of us **wishes to be recognized in the poor, in those who suffer or are persecuted:** 'As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me' (Mt 25:40). **But is it above all by the power of his Paschal Mystery that Christ has set us free.** Through his perfect obedience on the Cross and through the glory of his Resurrection, **the Lamb of God has taken away the sin of the world and opened for us the way to definitive liberation.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Libertatis conscientia on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, no. 50-51, March 22, 1986)

JOHN PAUL II

Salvation can only come from Jesus Christ

If we go back to the beginnings of the Church, we find a clear affirmation that **Christ is the one Savior of all, the only one able to reveal God and lead to God.** In reply to the Jewish religious authorities who question the apostles about the healing of the lame man, Peter says: 'By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by him this man is standing before you well.... And there is salvation in no one else, for **there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved'** (Acts 4:10, 12). **This statement, which was made to the Sanhedrin, has a universal value, since for all people —Jews and Gentiles alike— salvation can only come from Jesus Christ.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 5, December 7, 1990)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Redemption, accomplished by Jesus, is made efficacious through the Sacraments

The mystery of the Incarnation, Death

and Resurrection of Jesus, the Son of God become man, is the unique and inexhaustible font of the redemption of humanity, made efficacious in the Church through the sacraments. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Notification on the works of Fr. Jon Sobrino SJ*, no. 10, November 26, 2006)

JOHN PAUL II

Only those who suffer in union with Christ and the Church can participate in the redemptive suffering

For, whoever suffers in union with Christ—just as the Apostle Paul bears his ‘tribulations’ in union with Christ— not only receives from Christ that strength already referred to but also ‘completes’ by his suffering ‘what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions’. [...] The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world’s redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite. No man can add anything to it. But at the same time, in the mystery of the Church as his Body, Christ has in a sense opened his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering. [...] Only within this radius and dimension of the Church as the Body of Christ, which continually develops in space and time, can one think and speak of ‘what is lacking’ in the sufferings of Christ. The Apostle, in fact, makes this clear when he writes of ‘completing what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the Church’. It is precisely the Church, which ceaselessly draws on the infinite resources of the Redemption, introducing it into the life of humanity, which is the dimension in which the redemptive suffering of Christ can be constantly completed by the suffering of man. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Salvifici doloris*, no. 24, February 11, 1984)

II – HOW THE CHURCH ALWAYS CONSIDERED POVERTY AND WHY IT HAS CONCERN FOR THE POOR

JOHN PAUL II

The Church’s love for the poor is a part of her constant tradition

As far as the Church is concerned, the social message of the Gospel must not be

considered a theory, but above all else a basis and a motivation for action. Inspired by this message, some of the first Christians distributed their goods to the poor, bearing witness to the fact that, despite different social origins, it was possible for people to live together in peace and harmony. Through the power of the Gospel, down the centuries monks tilled the land, men and women Religious founded hospitals and shelters for the poor, confraternities as well as individual men and women of all states of life devoted themselves to the needy and to those on the margins of society, convinced as they were that Christ’s words ‘as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me’ (Mt 25:40) were not intended to remain a pious wish, but were meant to become a concrete life commitment. [...] The Church’s love for the poor, [...] and a part of her constant tradition. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 57, May 1, 1991)

PAUL VI

The Church’s mission cannot be reduced to a simply temporal project

Many, even generous Christians [...] are frequently tempted to reduce her mission to the dimensions of a simply temporal project. They would reduce her aims to a man-centered goal; the salvation of which she is the messenger would be reduced to material well-being. Her activity, forgetful of all spiritual and religious preoccupation, would become initiatives of the political or social order. But if this were so, the Church would lose her fundamental meaning. Her message of liberation would no longer have any originality and would easily be open to monopolization and manipulation by ideological systems and political parties. She would have no more authority to proclaim freedom as in the name of God. This is why we have wished to emphasize, in the same address at the opening of the Synod, [...] ‘the kingdom of God, before anything else, in its fully theological meaning....’ (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 32, December 8, 1975)

BENEDICT XVI

There are many forms of poverty other than material poverty

Fighting poverty requires attentive consideration of the complex phenomenon of globalization [...] Yet the reference to globalization should also alert us to the spiritual and moral implications of the question, urging us, in our dealings with the poor, to set out from the clear recognition that we all share in a single divine plan [...] **This perspective requires an understanding of poverty that is wide-ranging and well articulated. If it were a question of material poverty alone, then the social sciences, which enable us to measure phenomena on the basis of mainly quantitative data, would be sufficient to illustrate its principal characteristics. Yet we know that other, non-material forms of poverty exist** which are not the direct and automatic consequence of material deprivation. For example, **in advanced wealthy societies, there is evidence of marginalization, as well as affective, moral and spiritual poverty**, seen in people whose interior lives are disoriented and who experience various forms of malaise despite their economic prosperity. On the one hand, I have in mind what is known as ‘moral underdevelopment’ and on the other hand the negative consequences of ‘superdevelopment’. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace*, no. 2, January 1, 2009)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church’s love for the poor extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty

‘The Church’s love for the poor . . . is a part of her constant tradition.’ This love is inspired by the Gospel of the Beatitudes, of the poverty of Jesus, and of his concern for the poor. **Love for the poor** is even one of the motives for the duty of working so as to ‘be able to give to those in need’ (Eph 4:28). It **extends not only to material poverty but also to the many forms of cultural and religious poverty**. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2444)

JOHN PAUL II

The primacy of attention should be for spiritual forms of poverty

True evangelizing zeal is roused in sympathy above all for the situation of spiritual necessity – at times extreme – in which so many men and women find themselves. Consider the number of those who do not know Christ, or have a deformed image of Him, or have abandoned his following, seeking their own well-being in the attractions of this secularized society or through the hateful confrontation of ideological battles. **In light of this poverty of spirit, the Christian may not remain passive:** he must pray, give testimony of his faith at each moment, and speak of Christ, of his great love, with courage and charity! **And he should seek that these others approach or return to the Lord and to his Mystical Body, which is the Church, through a profound and joyful conversion of their lives, that gives meaning and eternal value throughout all of their earthly journey. The primacy of this attention to the spiritual forms of human poverty, will impede that the preferential love of Christ for the poor – of which the Church participates – be interpreted with exclusively socio-economic categories, and will remove all danger of unjust discrimination in pastoral action.** (John Paul II. *Homily*, no. 3, April 7, 1987)

PIUS XI

No one is so poor as he who is deprived of God’s grace

Since no one can be thought so poor and naked, no one so infirm or hungry, as he who is deprived of the knowledge and grace of God, so there is no one who cannot understand that both the mercy and the rewards of God shall be given to him who, on his part, shows mercy to the neediest of his fellow-beings. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Rerum Ecclesiae*, no. 14, February 28, 1926)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The first poverty is not to know Christ

In this way, the Congregation seeks to be of service to the people of God, and

particularly to the simple and poorest members of the Church. From the beginning, this preoccupation for the poor has been one of the characteristics of the Church's mission. If it is true, as the Holy Father has indicated, that **'the first poverty among people is not to know Christ'** (Benedict XVI, Lenten Message 2006), then all people have the right to know the Lord Jesus, who is 'the hope of the nations and the salvation of the peoples.' What is more, **each Christian has the right to know in an adequate, authentic, and integral manner the truth which the Church professes and expresses about Christ.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Notification on the works of Fr. Jon Sobrino S.J.*, no. 1, November 26, 2006)

Human misery is the obvious sign of the need for salvation

In its various forms – material deprivation, unjust oppression, physical and psychological illnesses, and finally death – **human misery is the obvious sign of the natural condition of weakness in which man finds himself since original sin and the sign of his need for salvation.** Hence it drew the compassion of Christ the Savior to take it upon himself and to be identified with the least of his brethren (cf. Mt 25:40, 45). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, no. 68, March 22, 1986)

PAUL VI

The deep solicitude of the Church for the needs of men is born of the desire to illuminate them with the light of Christ

We confess that the Kingdom of God begun here below in the Church of Christ is not of this world whose form is passing, and that its proper growth cannot be confounded with the progress of civilization, of science or of human technology, but that it consists in an ever more profound knowledge of the unfathomable riches of Christ, an ever stronger hope in eternal blessings, an ever more ardent response to the love of God, and an ever more generous bestowal of grace and holiness among men. [...] The deep solicitude of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, for the needs of men, for their joys and hopes, their griefs and efforts, is therefore **nothing other than her great desire**

to be present to them, in order to illuminate them with the light of Christ and to gather them all in Him, their only Savior. (Paul VI. *Apostolic letter Solemni hac liturgia*, Credo of the People of God, no. 27, June 30, 1968)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The preferential option of Christ: proclaim the good news to the poor

Jesus said to them in reply, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them'. (Mt 11:4-5)

JOHN PAUL II

The greatest good we can give the poor: the Gospel

And may this be the special mark of your ministry too: concern for the poor, for those who are materially or spiritually in need. Renew your pastoral love will embrace those in want, those afflicted, those in sin. And let us remember that the greatest good we can give them is the word of God. This does not mean that we do not assist them in their physical needs, but it does mean that they need something more, and that we have something more to give: the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (John Paul II. *Address to the Philippine Episcopate and Asian Bishops*, no. 4, February 17, 1981)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The preoccupation with bread cannot postpone evangelization

The zeal and the compassion which should dwell in the hearts of all pastors nevertheless run the risk of being led astray and diverted to works which are just as damaging to man and his dignity as is the poverty which is being fought, if one is not sufficiently attentive to certain temptations. The feeling of anguish at the urgency of the problems cannot make us lose sight of what is essential nor forget the reply of Jesus to the Tempter: 'It is not on bread alone that man lives, but

on every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Matthew 4:4; cf. Deuteronomy 8:3). **Faced with the urgency of sharing bread, some are tempted to put evangelization into parentheses, as it were, and postpone it until tomorrow: first the bread, then the Word of the Lord.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, no. VI, 2-3, August 6, 1984)

JOHN PAUL I

The Church's pastoral charity would be incomplete if she did not point out 'higher needs'

For us, evangelization involves an explicit teaching about the name of Jesus, his identity, his teaching, his Kingdom and his promises. And his chief promise is eternal life. Jesus truly has words that lead us to eternal life. Just recently at a general audience, we spoke to the faithful about eternal life. We are convinced that it is necessary for us to emphasize this element, in order to complete our message and to model our teaching on that of Jesus. From the days of the Gospel, and in imitation of the Lord, who 'went about doing good' (Act 10:38), the Church is irrevocably committed to contributing to the relief of physical misery and need. But her pastoral charity would be incomplete if she did not point out even 'higher needs'. (John Paul I. *Address to a group of Bishops from the Philippines on their ad limina visit*, September 28, 1978)

BENEDICT XVI

The witness of charity must go together with the proclamation of the truth of the Gospel

The witness of charity, practiced here in a special way, is part of the Church's mission, together with the proclamation of the truth of the Gospel. Human beings do not only need to be physically nourished or helped through moments of difficulty; they also need to know who they are and to understand the truth about themselves and their dignity. [...] With her service for the poor the Church is committed to proclaiming to all the truth about man who is

loved by God, created in his image, redeemed by Christ and called to eternal communion with him. A great many people have thus been able to rediscover and are still rediscovering their dignity, lost at times because of tragic events; they rediscover trust in themselves and hope in the future. (Benedict XVI. *Address to Diocesan Caritas of Rome*, February 14, 2010)

PIUS XII

The Church desires that all material redemptions have as their base a moral elevation

The Church is concerned and has always been concerned regarding the labor question, of the social question, offering above all those great principles, that have to be the only base of every true solution, and descending also, as much as possible, to those practical initiatives that are within its reach. **The Church desires that those who work may live a truly human life, in order to be able to live a Christian life, without the excessive earthly preoccupations impeding them to gaze toward heaven;** the Church proposes a more just distribution of natural goods, starting principally from the base of a just salary, that guarantees your present life and that of your family, opening the doors to savings that guarantee the future. But we desire to add once more that the Church desires that all of the material redemptions have as their base a former intellectual and moral elevation, for not from bread alone does man live (Deut. 8:3) and it is written: **But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides** (Mt 6:33). (Pius XII. *Address to a pilgrimage of workers from Barcelona*, October 25, 1954)

JOHN PAUL II

The duties toward the poor lies in their dignity as children of God

Within the Church, dear brothers and sisters, you experience in a special way the dignity of the children of God, which is the most noble and beautiful title to which a human being may aspire. Always maintain alive and functioning this dignity; in it lies the grandeur that the Church, Body of Christ, cares, teaches and

promotes. No one furnishes so many reasons to love, respect and make respected the poor as the Church, which is the depository of the revealed truth with respect to man, image of God, redeemed by Christ. The announcing of the Good News of the kingdom gives reason for this happiness that today we share, despite the particular difficulties of your existence. [...] It is in His [Jesus'] dignity as the Son of God that lies the roots of the rights of every man, whose guarantee is God himself. That is why the Church, obedient to the mandate received, urges the duties of solidarity, justice and charity for all, particularly toward those most in need. (John Paul II. *Meeting with the inhabitants of the working class districts of Medellin*, no. 2, July 5, 1986)

PAUL VI

The option for the poor has as its purpose to raise them to a life in accordance with their dignity as Children of God

[The Church], with its option for the poor and its love for evangelical poverty, never wished to leave them in this state, but rather help them and raise them toward increasingly superior forms of life, more in accordance with their dignity as men and children of God. (Paul VI. *Homily during the Canonization of John Macias*, September 28, 1975)

BENEDICT XVI

To change unjust structures we must focus attention on eternal salvation

Yet changing unjust structures is not of itself sufficient to guarantee the happiness of the human person. Moreover, as I affirmed recently to the Bishops gathered in Aparecida, Brazil, the task of politics 'is not the immediate competence of the Church' (Address to the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, May 13, 2007). Rather, her mission is to promote the integral development of the human person. For this reason, the great challenges facing the world at the present time, such as globalization, human rights abuses, unjust social structures, cannot be confronted and overcome unless attention is focused on the deepest needs of the human person: the promotion of human

dignity, well-being and, in the final analysis, eternal salvation. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants of the 18th General Assembly of Caritas Internationalis*, June 8, 2007)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

The Church is conscious that it is impossible to eliminate poverty completely from this world

Jesus says: 'You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me' (Mt 26:11; cf. Mk 14:7; Jn 12:8). He makes this statement not to contrast the attention due to him with service of the poor. Christian realism, while appreciating on the one hand the praiseworthy efforts being made to defeat poverty, is cautious on the other hand regarding ideological positions and Messianistic beliefs that sustain the illusion that it is possible to eliminate the problem of poverty completely from this world. This will happen only upon Christ's return, when he will be with us once more, for ever. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 183, May 26, 2006)

III – SHOULD THE CHURCH BE POOR? IN WHAT MANNER?

JOHN PAUL II

Far from adding poverty to that of the poor, it is necessary to spread true richness

Saint Thomas comments: Jesus 'defended material poverty to give us spiritual riches' (S Th III, q. 40, a.3) All of those who, receiving his invitation, voluntarily follow the path of poverty, inaugurated by Him, are brought to spiritually enrich humanity. Far from simply adding their poverty to that of the other poor who live in the world, they are called to proportion true richness, which is of a spiritual order. As was written in the Apostolic Exhortation *Redemptionis Donum*, Christ 'is not only the teacher but also the spokesman of that salvific poverty which corresponds to the infinite riches of God' (no. 12). If we look to this Master, we learn from him the

true meaning of evangelical poverty and the grandeur of the vocation to follow him by the way of the poverty. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2-3, November 30, 1994)

Evangelical poverty is the subjection of all goods to the supreme Good of God

On the subject of evangelical poverty, the synod fathers gave a concise yet important description, presenting it as 'the subjection of all goods to the supreme good of God and his kingdom' (Proposition 8). In reality, only the person who contemplates and lives the mystery of God as the one and supreme good, as the true and definitive treasure, can understand and practice poverty, which is certainly not a matter of despising or rejecting material goods but of a loving and responsible use of these goods and at the same time an ability to renounce them with great interior freedom – that is, with reference to God and his plan. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 30, March 25, 1992)

JOHN XXII

Jesus Christ and his Apostles had earthly possessions

Since among some learned men it often happens that doubt is again raised as to whether should be branded as heretical to affirm persistently that our Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles did not possess anything either in particular or even in common, even though there are different and adverse opinions on that question, we, in a desire to put an end to this controversy, declare on the advice of our brethren by this perpetual edict that a persistent assertion of this kind shall henceforth be branded as erroneous and heretical, since it expressly contradicts Sacred Scripture, which in many passages asserts that they did have some possessions; and since with regard to the aforementioned it openly submits that Sacred Scripture itself, by which surely the articles of orthodox faith are approved, contains a ferment of falsehood and consequently, in so far as in it lies, completely voiding the faith of Scripture it renders the Catholic faith, by destroying its approval, doubtful and uncertain. (Denzinger-Hünemann 930. *John XXII*, Edict *Cum inter nonnullos*, November 12, 1323)

JOHN XXIII

The Lord himself had money-boxes in forming his Church

Even though We praise and extol this wonderful virtue of poverty so much, no one should conclude that We have any intention of giving Our approval to the unbecoming indigence and misery in which the ministers of the Lord are sometimes forced to live, both in cities and in remote rural areas. In this regard, when St. Bede the Venerable explained and commented on the words of the Lord on detachment from earthly things, he excluded possible incorrect interpretations of this passage with these words: 'You must not think that this command was given with the intention of having the saints keep no money at all for their own use or for that of the poor (for we read that the Lord himself... had money-boxes in forming his Church...) but rather the idea was that this should not be the motive for serving God nor should justice be abandoned out of fear of suffering want' (*In Luc. Evang.* IV, c. 12). (John XXIII. *Encyclical Sacerdotii nostri primordia*, no. 19, August 1, 1959)

JOHN PAUL II

The Church has always claimed the right to possess and administer temporal goods

The Church has always claimed the right to possess and administer temporal goods. However, she does not ask for privileges in that area, but rather the possibility to use the means at her disposal for a threefold purpose: 'to order divine worship; to provide decent support for the clergy and other ministers; to perform the works of the sacred apostolate and of charity, especially towards the needy' (Code of Canon Law, can. 1254, §2). (John Paul II. *Address to a delegation from the Croatia*, December 15, 1998)

BENEDICT XVI

When the so-called paupers' movement rose up against a rich and beautiful Church, the Mendicant Orders opposed them

Francis of Assisi and Dominic of Guzmán [...] were able to read 'the signs of the times'

intelligently, perceiving the challenges that the Church of their time would be obliged to face. A first challenge was the expansion of various groups and movements of the faithful who, in spite of being inspired by a legitimate desire for authentic Christian life often set themselves outside ecclesial communion. They were profoundly adverse to the rich and beautiful Church which had developed precisely with the flourishing of monasticism. In recent Catecheses I have reflected on the monastic community of Cluny, which had always attracted young people, therefore vital forces, as well as property and riches. **Thus, at the first stage, logically, a Church developed whose wealth was in property and also in buildings. The idea that Christ came down to earth poor and that the true Church must be the very Church of the poor clashed with this Church.** The desire for true Christian authenticity was thus in contrast to the reality of the empirical Church. **These were the so-called paupers' movements of the Middle Ages. They fiercely contested the way of life of the priests and monks of the time, accused of betraying the Gospel and of not practising poverty like the early Christians, and these movements countered the Bishops' ministry with their own 'parallel hierarchy'. Furthermore, to justify their decisions, they disseminated doctrine incompatible with the Catholic faith.** For example, the Cathars' or Albigensians' movement re-proposed ancient heresies such as the debasement of and contempt for the material world the opposition to wealth soon became opposition to material reality as such, [...] **Both Franciscans and Dominicans, following in their Founders' footsteps, showed on the contrary that it was possible to live evangelical poverty, the truth of the Gospel as such, without being separated from the Church. They showed that the Church remains the true, authentic home of the Gospel and of Scripture.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, January 13, 2010)

PIUS X

The external pomp, by which authority in the Church is revered, is honor paid to Jesus Christ

Their [the modernists] general directions for the Church may be put in this way: Since the end of the Church is entirely spiritual, the

religious authority should strip itself of all that external pomp which adorns it in the eyes of the public. And here they forget that while religion is essentially for the soul, it is not exclusively for the soul, and that **the honor paid to authority is reflected back on Jesus Christ who instituted it.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 25, September 8, 1907)

JOHN PAUL II

The Church has feared no 'extravagance', devoting the best of resources to the unsurpassable gift of the Eucharist

Reading the account of the institution of the Eucharist in the Synoptic Gospels, we are struck by the simplicity and the 'solemnity' with which Jesus, on the evening of the Last Supper, instituted this great sacrament. There is an episode which in some way serves as its prelude: the anointing at Bethany. A woman, whom John identifies as **Mary the sister of Lazarus, pours a flask of costly ointment over Jesus' head, which provokes from the disciples – and from Judas in particular (cf. Mt 26:8, Mk 14:4, Jn 12:4) – an indignant response, as if this act, in light of the needs of the poor, represented an intolerable 'waste'. But Jesus' own reaction is completely different.** While in no way detracting from the duty of charity towards the needy, for whom the disciples must always show special care – 'the poor you will always have with you' (Mt 26:11, Mk 14:7, cf. Jn 12:8) – **he looks towards his imminent death and burial, and sees this act of anointing as an anticipation of the honor which his body will continue to merit even after his death, indissolubly bound as it is to the mystery of his person. [...]** Like the woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany, **the Church has feared no 'extravagance', devoting the best of her resources to expressing her wonder and adoration before the unsurpassable gift of the Eucharist.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 47-48, April 17, 2003)

OFFICE FOR THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF

In the divine worship ‘noble simplicity’ must not be confused with ‘liturgical poverty’

Divine beauty manifests itself in an altogether particular way in the sacred liturgy, also through material things of which man, made of soul and body, has need to come to spiritual realities: the building of worship, the furnishings, the vestments, the images, the music, the dignity of the ceremonies themselves. Reread in this connection is the fifth chapter on ‘Decorum of the Liturgical Celebration’ in the encyclical ‘*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*’ – of Pope John Paul II (April 17, 2003), where he affirms that Christ himself wanted a fitting a decorous environment for the Last Supper, asking his disciples to prepare it in the house of a friend who had a ‘large upper room furnished’ (Lk 22:12, cf. Mk 14:15). [...] The liturgy calls for the best of our possibilities, to glorify God the Creator and Redeemer. In the end, the care for the churches and the liturgy must be an expression of love for the Lord. Also in a place where the Church does not have great material resources, this duty cannot be neglected. [...] However, the ‘noble simplicity’ of the Roman Rite must not be confused with a misunderstood ‘liturgical poverty’ and an intellectualism that can lead to the ruin of solemnity, foundation of divine worship. (Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff. *The Noble Simplicity of Liturgical Vestments*, November 17, 2010)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

To serve the dignity of worship: all things should be truly worthy, becoming, and beautiful, as symbols of the supernatural world

Holy Mother Church has therefore always been the friend of the fine arts and has ever sought their noble help, with the special aim that all things set apart for use in divine worship should be truly worthy, becoming, and beautiful, signs and symbols of the supernatural world, [...] The Church has been particularly careful to see that sacred

furnishings should worthily and beautifully serve the dignity of worship. (Vatican Council II. *Constitution Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 122, December 4, 1963)

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

All that pertains to the Holy Sacrifice must be precious

I entreat you more than if it were a question of myself that, when it is becoming and it may seem to be expedient, you humbly beseech the clerics to venerate above all the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Name and written words which sanctify the body. They ought to hold as precious the chalices, corporals, ornaments of the altar, and all that pertain to the Sacrifice. And if the most holy Body of the Lord be lodged very poorly in any place, let It according to the command of the Church be placed by them and left in a precious place. (Saint Francis of Assisi. *Letter to all the Custodes*, I, no. 5)

Wherever the Most Holy Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ has been illicitly placed and abandoned let Him be placed in an honorable place

However all those who minister such holy mysteries, should consider within themselves, most of all those who minister illicitly, how vile are the chalices, corporals, and altar linens, where the His very Body and Blood are sacrificed. And by many in vile places He is placed and abandoned, borne about in a wretched manner and consumed unworthily and ministered to others indiscretely. [...] Is not our piety stirred concerning all these things, when the pious Lord Himself offers Himself into our hands and we handle Him and consume Him each day with our mouth? Or are we ignorant that we must (one day) fall into His Hand? Therefore let us correct quickly all these things and the others; and wherever the Most Holy Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ has been illicitly placed and abandoned, let Him be removed from that place and let them be placed in an honorable place. (Saint Francis of Assisi. *Letter to the Clergy II*, no. 4-5, 8-11)

BENEDICT XVI

Love does not calculate; Judas' calculation is a disguise for egoistic lack of dedication

Mary of Bethany 'took 300 grams [a pound] of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair' (cf. Jn 12: 3). Mary's gesture is the expression of great faith and love for the Lord; it is not enough for her to wash the Teacher's feet with water; she sprinkles on them a great quantity of the precious perfume which as Judas protested it would have been possible to sell for 300 denarii. She did not anoint his head, as was the custom, but his feet: **Mary offers Jesus the most precious thing she has and with a gesture of deep devotion. Love does not calculate, does not measure, does not worry about expense, does not set up barriers but can give joyfully; it seeks only the good of the other, surmounts meanness, pettiness, resentment and the narrow-mindedness that human beings sometimes harbour in their hearts. [...] Mary's action is in contrast to the attitude and words of Judas who, under the pretext of the aid to be given to the poor, conceals the selfishness and falsehood of a person closed into himself, shackled by the greed for possession and who does not let the good fragrance of divine love envelop him. Judas calculates what one cannot calculate, he enters with a mean mindset the space which is one of love, of giving, of total dedication. And Jesus, who had remained silent until that moment, intervenes defending Mary's gesture: 'Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial' (Jn 12: 7). (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, March 29, 2010)**

LEO XIII

Pomp and splendor of ceremonies: is to be solicitous for the salvation of one's neighbor

The Scriptures teach us that it is the duty of all to be solicitous for the salvation of one's neighbor, according to the power and position of each. [...] those who belong to the clergy should do this by an enlightened fulfillment of their preaching ministry, **by the pomp and splendor of ceremonies.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Testem benevolentiae nostrae*, January 22, 1899)

OFFICE FOR THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF

The Church will attract men, rich or poor, by putting on the royal mantle of true beauty

And again, what is the purpose of the beauty of vestments and sacred vessels, if the poor man dies of hunger or does not have what it takes to cover his nakedness? Does that beauty not subtract from the resources to care for the needy? [...] At present we are in need not so much of simplifying and pruning, but of rediscovering the decorum and majesty of divine worship. The sacred liturgy of the Church will attract those of our time not by wearing more of the everyday gray and anonymous clothing, of which he is already very accustomed, but by putting on the royal mantle of true beauty. The liturgy of today needs ever new and young clothing, which will make it perceived as a window open to heaven, as point of contact with the One and Triune God, to whose adoration it is ordered, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, High and Eternal Priest. (Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff. *Beauty and the Liturgical Rite*, November 3, 2010)

IV – THE SAINTS, RICH OR POOR, ARE THE TRUE EVANGELIZERS IN THE CHURCH

JOHN PAUL II

The Church is universal, not of only one class

'Blessed are the poor in spirit'. The 'rich' are also 'poor in spirit' when, in proportion to their own riches, they do not fail to 'give of themselves' and to 'serve the others'. In this way, then, the Church of the poor speaks in the first place and above all to man. To each man and, therefore, to all men. It is the universal Church. The Church of the mystery of the Incarnation. It is not the Church of one class or only one caste. And it speaks in the name of truth itself. (John Paul II. *Address during the visit to the favela Vidigal in Rio de Janeiro*, no. 4-5, July 2, 1980)

BENEDICT XVI

Evangelization is the proclamation of Jesus as the one Saviour – without a reductive sociological understanding

The more ardent the love for the Eucharist in the hearts of the Christian people, the more clearly will they recognize the **goal of all mission: to bring Christ to others. Not just a theory or a way of life inspired by Christ, but the gift of his very person.** Anyone who has not shared the truth of love with his brothers and sisters has not yet given enough. **The Eucharist, as the sacrament of our salvation, inevitably reminds us of the unicity of Christ and the salvation that he won for us by his blood.** The mystery of the Eucharist, believed in and celebrated, demands a constant catechesis on the need for all to engage in a missionary effort centred on the proclamation of Jesus as the one Saviour. This will help to avoid a reductive and purely sociological understanding of the vital work of human promotion present in every authentic process of evangelization. (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 86, February 22, 2007)

JOHN PAUL II

Holiness of life is what makes a Christian a fruitful evangelizer

Since they are members of the Church by virtue of their Baptism, all Christians share responsibility for missionary activity. [...] Missionary cooperation is rooted and lived, above all, in personal union with Christ. Only if we are united to him as the branches to the vine (cf. Jn 15:5) can we produce good fruit. Through holiness of life every Christian can become a fruitful part of the Church's mission. The Second Vatican Council invited all 'to a profound interior renewal, so that having a lively awareness of their personal responsibility for the spreading of the Gospel, they may play their part in missionary work among the nations.' (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 77, December 7, 1990)

Holiness is a fundamental condition for the mission of salvation of the Church

The vocation to holiness is intimately

connected to mission [...] Holiness, then, must be called a fundamental presupposition and an irreplaceable condition for everyone in fulfilling the mission of salvation within the Church. The Church's holiness is the hidden source and the infallible measure of the works of the apostolate and of the missionary effort. Only in the measure that the Church, Christ's Spouse, is loved by him and she, in turn, loves him, does she become a mother fruitful in the Spirit. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Christifideles Laici*, no. 17, December 30, 1988)

PAUL VI

The first means of evangelization: an authentically Christian life

It is appropriate first of all to emphasize the following point: for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. [...] Saint Peter expressed this well when he held up the example of a reverent and chaste life that wins over even without a word those who refuse to obey the word. It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus [...] in short, the witness of sanctity. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 41, December 8, 1975)

BENEDICT XV

To enter upon the apostolic life: one must despise sin and practice the virtues

But for the man who enters upon the apostolic life there is one attribute that is indispensable. It is of the most critical importance, as We have mentioned before, that he have sanctity of life. For the man who preaches God must himself be a man of God. The man who urges others to despise sin must despise it himself. [...] Let him be humble and obedient and chaste. And especially let him be a devout man, dedicated to prayer and constant union with God, a man who goes before the Divine Majesty and

fervently pleads the cause of souls. For as he binds himself more and more closely to God, he will receive the grace and assistance of God to a greater and greater degree. (Benedict XV. *Apostolic letter Maximum illud*, no. 26-27, November 30, 1919)

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Laudato si' (I): Collateral considerations: what is an Encyclical, what is the Social Doctrine of the Church, and finally, what are the prerequisites of a Social Encyclical?

There are few images that so authentically and poetically reflect the relationship between God and mankind, as the shepherd and his flock. 'I am the good shepherd, my sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me' (Jn 10:14, 27). These unforgettable words of the Eternal Shepherd have instilled confidence and certainty in his sheep throughout the centuries. Yes, throughout all centuries, for the 'echo' of the voice of the Shepherd has consistently made itself heard among the faithful in different ways. Amongst these, an incomparable manner is, without doubt, through the Magisterium of the Church, which by the munus of teaching, projects the voice of the Divine Master for all time, leading the flock to fertile pastures and defending it from ferocious wolves. Even today, the 'sheep' know how to recognize who is speaking to them...

A short time ago Pope Francis published his second Encyclical. The interest that preceded its publication was a clear symptom of the desire to find in it an 'echo' of the voice of Jesus Christ caring for his flock in these agitated times. The publication of 'Laudato si' – which Francis wishes to incorporate into the social doctrine of the Church – awakened a reaction, that is as wide as it is superficial, from the most diverse quarters, ranging from radical environmental groups, to political leaders and religious sectors: reactions of delight, of reserve, and of concern...

Therefore, due to the importance of this document, the Denzinger-Bergoglio, as well as its English counterpart, presents a study that is more exhaustive than our usual endeavors. The structure of this study is similar to the regular format, but with new aspects that will help the reader to delve into the less commented upon meanderings of the Encyclical, so as to be able to attain a sound judgement in this regard, always in keeping with the immutable doctrine of the Church.

In this first part, it seemed opportune to make some collateral considerations since many people do not have certain essential premises clear regarding what a pontifical document is, especially one that is of the calibre of the document which is the object of this analysis.

As Catholics, how should we consider this Encyclical? Do we find in it an authentic echo of the voice of the Good Shepherd, clarifying the social questions of our days? Let us leave it to the Magisterium itself to answer these questions.

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Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

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Benedict XVI

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John Paul II

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Benedict XVI

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John Paul II

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- ♦ In order to know man, one must know God

John XXIII

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Pius XII

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Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

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Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

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Paul VI

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Pius XI

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Pius XII

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Catechism of the Catholic Church

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Pius XII

- ♦ Jesus Christ defeats sin, root of disharmony among men and nature

John XXIII

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John Paul II

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Benedict XVI

- ♦ We cannot work well for the earth unless we take into account the Last Judgment, Purgatory, Hell and Heaven
- ♦ The relationship between humans and the environment ultimately stems from their relationship with God

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

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John Paul II

♦ Ecological imbalance is born of a misuse use of creatures, ignoring or rejecting the purpose that is inherent to the work of creation

Benedict XVI

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Congregation for the Doctrine and the Faith

♦ In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Cathars revived old dualistic positions, considering the material universe as evil, and constituted a real danger to the faith

Benedict XVI

♦ The mendicant orders were called to confront such heresies by their adhesion to the doctrine of the Church – In this context, Saint Francis' admiration for nature can be understood as a testimony of the goodness of creation

Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio

♦ In every created thing, Saint Francis perceived a trace of the Creator; and in loving creatures he used them as a ladder to ascend to the Beloved

Benedict XVI

♦ Saint Francis' gazing at nature was contemplation of the Creator; to understand it otherwise is to make Francis unrecognizable

♦ The 'Canticle of the Creatures' before being an invitation to respect creation, is a prayer, praise addressed to the Creator – Francis' canticle, of obvious biblical inspiration, aspires towards the Creator, not to environment protection

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Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio

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I – A PRELIMINARY QUESTION: WHAT DEGREE OF ADHESION SHOULD THE FAITHFUL OFFER TO DOCUMENTS OF THE CHURCH?

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The mission of teaching is entrusted to the Magisterium so that all men may attain to salvation

As successors of the apostles, the bishops of the Church 'receive from the Lord, to whom

all power is given in heaven and on earth, the mission of teaching all peoples, and of preaching the Gospel to every creature, so that all men may attain to salvation...'

They have been entrusted then with the task of preserving, explaining, and spreading the Word of God of which they are servants (cf. *Dei verbum*, n. 10). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Donum Veritatis*, no. 14, May 24, 1990)

For this, Jesus Christ promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit to the

Church's Pastors – but there are degrees to be considered

Jesus Christ promised the assistance of the Holy Spirit to the Church's Pastors so that they could fulfill their assigned task of teaching the Gospel and authentically interpreting Revelation. In particular, He bestowed on them the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. This charism is manifested when the Pastors propose a doctrine as contained in Revelation and can be exercised in various ways. [...] Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and in a particular way, to the Roman Pontiff as Pastor of the whole Church, when exercising their ordinary Magisterium, even should this not issue in an infallible definition or in a 'definitive' pronouncement but in the proposal of some teaching which leads to a better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals and to moral directives derived from such teaching. One must therefore take into account the proper character of every exercise of the Magisterium, considering the extent to which its authority is engaged. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Donum veritatis*, no. 15, 17, May 24, 1990)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The same applies to the Church's social doctrine

Insofar as it is part of the Church's moral teaching, the Church's social doctrine has the same dignity and authority as her moral teaching. It is authentic Magisterium, which obligates the faithful to adhere to it (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2037). The doctrinal weight of the different teachings and the assent required are determined by the nature of the particular teachings, by their level of independence from contingent and variable elements, and by the frequency with which they are invoked (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction Donum veritatis*, 16–17, 23: AAS 82 (1990), 1557–1558, 1559–1560) (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 80)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

To be believed: what is proposed as divinely revealed either by solemn pronouncement or by the ordinary and universal Magisterium; to be firmly accepted and held: what is set forth definitively by the Magisterium regarding teaching on faith and morals

When the Magisterium of the Church makes an infallible pronouncement and solemnly declares that a teaching is found in Revelation, the assent called for is that of theological faith. This kind of adherence is to be given even to the teaching of the ordinary and universal Magisterium when it proposes for belief a teaching of faith as divinely revealed. When the Magisterium proposes 'in a definitive way' truths concerning faith and morals, which, even if not divinely revealed, are nevertheless strictly and intimately connected with Revelation, these must be firmly accepted and held. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Donum veritatis*, no. 23, May 24, 1990)

An example of the ordinary and universal Magisterium that is binding is found in the 'Instruction Donum vitae' of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: the Magisterium does not offer opinions nor does it propose lines of dialogue, rather, by the authority of the Church, it defines the true doctrine or its application with regards to a particular question

The style of *Donum vitae* corresponds to that of an authentic document of the Magisterium: it continually speaks in the name and with the authority of the Church (for example these meaningful expressions are used: the intervention of the Church [introduction, 1], the Church puts forward [ibidem], the Church offers [introduction 5], the Church prohibits [part 1,5], the Church is opposed [part 2,5], the Church reminds man [conclusion]) and right from the preamble it declares that it 'does not intend to repeat all the Church's teaching on the dignity of human life as it originates and on procreation, but to offer, in the light of the previous teaching of

the Magisterium, some specific replies to the main questions being asked in this regard' (*Donum vitae*, preamble). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *On the doctrinal authority of the Instruction Donum vitae*, December 21, 1988)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

'Religious submission of mind and will': to the authentic teaching of the Magisterium that is proclaimed by a definitive act be shown to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff when he is not speaking ex cathedra

Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. **This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking ex cathedra;** that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgments made by him are sincerely adhered to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 25, November 21, 1964)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Does that mean that they cannot be questioned? On questions of interventions in the prudential order, involving contingent and conjectural elements, it could happen that some Magisterial documents might not be free from all deficiencies

Finally, in order to serve the People of God as well as possible, in particular, by warning them of dangerous opinions which could lead to error, **the Magisterium can intervene in questions under discussion which involve, in addition to solid principles, certain contingent and**

conjectural elements. [...] The willingness to submit loyally to the teaching of the Magisterium on matters *per se* not irreformable must be the rule. It can happen, however, **that a theologian may, according to the case, raise questions regarding the timeliness, the form, or even the contents of magisterial interventions.** Here the theologian will need, first of all, to assess accurately the authoritativeness of the interventions which becomes clear from the nature of the documents, the insistence with which a teaching is repeated, and the very way in which it is expressed (LG, n. 25, §1). When it comes to the question of interventions in the prudential order, it could happen that some Magisterial documents might not be free from all deficiencies. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Donum veritatis*, no. 24, May 24, 1990)

II – 'LAUDATO SI' AND THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH: THE SAME PURPOSES, OBJECTIVES AND FOUNDATIONS?

A) The purpose of the social doctrine of the Church is the supernatural salvation of man, a concern that is not perceived in the 'Laudato si'

JOHN PAUL II

Pastors have the principal duty to be Teachers of the Truth that comes from God, not politicians, scientists or technologists

It is a great consolation for the universal Father to note that you come together here not as a symposium of experts, not as a parliament of politicians, not as a congress of scientists or technologists, however important such assemblies may be, but as a fraternal encounter of Pastors of the Church. And as Pastors you have the vivid awareness that your principal duty is to be Teachers of the Truth. Not a human and rational truth, but the Truth that comes from God, the Truth that brings with it the principle of the authentic liberation of man: 'you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free' (Jn 8:32); **that Truth which is the only one that offers a solid basis for an adequate 'praxis'.** (John Paul II.

Address for the Inauguration of the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate, January 28, 1979)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church bears a mission distinct from that of political authorities – it is concerned with temporal aspects in the measure that they are ordered to God and the good of souls

The Church makes a moral judgment about economic and social matters, ‘when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it.’ In the moral order she bears a mission distinct from that of political authorities: the Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, our ultimate end. She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio–economic relationships. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2420)

JOHN XXIII

The Church constructs her social teaching on the principle that man is raised in the plan of Providence to the supernatural order

The permanent validity of the Catholic Church’s social teaching admits of no doubt. This teaching rests on one basic principle: individual human beings are the foundation, the cause and the end of every social institution. That is necessarily so, for men are by nature social beings. This fact must be recognized, as also the fact that they are raised in the plan of Providence to an order of reality which is above nature. On this basic principle, which guarantees the sacred dignity of the individual, the Church constructs her social teaching. She has formulated, particularly over the past hundred years, and through the efforts of a very well informed body of priests and laymen, a social doctrine which points out with clarity the sure way to social reconstruction. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 218–220, May 15, 1961)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Helping man on the path of salvation: the primary and sole purpose of the Church’s social doctrine

With her social doctrine, the Church aims ‘at helping man on the path of salvation’ [94]. This is her primary and sole purpose. There is no intention to usurp or invade the duties of others or to neglect her own; nor is there any thought of pursuing objectives that are foreign to her mission. (Note 94: John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, 54). (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 69)

B) As the most formal documents of the Magisterium, Encyclicals deal with topics of key importance to the Church at a particular moment in history. In the Social Encyclicals the most important topic is the human person – image and likeness of God – not algae, worms and reptiles...

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The object of social doctrine is the human person, entrusted by Christ to the Church’s care

The object of the Church’s social doctrine is essentially the same that constitutes the reason for its existence: the human person called to salvation, and as such entrusted by Christ to the Church’s care and responsibility. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 81)

JOHN PAUL II

The guiding principle of the Church’s social doctrine: a correct view of the human person, created in God’s own image and likeness

From this point forward it will be necessary to keep in mind that the main thread and, in a

certain sense, the guiding principle [...] and of the Church's social doctrine, is a correct view of the human person and of his unique value, inasmuch as 'man ... is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself'. God has imprinted his own image and likeness on man (cf. Gen 1:26), conferring upon him an incomparable dignity. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 11, May 1, 1991)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Created in God's image, man is worth more than sparrows and sheep

The hierarchy of creatures is expressed by the order of the 'six days', from the less perfect to the more perfect. God loves all his creatures (Cf. Ps 145:9) and takes care of each one, even the sparrow. Nevertheless, Jesus said: 'You are of more value than many sparrows', or again: 'of how much more value is a man than a sheep' (Lk 12:6-7; Mt 12:12)! (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 342)

BENEDICT XVI

Man has an incomparable dignity: God did not hesitate to give his own Son for him

Man, created in the image of God, has an incomparable dignity; man, who is so worthy of love in the eyes of his Creator that God did not hesitate to give his own Son for him. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, January 8, 2007)

More than defending the earth, water and air, the Church must above all protect mankind from self-destruction

The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction. There is need for what might be called a human ecology, correctly understood. The deterioration of nature is in fact closely connected to the culture that shapes human coexistence: when 'human ecology' is

respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 51, June 29, 2009)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

In our days it is the human person that must to be preserved; human society to be renewed

Though mankind is stricken with wonder at its own discoveries and its power, it often raises anxious questions about the current trend of the world, about the place and role of man in the universe, about the meaning of its individual and collective strivings, and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity. Hence, giving witness and voice to the faith of the whole people of God gathered together by Christ, this council can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with, as well as its respect and love for the entire human family with which it is bound up, than by engaging with it in conversation about these various problems. The council brings to mankind light kindled from the Gospel, and puts at its disposal those saving resources which the Church herself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, receives from her Founder. For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 3, December 7, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

More than preserving the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction, greater effort must made to safeguard the natural and moral conditions of mankind

In addition to the irrational destruction of the natural environment, we must also mention the more serious destruction of the human environment, something which is by no means receiving the attention it deserves. Although people are rightly worried – though much less than they should be – about preserving the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction, because they realize that each of these species makes

its particular contribution to the balance of nature in general, too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic 'human ecology'. Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God's gift to man. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 38, May 1, 1991)

C) The social doctrine of the Church forms part of Moral Theology; it offers principles for reflection, criteria for judgment and directives for action – not technical solutions

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

The Church's social doctrine is of a specifically theological–moral nature

The Church's social doctrine is therefore of a theological nature, specifically theological–moral, 'since it is a doctrine aimed at guiding people's behaviour' (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 41). 'This teaching ... is to be found at the crossroads where Christian life and conscience come into contact with the real world. [It] is seen in the efforts of individuals, families, people involved in cultural and social life, as well as politicians and statesmen to give it a concrete form and application in history' (*Centesimus Annus*, 59). (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 73)

The Church's social doctrine does not belong to the field of ideology, but of theology– it cannot be defined according to socio–economic parameters

The Church's social doctrine 'belongs to the field, not of ideology, but of theology and particularly of moral theology' (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 41). It cannot be defined according to socio–economic parameters. It is not an ideological or pragmatic system intended to define and generate economic, political and social relationships, but is

a category unto itself. It is 'the accurate formulation of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to interpret these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to guide Christian behaviour' (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 41). (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 72)

JOHN PAUL II

The Church's social teaching is a valid instrument of evangelization, and only in this light does it concern itself with everything else

Thus the Church's social teaching is itself a valid instrument of evangelization. As such, it proclaims God and his mystery of salvation in Christ to every human being, and for that very reason reveals man to himself. In this light, and only in this light, does it concern itself with everything else: the human rights of the individual, and in particular of the 'working class', the family and education, the duties of the State, the ordering of national and international society, economic life, culture, war and peace, and respect for life from the moment of conception until death. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 54, May 1, 1991)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

Christ did not bequeath to the Church a mission in the political, economic or social order

The Church does not assume responsibility for every aspect of life in society, but speaks with the competence that is hers, which is that of proclaiming Christ the Redeemer (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2420): 'Christ did not bequeath to the Church a mission in the political, economic or social order; the purpose he assigned to her was

a religious one. But this religious mission can be the source of commitment, direction and vigour to establish and consolidate the community of men according to the law of God' (*Gaudium et spes*, 42). This means that **the Church does not intervene in technical questions with her social doctrine, nor does she propose or establish systems or models of social organization** (John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 41). **This is not part of the mission entrusted to her by Christ.** (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 68)

PIUS XI

The Church's authority conferred by God is on the moral implications of different matters and on what leads to eternal happiness – not technical matters

Certainly the Church was not given the commission to guide men to an only fleeting and perishable happiness but to that which is eternal. Indeed 'the Church holds that it is unlawful for her to mix without cause in these temporal concerns' (Pius XI. Encyclical *Ubi arcano*, Dec. 23, 1922); however, she can in no wise renounce the duty God entrusted to her to interpose her authority, not of course in matters of technique for which she is neither suitably equipped nor endowed by office, but in all things that are connected with the moral law. (Pius XI. Encyclical *Quadragesimo anno*, no. 41, May 15, 1931)

PAUL VI

In the social sphere, the Church assists discovery of the truth and the right path to follow

In the social sphere, the Church has always wished to assume a double function: first to enlighten minds in order to assist them to discover the truth and to find the right path to follow amid the different teachings that call for their attention; and secondly to take part in action and to spread, with a real care for service and effectiveness, **the energies of the Gospel.** (Paul VI. *Apostolic letter Octogesima adveniens*, no. 48, May 14, 1971)

PIUS XII

The Church should form the consciences of those who are called to seek the practical solutions for social problems in conformity to the divine laws

Moved by the profound conviction that the Church not only has the right, but also the duty to pronounce its authorized word on social questions, Leo XIII directed his message to the world. It is not that he sought to establish norms of a purely practical, or we could almost say technical character, of the social constitution; for he knew well and it was evident to him [...] that the Church does not attribute to Herself such a mission. [...] It is on the other hand, undoubtedly, **the prerogative of the Church that aspect of the social order where it comes close to and in contact with the moral field, to judge whether the bases of an existing social order are in accordance with the immutable order that God, Creator and Redeemer, has shown through natural right and Revelation: a double manifestation, to which Leo XIII refers to in his encyclical. [...] Because the Church, guardian of Christian supernatural order, in which nature and grace converge, must form the consciences, even of those who are called to seek solutions for the problems and the duties imposed by social life. On the form given to society, conforming or not to divine laws, depends and influences also the good and evil in souls, that is to say, that if men, all called to be vivified by the grace of Jesus Christ, inhale either the healthy and vital air of the truth and moral virtue or the harmful and often lethal bacteria of error and depravation in the situations of the course of the earthly life.** (Pius XII. *Radio message for the 50th anniversary of Rerum novarum*, no. 4–5, June 1, 1941)

JOHN PAUL II

For this, the social doctrine of the Church offers 'principles for reflection,' 'criteria of judgment' and 'directives for action'

In addition, the social doctrine of the Church has once more demonstrated its character as an application of the word of God to people's lives and the life of society, as well as to the earthly realities connected with them, offering 'principles for reflection,' 'criteria

of judgment' and 'directives for action' (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Libertatis conscientia*, no. 72; Paul VI *Octogesima adveniens*). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 8, December 30, 1987)

D) The social doctrine of the Church takes its principles from Revelation, and how it has been understood by the Church throughout the centuries. Therefore: Orthodox patriarchs and Sufi Muslims are not among Her sources, and even less so pantheistic documents like the Earth Charter

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

The Church's doctrinal heritage has its roots in Sacred Scripture and Tradition

In her continuous attention to men and women living in society, the Church has accumulated a rich doctrinal heritage. This has its roots in Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels and the apostolic writings, and takes on shape and body beginning from the Fathers of the Church and the great Doctors of the Middle Ages, constituting a doctrine in which, even without explicit and direct Magisterial pronouncements, the Church gradually came to recognize her competence. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 87)

BENEDICT XVI

Social doctrine is built on the foundation handed on by the Apostles to the Fathers of the Church

The Church's social doctrine illuminates with an unchanging light the new problems that are constantly emerging. This safeguards the permanent and historical character of the doctrinal 'patrimony' (John Paul II. *Laborem exercens*) which, with its specific characteristics, is part and parcel of the Church's ever-living Tradition (John Paul II. *Centesimus annus*). Social doctrine is built on the foundation handed on by the Apostles to the Fathers

of the Church, and then received and further explored by the great Christian doctors. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 12, June 29, 2009)

Christians have their own contribution to make – in light of divine Revelation and in fidelity to Tradition

If you want to cultivate peace, protect creation. The quest for peace by people of good will surely would become easier if all acknowledge the indivisible relationship between God, human beings and the whole of creation. In the light of divine Revelation and in fidelity to the Church's Tradition, Christians have their own contribution to make. They contemplate the cosmos and its marvels in light of the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of Christ, who by his death and resurrection has reconciled with God 'all things, whether on earth or in heaven' (Col 1:20). (Benedict XVI. *Message for the celebration of the 43rd World Day of Peace*, no. 14, January 1, 2010)

JOHN PAUL II

The morally coherent world view is grounded in religious convictions drawn from Revelation

Many ethical values, fundamental to the development of a peaceful society, are particularly relevant to the ecological question. The fact that many challenges facing the world today are interdependent confirms the need for carefully coordinated solutions based on a morally coherent world view. For Christians, such a world view is grounded in religious convictions drawn from Revelation. (John Paul II. *Message for the 23rd World Day of Peace*, no. 2, January 1, 1990)

BENEDICT XVI

Without the Tradition of the Apostolic Faith, social doctrine is reduced to merely sociological data

A fresh reading of *Populorum Progressio*, more than forty years after its publication, invites us to remain faithful to its message of

charity and truth, viewed within the overall context of Paul VI's specific magisterium and, more generally, within the tradition of the Church's social doctrine. Moreover, an evaluation is needed of the different terms in which the problem of development is presented today, as compared with forty years ago. **The correct viewpoint, then, is that of the Tradition of the Apostolic Faith [13],** a patrimony both ancient and new, **outside of which Populorum Progressio would be a document without roots — and issues concerning development would be reduced to merely sociological data.** (Note 13: Cf. Benedict XVI. Address at the Inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, Aparecida, 13 May 2007). (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 10, June 29, 2009)

E) To clarify moral action, social doctrine is based on eternal truths and not on contingent human authority, such as disputable scientific investigations regarding global warming and the greenhouse effect, the human causes of which have not been proven but rather are questioned in many circles

JOHN PAUL II

There can be no genuine solution of the 'social question' apart from the Gospel, where the context for the proper moral perspective is found

It was out of an awareness of his mission as the Successor of Peter that Pope Leo XIII proposed to speak out, and Peter's Successor today is moved by that same awareness. Like Pope Leo and the Popes before and after him, I take my inspiration from the Gospel image of 'the scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven', whom the Lord compares to 'a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old' (Mt 13:52). The treasure is **the great outpouring of the Church's Tradition, which contains 'what is old' – received and passed on from the very beginning – and which enables us to interpret the 'new things' in the midst of which the life**

of the Church and the world unfolds. [...] Now, as then, we need to repeat that there can be no genuine solution of the 'social question' apart from the Gospel, and **that the 'new things' can find in the Gospel the context for their correct understanding and the proper moral perspective for judgment on them.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 3. 5, May 1, 1991)

In order to know man, one must know God

The Church receives 'the meaning of man' from Divine Revelation. 'In order to know man, authentic man, man in his fullness, one must know God', said Pope Paul VI, and he went on to quote Saint Catherine of Siena, who, in prayer, expressed the same idea: 'In your nature, O eternal Godhead, I shall know my own nature' (Paul VI, Homily at the Final Public Session of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, December 7, 1965: AAS 58, 1966, 58). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 55, May 1, 1991)

JOHN XXIII

The moral order has no existence except in God; cut off from God it must necessarily disintegrate

The root cause of so much mistrust is **the presence of ideological differences between nations,** and more especially between their rulers. There are some indeed who go so far as to deny the existence of a moral order which is transcendent, absolute, universal and equally binding upon all. And where the same law of justice is not adhered to by all, men cannot hope to come to open and full agreement on vital issues. **Yes, both sides speak of justice and the demands of justice, but these words** frequently take on different or opposite meanings according to which side uses them. [...] **But the moral order has no existence except in God; cut off from God it must necessarily disintegrate.** Moreover, man is not just a material organism. He consists also of spirit; he is endowed with reason and freedom. **He demands, therefore, a moral and religious order; and it is this order – and not considerations of a purely extraneous, material order – which has the greatest validity in the**

solution of problems relating to his life as an individual and as a member of society, and problems concerning individual states and their inter-relations. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 205–206, 208, May 15, 1961)

PIUS XII

Caution must be used when there is question of hypotheses in scientific questions

It remains for Us now to speak about those questions which, **although they pertain to the positive sciences**, are nevertheless more or less connected with the truths of the Christian faith. In fact, **not a few insistently demand that the Catholic religion take these sciences into account** as much as possible. This **certainly would be praiseworthy in the case of clearly proved facts; but caution must be used when there is rather question of hypotheses**, having some sort of scientific foundation, in which the doctrine contained in Sacred Scripture or in Tradition is involved. If such conjectural opinions are directly or indirectly opposed to the doctrine revealed by God, then the demand that they be recognized can in no way be admitted. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Humani generis*, no. 28, August 12, 1950)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Circumstances of uncertainty and provisional solutions call for the applying not of rules but of guidelines

The authorities called to make decisions concerning health and environmental risks sometimes find themselves facing a situation in which available scientific data are contradictory or quantitatively scarce. It may then be appropriate to base evaluations on the **'precautionary principle'**, which does not mean applying rules but certain guidelines aimed at managing the situation of uncertainty. [...] The circumstances of uncertainty proper moral perspective make it particularly important that the decision-making process be transparent. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 469)

III – WITHIN THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH, LEGITIMATE ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WITH RESPECT TO GOD AND THE ETERNAL SALVATION OF MAN

A) The ecological question may have serious moral implications, but may not take man from his true end which is God and eternity. The salvation of a soul is worth more than the entire created universe

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

The human person transcends the limits of the created universe for his ultimate end is God himself

The human person, in himself and in his vocation, **transcends the limits of the created universe**, of society and of history: **his ultimate end is God himself** (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2244), who has revealed himself to men in order to invite them and receive them into communion with himself (cf. Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, 2). (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 47)

PAUL VI

The rational creature should direct his life to God

Just as the whole of creation is ordered toward its Creator, so too the rational creature should of his own accord direct his life to God, the first truth and the highest good. [...] United with the life-giving Christ, man's life is newly enhanced; it acquires a transcendent humanism which surpasses its nature and bestows new fullness of life. [...] **Man's personal and collective fulfillment could be jeopardized if the proper scale of values were not maintained.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Populorum progressio*, no. 16, 18, March 26, 1967)

PIUS XI

The Author of nature established an orderly relationship – subordinating immediate purposes, like caring for nature, to our supreme and last end

But it is only the moral law which, just as it commands us to seek our supreme and last end in the whole scheme of our activity, so likewise commands us to seek directly in each kind of activity those purposes which we know that nature, or rather God the Author of nature, established for that kind of action, and in orderly relationship to subordinate such immediate purposes to our supreme and last end. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 43, May 15, 1931)

LEO XIII

God has given us this world as a place of exile, and not as our abiding place: concern for the ‘common home’ must be based on the ‘Father’s Home’

Exclude the idea of futurity, and forthwith the very notion of what is good and right would perish; nay, the whole scheme of the universe would become a dark and unfathomable mystery. The great truth which we learn from nature herself is also the grand Christian dogma on which religion rests as on its foundation – that, when we have given up this present life, then shall we really begin to live. God has not created us for the perishable and transitory things of earth, but for things heavenly and everlasting; He has given us this world as a place of exile, and not as our abiding place. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Rerum novarum*, no. 21, May 15, 1931)

Life on earth is only the way and the means of perfecting the soul, which is made after the image and likeness of God

Life on earth, however good and desirable in itself, is not the final purpose for which man is created; it is only the way and the means to that attainment of truth and that love of goodness in which the full life of the soul consists. It is the soul which is made after the image and likeness of God; it is in the soul that the sovereignty resides in virtue whereof

man is commanded to rule the creatures below him and to use all the earth and the ocean for his profit and advantage. ‘Fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and all living creatures that move upon the earth’ (Gen 1:28). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Rerum novarum*, no. 40, May 15, 1931)

PIUS XI

What are temporal upheavals, disasters and calamities compared with the loss of souls?

Minds of all, it is true, are affected almost solely by temporal upheavals, disasters, and calamities. But if we examine things critically with Christian eyes, as we should, what are all these compared with the loss of souls? (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 130, May 15, 1931)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The justification of the ungodly is greater than the creation of heaven and earth

A work may be called great in two ways: first, on the part of the mode of action, and thus the work of creation is the greatest work, wherein something is made from nothing; secondly, a work may be called great on account of what is made, and thus the justification of the ungodly, which terminates at the eternal good of a share in the Godhead, is greater than the creation of heaven and earth, which terminates at the good of mutable nature. Hence, Augustine, after saying that ‘for a just man to be made from a sinner is greater than to create heaven and earth,’ adds, ‘for heaven and earth shall pass away, but the justification of the ungodly shall endure.’ (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I–II*, q. 113, a. 9)

Greater than the good of nature in the whole universe: the good of grace in one person

But the good of grace in one is greater than the good of nature in the whole universe. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I–II, q. 113, a. 9, ad 2)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Man alone is more precious in the eyes of God than the entire creation

What is then, the being that is going to come into existence surrounded by such consideration? It is man, great and admirable living figure, more precious in the eyes of God than the entire creation, and God has given so much importance to his salvation that he has not spared his only Son for him. For God has not ceased to do all that was possible so that man would arise to him and sit at his right hand. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homilies in Genesis*, Sermon 2, 1)

- B) Care for creation demands a constant reference to the soteriological and eschatological truths of the faith and of God himself; only in this way will it be effective

PIUS XII

The harmony of the relationship between man and creation comes from its common origin, elevated by the Incarnation

The relationship of man with the world enjoys the clear light of the eternal Spirit, communicated by the Creator to creation. In this way, the Incarnation conserves and augments the dignity of man and the nobility of the world over the foundation of its same origin in the divine Spirit, font and unity, order and harmony. If, on the contrary, this foundation of the spirit is removed, and, in consequence, the image (in man) and the trace (in irrational creatures) of the eternal divine Being in created things, the harmony is also lost in the relationship of man with the world. (Pius XII. *Radio message for Christmas*, December 22, 1957)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The work of creation finds its meaning and summit in the greater work of Redemption

Thus, the work of creation culminates in the greater work of redemption. The first

creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation in Christ, the splendour of which surpasses that of the first creation. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 349)

PIUS XII

Jesus Christ defeats sin, root of disharmony among men and nature

The profound darkness and disharmony, roots of all others, that the Incarnate Word had come to illuminate and recompose, consists in the rupture produced by original sin, that dragged the entire human race, and the world, its house, into its bitter consequences. [...] However, the hope of a return to the primitive condition was never extinguished in man and in the world, following the divine order, expressed, according to the expression of the Apostle, with the cries of all creatures (cf. Rom 8:22), for despite slavery to sin, man always remains an image of the divine Spirit, and the world, property of the Word. Christ has come to revive that which the fault had killed, heal that which had been wounded, illuminate that which had been darkened, in man as well as in the world. (Pius XII. *Radio message for Christmas*, December 22, 1957)

JOHN XXIII

Christianity is the meeting-point of earth and heaven; the earthly existence and the eternal life

Christianity is the meeting-point of earth and heaven. It lays claim to the whole man, body and soul, intellect and will, inducing him to raise his mind above the changing conditions of this earthly existence and reach upwards for the eternal life of heaven, where one day he will find his unfailing happiness and peace. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 2, May 15, 1961)

JOHN PAUL II

The Church renders this service to human society by preaching the truth about the creation of the world and about Redemption

Thus the first and most important task is accomplished within man's heart. The way in which he is involved in building his own future depends on the understanding he has of himself and of his own destiny. It is on this level that the Church's specific and decisive contribution to true culture is to be found. [...] The Church renders this service to human society by preaching the truth about the creation of the world, which God has placed in human hands so that people may make it fruitful and more perfect through their work; and by preaching the truth about the Redemption, whereby the Son of God has saved mankind and at the same time has united all people, making them responsible for one another. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 51, May 1, 1991)

BENEDICT XVI

We cannot work well for the earth unless we take into account the Last Judgement, Purgatory, Hell and Heaven

In the Encyclical *Spe Salvi* I wanted to speak precisely about the Last Judgement, judgement in general, and in this context also about Purgatory, Hell and Heaven. I think we have all been struck by the Marxist objection that Christians have only spoken of the afterlife and have ignored the earth. [...] Now, although it is right to show that Christians work for the earth – and we are all called to work to make this earth really a city for God and of God – we must not forget the other dimension. Unless we take it into account, we cannot work well for the earth: to show this was one of my fundamental purposes in writing the Encyclical. When one does not know the judgement of God one does not know the possibility of Hell, of the radical and definitive failure of life, one does not know the possibility of and need for purification. Man then fails to work well for the earth because he ultimately loses his criteria, he no longer knows himself – through not knowing God – and destroys the earth. All the great ideologies have promised: we will take things in hand, we will no longer neglect the earth, we will create a new, just, correct and brotherly world. But they destroyed the world instead. We see it with Nazism, we also see it with Communism which promised to build the

world as it was supposed to be and instead destroyed it. In the *ad limina* visits of Bishops from former Communist countries, I always see anew that in those lands, not only the planet and ecology, but above all and more seriously, souls have been destroyed. Rediscovering the truly human conscience illuminated by God's presence is our first task for the re-edification of the earth. This is the common experience of those countries. The re-edification of the earth, while respecting this planet's cry of suffering, can only be achieved by rediscovering God in the soul with the eyes open to God. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the parish priests and the clergy of the diocese of Rome*, February 7, 2008)

The relationship between humans and the environment ultimately stems from their relationship with God

The relationship between individuals or communities and the environment ultimately stems from their relationship with God. When 'man turns his back on the Creator's plan, he provokes a disorder which has inevitable repercussions on the rest of the created order' (Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace, 5). (Benedict XVI. *Message to the participants of the Seventh Symposium of the Religion, Science and the Environment Movement*, September 1, 2007)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

Without the relationship with God, nature is stripped of its profound meaning and impoverished

The attitude that must characterize the way man acts in relation to creation is essentially one of gratitude and appreciation; the world, in fact, reveals the mystery of God who created and sustains it. If the relationship with God is placed aside, nature is stripped of its profound meaning and impoverished. If on the other hand, nature is rediscovered in its creaturely dimension, channels of communication with it can be established, its rich and symbolic meaning can be understood, allowing us to enter into its realm of mystery. This realm

opens the path of man to God, Creator of heaven and earth. The world presents itself before man's eyes as evidence of God, the place where his creative, providential and redemptive power unfolds. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 487)

JOHN PAUL II

Ecological imbalance is born of a misuse of creatures, ignoring or rejecting the purpose that is inherent to the work of creation

The ecological imbalance [...] is born of an arbitrary – and overall harmful – use of creatures, whose laws and natural order are violated, **ignoring or rejecting the purpose that is inherent to the work of creation**. Also, this way of behavior is derived from a false interpretation of the autonomy of earthly things. When man uses these things 'without any reference to their Creator' – to use the words of the conciliar Constitution – **he does incalculable damage even to himself**. The solution to the problem of the ecological threat is in intimate relation with the principles of the 'legitimate autonomy of the earthly realities,' that is to say, ultimately, **with the truth regarding creation and regarding the Creator of the world**. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 4, April 2, 1986)

BENEDICT XVI

Creation awaits God's children, who treat it according to God's perspective

Rather, wherever the Creator's Word was properly understood, wherever life was lived with the redeeming Creator, people strove to save creation and not to destroy it. Chapter 8 of the Letter to the Romans also fits into this context. It says that the whole of Creation has been groaning in travail because of the bondage to which it has been subjected, awaiting the revelation of God's sons: **it will feel liberated when creatures, men and women who are children of God, treat it according to God's perspective**. I believe that we can establish exactly this as a reality today. Creation is groaning – **we perceive it**, we almost hear it – and awaits human beings who will preserve it

in accordance with God. [...] And *the wasting of creation* begins when we no longer recognize any need superior to our own, but see only ourselves. It begins when **there is no longer any concept of life beyond death**, where in this life we must grab hold of everything and possess life as intensely as possible, where we must possess all that is possible to possess. I think, therefore, **that true and effective initiatives to prevent the waste and destruction of Creation can be implemented and developed, understood and lived only where creation is considered as beginning with God; where life is considered as beginning with God and has greater dimensions** – in responsibility before God – and one day will be given to us by God in fullness and never taken away from us: in giving life we receive it. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the clergy of the Diocese of Bolzano–Bressanone*, August 6, 2008)

C) **Saint Francis of Assisi: an ecologist in the Middle Ages? How should the love for creation of the Poverello of Assisi be understood?**

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE AND THE FAITH

In the 12th and 13th centuries, the Cathars revived old dualistic positions, considering the material universe as evil, and constituted a real danger to the faith

At the end of the 12th century and the beginning of the 13th a number of professions of faith had urgently to reaffirm that God is creator of beings 'visible and invisible', that he is the author of the two Testaments, and to specify that the devil is in no way evil by nature but by choice. **The old dualistic positions enshrined in vast doctrinal and spiritual movements constituted at this time a real danger to faith, both in the South of France and Northern Italy**. (Congregation for the Doctrine and the Faith. *Christian faith and demonology*, June 26, 1975)

BENEDICT XVI

The mendicant orders were called to confront such heresies by their adhesion to the doctrine of the Church – In this context, Saint Francis' admiration for nature can be understood as a testimony of the goodness of creation

These two great saints [Francis of Assisi and Dominic Guzman] were able to read 'the signs of the times' intelligently, perceiving the challenges that the Church of their time would be obliged to face. A first challenge was the expansion of various groups and movements of the faithful who, in spite of being inspired by a legitimate desire for authentic Christian life often set themselves outside ecclesial communion. [...] Furthermore, to justify their decisions, they disseminated doctrine incompatible with the Catholic faith. For example, the Cathars' or Albigensians' movement reposed ancient heresies such as the debasement of and contempt for the material world the opposition to wealth soon became opposition to material reality as such, the denial of free will and, subsequently, dualism, the existence of a second principle of evil equivalent to God. [...] This personal and community style of the Mendicant Orders, together with total adherence to the teaching and authority of the Church, was deeply appreciated by the Pontiffs of the time, such as Innocent III and Honorius III, who gave their full support to the new ecclesial experiences, recognizing in them the voice of the Spirit. And results were not lacking: the groups of paupers that had separated from the Church returned to ecclesial communion or were gradually reduced until they disappeared. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, January 13, 2010)

SAINT BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO

In every created thing, Saint Francis perceived a trace of the Creator; and in loving creatures he used them as a ladder to ascend to the Beloved

Of the ardent love that glowed in Francis, the friend of the Bridegroom, who can avail to tell? He seemed utterly consumed, like unto

a coal that is set on fire, by the flame of the love divine. For, at the mere mention of the love of the Lord, he was aroused, moved, and enkindled, as though the inner chords of his heart vibrated under the bow of the voice from without. [...] That he might by all things be stirred up unto the divine love, he triumphed in all the works of the Lord's hands, and through the sight of their joy was uplifted unto their life-giving cause and origin. He beheld in fair things Him Who is the most fair, and, through the traces of Himself that He hath imprinted on His creatures, he everywhere followed on to reach the Beloved, making of all things a ladder for himself whereby he might ascend to lay hold on Him Who is the altogether lovely. For by the impulse of his unexampled devotion he tasted that fountain of goodness that streameth forth, as in rivulets, in every created thing, and he perceived as it were an heavenly harmony in the concord of the virtues and actions granted unto them by God, and did sweetly exhort them to praise the Lord, even as the Prophet David had done. (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *The life of Saint Francis of Assisi*, IX, 1)

BENEDICT XVI

Saint Francis' gazing at nature was contemplation of the Creator; to understand it otherwise is to make Francis unrecognizable

Francis himself suffers a sort of mutilation when he is cast as a witness of albeit important values appreciated by contemporary culture, which overlooks the fact that his profound decision, we might say the heart of his life, was his choice for Christ. [...] In Francis everything started from God and returned to God. His Praises of God Most High reveal his constantly enraptured heart in conversation with the Trinity. [...] His gazing at nature was actually contemplation of the Creator in the beauty of his creatures. His actual hope of peace is thus modulated as a prayer, since the way in which he was to express it was revealed to him: 'May the Lord give you peace' (2 Testament 23). Francis was a man for others because he was a man of God through and through. To seek to separate the 'horizontal' dimension of his message from the 'vertical' would make Francis unrecognizable. (Benedict XVI.

*Address to the clergy and men and women religious,
Cathedral of San Rufino, June 17, 2007)*

The ‘Canticle of the Creatures’ before being an invitation to respect creation, is a prayer, praise addressed to the Creator – Francis’ canticle, of obvious biblical inspiration, aspires towards the Creator, not to environment protection

In a word, Francis was truly in love with Jesus. He met him in the Word of God, in the brethren, in nature, but above all in the Eucharistic Presence. [...] **As with concentric circles, the love of Francis for Jesus extends not only to the Church but to all things seen in Christ and for Christ.** Here the Canticle of the Creatures is born in which the eye rests on the splendour of creation: from brother sun to sister moon, from sister water to brother fire. **His interior gaze became so pure and penetrating as to perceive the beauty of creation in the beauty of creatures. The Canticle of Brother Sun, before being a great work of poetry and an implicit invitation to respect creation, is a prayer, praise addressed to the Lord, Creator of all.** (Benedict XVI. *Address during the meeting with youth in Assisi*, June 17, 2007)

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Parts of the ‘Canticle of the Sun’ omitted in the ‘Laudato si’: Praise to God, considerations about death, sin and eternal salvation

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord,

Praise, glory and honor and benediction all, are Thine.

To Thee alone do they belong, most High,
And there is no man fit to mention Thee. [...]

Praised be my Lord for our sister, the bodily death,

From which no living man can flee.

Woe to them who die in mortal sin;

Blessed those who shall find themselves in Thy most holy will,

For the second death shall do them no ill.

Praise ye and bless ye my Lord, and give Him thanks,

And be subject unto Him with great humility. (Saint Francis of Assisi. *Praises of the Creatures or Canticle of the Sun*)

SAINT BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO

The piety that led him to love all creatures above all inclined him to the salvation of souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ Jesus

That true godliness which, according unto the Apostle, is profitable unto all things, had so filled the heart of Francis and entered into his inmost parts as that it seemed to have established its sway absolutely over the man of God. [...] And as by this piety he was touched with kindly feeling for all things, so above all, when he beheld souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ Jesus being defiled by any stain of sin, he would weep over them with such tenderness of compassion as that he seemed, like a mother in Christ, to be in travail of them daily. (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *Life of Saint Francis of Assisi*, VIII, 1)

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Laudato si' (II): What Francis forgot...

Advertising, news, social networks...we are bombarded on all sides by information...But the information we receive is often contradictory. Who should we listen to? What path should we follow? Where is the real truth to be found?

An Encyclical is launched, and as Catholics, we avidly read it in search of directives to give meaning to our lives, indicating the steps we should take so as to live our holy Religion with authenticity in the midst of a society devastated by sin. We hoped for clear words to strengthen us in the faith of the Church, which has suffered such defamation in our days. But... instead, we find warnings about the care of nature! So ecologists feel inspired, the soothsayers of climatic change feel encouraged, those of other religions feel respected, and we Catholics – forgotten, abandoned and, why not admit it...a little perplexed. Isn't Jesus Christ the center of our faith? Why does this document refer to Him and His Church in such a vague and secondary manner? Is care for creation really the most important aspect in the life of a Christian, above all in these times? Will we conquest Heaven simply by loving and caring for irrational creatures?

Faced with these concerns, it seems necessary to fix our attention on the Light that never stops shining, on the wellspring of Truth, on the infallible voice of the Popes and the Magisterium of the Church, so as to consider what they have to tell us – so much! – about the topics dealt with in this Encyclical.

What should the attitude of the faithful be with regards to the whole of creation?

FRANCIS

Nowadays we **must forcefully reject the notion that** our being created in God's image and **given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures.** (*Encyclical Laudato Si'*, no. 67)

Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, **risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light.** (*Encyclical Laudato Si'*, no. 221)

Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence. (*Encyclical Laudato Si'*, no. 66)

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I – MAN IS AN IMAGE OF GOD AND ALL WAS CREATED FOR HIM

Among all of the marvels of creation, one in particular stands out due to its great superiority: the human being. 'Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet' (Ps 8:5–6). Created in the image and likeness of God, we may not forget that man has a spiritual and eternal soul, and is the only creature of all visible beings that is capable of knowing his Creator. These characteristics place the human being above other creatures, for he alone, by the express divine will, is king of a creation that he is called to dominate. If we wish to be in accord with God, the Almighty Creator, we must love and analyze nature according to His divine plan, giving to each creature the attention, importance and position that God wished to give it. That is why we shall now bring to mind who man is, and the implication of his supremacy over the earth.

FRANCIS

Nowadays we must forcefully reject the notion that our being created in God's image and given dominion over the earth justifies absolute domination over other creatures. (*Encyclical Laudato Si'*, no. 67, May 24, 2015)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The very first pages of Sacred Scripture emphasize that man has dominion over other creatures

Then God said: **'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground.'** God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: **'Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth.'** God also said: **'See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food.'** And so it happened. God looked at everything he had made, and he found it very good. Evening came, and morning followed – the sixth day. (Gen 1:26–31)

Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands

Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor. Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. (Ps 8:5–6)

He chose us in him, before the foundation of the world

As he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. (Eph 1:4)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Man, created in that very image and likeness of God, was set over all irrational creatures

We behold the face of the earth furnished with terrestrial creatures, and **man, created after Your image and likeness, in that very image and likeness of You** (that is, the power of reason and understanding) on account of which **he was set over all irrational creatures.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions XIII*, 32, no. 47)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Divine Providence always governs inferior things by the superior. Made in God's image, man is above all animals – these are rightly subject to him

Now all animals are naturally subject to man. [...] for just as in the generation of things we perceive a certain order of procession of the perfect from the imperfect (thus matter is for the sake of form; and the imperfect form, for the sake of the perfect), so also is there order in the use of natural things; thus the imperfect are for the use of the perfect; as the plants make use of the earth for their nourishment, and animals make use of plants, and man makes use of both plants and animals. Therefore it is in keeping with the order of nature, that **man should be master over animals.** [...] this is proved by the order of **Divine Providence which always governs inferior things by the superior.** Wherefore, as man, being made to the image of God, is above other animals, these are **rightly subject to his government.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 96, a. 1)

The subjection of other animals to man is in keeping with the order of nature itself

As the plants make use of the earth for their nourishment, and animals make use of plants, and man makes use of both plants and animals. Therefore it is in keeping with the order of nature, that man should be master over animals. [...] For we see in the latter a certain participated prudence of natural instinct, in regard to certain particular acts; whereas man possesses a universal prudence as regards all practical matters. Now whatever is participated is subject to what is essential and universal. Therefore the subjection of other animals to man is proved to be natural. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 96, a. 1)

JOHN PAUL II

Man, God's image, is the center of creation – he must dominate the earth and communicate to it his own dignity with the perspicacity of his intelligence

On my part, during these four years of pontificate, I have not ceased to proclaim, in my Encyclicals and Catechism, the centrality of man, his primacy over things and the importance of the subjective dimension of work, founded upon the dignity of the human person. In effect, man is, as a person, the center of creation; for he alone has been created in the image and likeness of God. Called to 'dominate the earth' (Gen 1:28) with the perspicacity of his intelligence and with the activity of his hands, he is converted into an artisan of the work – manual as well as intellectual – communicating to his labor the dignity that he himself has. (John Paul II. *Address to the representatives of the world labor*, no. 3, November 7, 1982)

God put all at the disposition of man, to make of creatures a hymn of praise to God

Faith tells us that we may responsibly take the reins of history to be artisans of our own destiny. The Lord of history makes man and the peoples protagonists, authors of their own future, responding to the calling of God. He put all at the disposition of man, king

of creation, to make of creatures a hymn of praise to God; and the glory of God is the living man, who has his life in the vision of God (cf. S. Ireneo, *Contra haereses*, IV, 20,7: PG 7, 105). (John Paul II. *Address to Bishops of the Episcopal Secretariat of Central America (SEDAC)*, no. 8, March 2, 1983)

Man can dominate the earth because he alone – and no other – is capable of 'tilling it' and transforming it according to his own needs

At the beginning of the Yahwist text, even before it speaks of the creation of man from the 'dust of the ground,' we read that 'there was no one to till the land or to make channels of water spring out of the earth to irrigate the whole land' (Gen 2:5–6). We rightly associate this passage with the one in the first narrative, in which God's command is expressed: 'Fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion...' (Gen 1:28). The second narrative alludes specifically to the work that man carries out to till the earth. The first fundamental means to dominate the earth lies in man himself. Man can dominate the earth because he alone – and no other of the living beings – is capable of 'tilling it' and transforming it according to his own needs. (John Paul II. *General audience*, October 24, 1979)

Within the order of creation, inferior creatures are submitted to man

The Book of Genesis says that the Creator has given the entire earth – in a certain sense all of the visible world – to man, putting it under his dominion. As image and likeness of God man domesticates the earth, making it his own, humanizing it in a responsible way. At the same time, he has given this world to man as a task for his work. The inferior creatures have been submitted to man, and at the same time have been given the resources contained in the created world, beginning by the visible riches that are found, we could say, on the surface, as well as those profoundly hidden within the structure of matter that human talent gradually discovers. (John Paul II. *Homily for workers in the city of Guayana*, no.3, January 29, 1985)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

All things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown

According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, **all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown.** (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 12, December 7, 1965)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

Created realities exist for man's use

In the Creator's plan, created realities, which are good in themselves, exist for man's use. The wonder of the mystery of man's grandeur makes the psalmist exclaim: **'What is man that you are mindful of him,** and the son of man that you care for him? **Yet you have made him little less than god,** and crown him with glory and honor. **You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet'** (Ps 8:5-7). (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 255)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Man was created to serve and love God and to offer all creation back to him

God created everything for man (cf. GS 12, no. 1; 24, no.3; 39, no.1), but **man in turn was created to serve and love God and to offer all creation back to him.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 358)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Man is more precious in the eyes of God than all other creatures

What is it that is about to be created, that enjoys such honour? **It is man that great and wonderful living creature, more precious in the eyes of God than all other creatures! For him the heavens and the earth, the sea and all the rest of creation exist.** God attached

so much importance to his salvation that he did not spare his own Son for the sake of man. Nor does he ever cease to work, trying every possible means, until he has raised man up to himself and made him sit at his right hand. (Saint John Chrysostom quoted by the Catechism of the Catholic Church. *In Genesi., Sermo 2*)

BENEDICT XVI

The fundamental difference between the human being and other animals in the fact that man is capable of recognizing God, his Creator

It is worth thinking a bit about these words of Origen, who sees **the fundamental difference between the human being and the other animals in the fact that man is capable of recognizing God, his Creator,** that man is capable of truth, capable of a knowledge that becomes a relationship, friendship. It is important in our time that we do not forget God, together with all the other kinds of knowledge we have acquired in the meantime, and they are very numerous! They all become problematic, at times dangerous, if the fundamental knowledge that gives meaning and orientation to all things is missing: knowledge of God the Creator. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, no. 4, January 11, 2006)

PIUS XI

Man has a value far surpassing that of the vast inanimate cosmos

Man has a **spiritual and immortal soul.** He is a person, marvelously endowed by his Creator with gifts of body and mind. **He is a true 'microcosm,' as the ancients said, a world in miniature, with a value far surpassing that of the vast inanimate cosmos.** God alone is his last end, in this life and the next. By sanctifying grace he is raised to the dignity of a son of God, and incorporated into the Kingdom of God in the Mystical Body of Christ. In consequence he has been endowed by God with many and varied prerogatives: the right to life, to bodily integrity, to the necessary means of existence; the right to tend toward his ultimate goal in the path marked out for him by God; the right of association and the

right to possess and use property. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 27, March 19, 1937)

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

What is a human thought worth?

One thought alone of man is worth more than the entire world, hence God alone is worthy of it. (Saint John of the Cross. *Sayings of light and love*, no. 32)

JOHN PAUL II

Man: the only being on earth that God willed for his own sake, has a dignity stemming from his spiritual nature

The concept of nature acquires a particular meaning when applied to man, the summit of creation. The only being on earth that God willed for his own sake has a dignity stemming from his spiritual nature which bears the mark of the Creator, for he was created in his image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26) and endowed with the highest faculties a creature can possess: reason and will. These make him capable of free self-determination and enable him to communicate with God, to answer his call and to fulfill himself in accordance with his own nature. **In fact, because he has a spiritual nature, man can receive supernatural realities and attain the eternal happiness freely offered by God. This communication is made possible because God and man are both spiritual beings.** (John Paul II. *Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*, no. 5, October 27, 1998)

Christianity is anthropocentric precisely because it is fully theocentric

In fact Christianity is anthropocentric precisely because it is fully theocentric; and simultaneously it is theocentric, thanks to its extraordinary anthropocentrism. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2, November 29, 1978)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

Man's end is not lesser creatures, but rather supernatural – a participation in divine goods

God in His infinite goodness has ordained man for a supernatural end, to participation, namely, in the divine goods which altogether surpass the understanding of the human mind. (Denzinger–Hünemann 3005. Vatican Council I, *Session III, Dogmatic constitution Dei Filius*, April 24, 1870)

JOHN PAUL II

The splendor of truth shines forth in a special way in man

The splendour of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26). Truth enlightens man's intelligence and shapes his freedom, leading him to know and love the Lord. Hence the Psalmist prays: 'Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord' (Ps 4:6). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, August 6, 1993)

Man cannot accept that his spiritual being be submitted to that which is inferior within the hierarchy of creatures

With how much love do the eyes of the Master and Redeemer gaze upon the beauty of the created world! **The visible world has been created for man.** Christ then said to those listening: 'Look at the birds of the air: **Are you not of more value than they?**' (Mt 6:26) [...] But precisely because of this, **man cannot accept that his spiritual being be submitted to that which is inferior within the hierarchy of creatures.** He may not take as the last goal of his existence that which is offered to him by the earth and the temporality of what is created. **He cannot lower himself to serve things, as though they were the only end and last destiny of his life.** (John Paul II. *Homily for workers and entrepreneurs*, no.4, May 10, 1990)

II – CREATURES REFLECT GOD IN VARIOUS MANNERS, ACCORDING TO THE HIERARCHY HE ESTABLISHED. THE ATTEMPT TO LEVEL ALL DEGREES OF GOODNESS AMONG CREATURES LEADS TO PANTHEISM

Man was created in the image and likeness of God; and other creatures, each in its own way, are reflections of God. In accordance with the ontological constitution of beings, Saint Bonaventure classifies them as shadow, vestiges or images of God. Among the multitude of unequal beings, a true order and harmony established by God himself prevails. Benedict XVI alerted against an attitude that tends to consider inferior beings as equal to superior beings, calling it a ‘new pantheism’.

FRANCIS

Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, **risen, is intimately present to each being**, surrounding it with his affection and penetrating it with his light. (*Encyclical Laudato Si'*, no. 221)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The diversity and inequality in created things are from the intention of God Himself

The highest degree of perfection should not be lacking in a work made by the supremely good workman. But the good of order among diverse things is better than any of the members of an order, taken by itself. For the good of order is formal in respect to each member of it, as the perfection of the whole in relation to the parts. It was not fitting, therefore, that God’s work should lack the good of order. And yet, without the diversity and inequality of created things, this good could not exist. To sum up: **The diversity and inequality in created things are not the result of chance**, nor of a diversity of matter, nor of the intervention of certain causes or merits, **but of the intention of God Himself, who wills to give the creature such perfection as it is possible for it to have**. Accordingly, in the Book of Genesis (Gen 1:31) it is said: ‘God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good,’ each one of them having been previously said to be good. For each thing in its nature is good, but all things together are very good, by reason of the order of the universe, which is the ultimate and noblest perfection in things. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra Gentiles*, II, 45)

The perfection of the universe is in the distinction of things

Therefore, as the divine wisdom is the cause of the distinction of things for the sake of the perfection of the universe, so it is the cause of inequality. For the universe would **not be perfect if only one grade of goodness were found in things**. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 47, a. 2)

SAINT BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO

The diversity of creatures: a stairway to ascend into God

For since according to the state of our condition that universality of things is the stairway to ascend into God; and among things there are a certain vestige, a certain image (imago), certain corporal things, certain spiritual things, certain temporal things, certain aeviternal things, and for this reason (per hoc) certain ones outside of us, certain ones inside us: for this purpose (ad hoc), that we arrive at considering the **First Principle**, which is most spiritual and eternal and above us, it is opportune, that we pass—over through the vestige, which is corporal, temporal and outside of us, and this is to be lead in the way of God; it is opportune, that we enter into

our mind, which is an aeviternal image (*imago*) of God, spiritual and within us, and this is to step in the truth of God; it is opportune, that we transcend to the eternal, most spiritual, and above us by looking towards the First Principle, and this is to be glad in the knowledge (*notitia*) of God and the reverence of His Majesty. (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *The Journey of the Mind into God*, I, 2)

Saint Bonaventure explains the hierarchy existing in creation: 'the first things are the lesser, the second ones the middle, the third the best'

In the third manner the power of sight of the one investigating by reasoning (*ratiocinabiliter*) sees, that **certain things only are, moreover that certain things are and live, but that certain things are, live, and discern; and indeed that the first things are the lesser, the second ones the middle, the third the best.** Again it sees that certain things are only corporal, certain things partly corporal, partly spiritual; from which it adverts, that some are merely spiritual as the better and more worthy of both. Nevertheless it sees, that certain things are mutable and corruptible, as (are) terrestrial things, certain things are mutable and... incorruptible, as (are) celestial things; from which it adverts, that certain things are immutable and incorruptible, as (are)

super-celestial things. (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *The Journey of the Mind into God*, I, 13)

All creatures of this sensible world lead the spirit in contemplating to God – some clearer than others

From these two first steps, by which we are lead by hand to gaze upon God in (His) vestiges as after the manner of the two wings descending about the feet (of the Seraphim), **we can gather, that all creatures of this sensible world lead the spirit (animus) of the one contemplating and tasting (sapientis) (them) into the eternal God,** for the reason (*pro eo*) that of that First Principle most powerful, most wise and best, of that eternal Origin, Light, and Fullness, of that, I say, Art efficient, exemplary (*exemplantis*) and ordering (*ordinantis*) there are shadows, resonances (*resonantia*) and pictures, **there are vestiges, likenesses (simulacra) and spectacles** divinely given to us as first premises of a syllogism (*proposita*) and signs to survey God (*ad contuendum Deum*)⁷; which, I say, are exemplary and/or rather exemplified (*exemplata*), proposed to minds still rough and sensible, to be transferred through the sensibles, which they see, to the intelligibles, which they do not see, as through signs to things signified (*signata*). (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *The Journey of the Mind into God*, II, 11)

FRANCIS

Saint Bonaventure held that, through universal reconciliation with every creature, Saint Francis in some way returned to the state of original innocence. (Encyclical *Laudato Si*, no. 66)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

SAINT BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO

Saint Bonaventure's own words about what he meant about Saint Francis being a new picture of man's estate before the Fall

That true godliness which, according unto the Apostle, is profitable unto all things, **had so filled the heart of Francis and entered**

into his inmost parts as that it seemed to have established its sway absolutely over the man of God. It was this piety that, **through devotion, uplifted him toward God; through compassion, transformed him into the likeness of Christ; through condescension, inclined him unto his neighbour, and, through his all-embracing love for every creature, set forth a new picture of man's estate before the Fall.** And as by this piety he was touched

with kindly feeling for all things, so above all, when he beheld souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ. (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *The Life of Saint Francis of Assisi*, VIII, 1)

JOHN PAUL II

Ecocentrism and biocentrism: an egalitarian consideration of the 'dignity' of all living beings

In the name of an idea inspired by ecocentrism and biocentrism it is being proposed that the ontological and axiological difference between men and other living beings be eliminated, since the biosphere is considered a biotic unity of indifferenced value. Thus man's superior responsibility can be eliminated in favour of an egalitarian consideration of the 'dignity' of all living beings. (John Paul II. *Address to the participants in the congress on 'Environment and Health'*, no. 5, March 24, 1997)

The principal danger: reducing an individual to a thing, or regarding him in the same way as other elements of nature

In view of these conceptual differences in the area of scientific and technological research, it would be good to ask ourselves about the senses of this concept, because the repercussions for man and for the way scientists look at him are far from negligible. **The principal danger consists in reducing an individual to a thing, or regarding him in the same way as the other elements of nature, thereby relativizing man, whom God has placed at the heart of creation.** To the extent that one is primarily interested in elements, one is tempted no longer to grasp the nature of a living being or of creation in their entirety, and to reduce them to a series of elements with multiple interactions. Hence **man is no longer seen in his spiritual and corporal unity, in his soul, the spiritual principle in man which serves as the form of his body** (cf. Council of Vienne, Constitution *Fidei Catholicae*, DS 902). (John Paul II. *Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*, no. 3, October 27, 1998)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

To truly love nature is to look at it as God does: in the order and harmony resulting from the diversity of beings and the relationships among them

The beauty of the universe: the order and harmony of the created world results from the diversity of beings and from the relationships which exist among them. [...] the beauty of creation reflects the infinite beauty of the Creator and ought to inspire the respect and submission of man's intellect and will. The hierarchy of creatures is expressed by the order of the 'six days', from the less perfect to the more perfect. God loves all his creatures (cf. Ps 145:9) and takes care of each one, even the sparrow. Nevertheless, Jesus said: 'You are of more value than many sparrows', or again: 'of how much more value is a man than a sheep!' (Lk 12:6-7, Mt 12:12) Man is the summit of the Creator's work, as the inspired account expresses by clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures (cf. Gen 1-26). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 341-343)

JOHN PAUL II

The contemplation of the nature itself should remind us that, if God cares in this way for his creatures, what will he not do for us?

On the contrary, man is called to seek God with all of his strength, inclusively through his work within the world. Only in God man finds his own liberty affirmed, his authority and superiority over all the other creatures. And, if at times this simple and profound conviction weakens, **the contemplation of nature itself should remind us that, if God cares in this way for his creatures, what will he not do to ensure that we do not lack the necessary?** A primordial task belongs to man: **Seeking the Kingdom of God and his justice** (cf. Mt 6:33). In this we should employ all of our strength, for the Kingdom is 'like treasure hidden in a field, one pearl of great value', of which the Gospel speaks; and to obtain it, we should do all possible, even 'sell all' (cf. Mt 13:44-45), that is, have no other desire in our hearts. (John Paul II. *Homily for workers and entrepreneurs*, no. 4-5, May 10, 1990)

BENEDICT XVI

It should also be stressed that it is contrary to authentic development to view nature as more important than the human person: this leads to attitudes of neo-paganism or new pantheism

Nature is at our disposal not as ‘a heap of scattered refuse’ (Heraclitus of Ephesus, Fragment 22B124), but as a gift of the Creator who has given it an inbuilt order, enabling man to draw from it the principles needed in order ‘to till it and keep it’ (Gen 2:15). But it should also be stressed that it is contrary to authentic development to view nature as something more important than the human person. This position leads to attitudes of neo-paganism or a new pantheism – human salvation cannot come from nature alone, understood in a purely naturalistic sense. This having been said, it is also necessary to reject the opposite position, which aims at total technical dominion over nature, because the natural environment is more than raw material to be manipulated at our pleasure; it is a wondrous work of the Creator containing a ‘grammar’ which sets forth ends and criteria for its wise use, not its reckless exploitation. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 48, June 29, 2009)

The Magisterium expresses grave misgivings about notions of the environment inspired by ecocentrism and biocentrism since these eliminate the difference of identity and worth between the human person and other living things

There exists a certain reciprocity: as we care for creation, we realize that God, through creation, cares for us. On the other hand, a correct understanding of the relationship between man and the environment will not end by absolutizing nature or by considering it more important than the human person. **If the Church’s magisterium expresses grave misgivings about notions of the environment inspired by ecocentrism and biocentrism, it is because such notions eliminate the difference of identity and worth between the human person and other living things.** In the name of a supposedly egalitarian vision of the ‘dignity’ of all living creatures, such notions end up abolishing the distinctiveness and superior role of human beings. They also

open the way to a new pantheism tinged with neo-paganism, which would see the source of man’s salvation in nature alone, understood in purely naturalistic terms. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the Celebration of the 43rd World Day of Peace*, no. 13, January 1, 2010)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

AND COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

New Age has a marked preference for Eastern or pre-Christian religions, and considers the world itself divine

New Age has a marked preference for Eastern or pre-Christian religions, which are reckoned to be uncontaminated by Judaeo-Christian distortions. Hence great respect is given to ancient agricultural rites and to fertility cults. ‘Gaia’, Mother Earth, is offered as an alternative to God the Father, whose image is seen to be linked to a patriarchal conception of male domination of women. There is talk of God, but it is not a personal God; **the God of which New Age speaks is neither personal nor transcendent.** Nor is it the Creator and sustainer of the universe, but an ‘impersonal energy’ immanent in the world, with which it forms a ‘cosmic unity’: ‘All is one’. This unity is monistic, pantheistic or, more precisely, panentheistic. God is the ‘life-principle’, the ‘spirit or soul of the world’, the sum total of consciousness existing in the world. In a sense, everything is God. God’s presence is clearest in the spiritual aspects of reality, so every mind/spirit is, in some sense, God. [...] There is no alterity between God and the world. The world itself is divine and it undergoes an evolutionary process which leads from inert matter to ‘higher and perfect consciousness’. [...] James Lovelock’s book on the Gaia Hypothesis claims that ‘the entire range of living matter on earth, from whales to viruses, and from oaks to algae, could be regarded as constituting a single living entity, capable of manipulating the Earth’s atmosphere to suit its overall needs and endowed with faculties and powers far beyond those of its constituent parts’. (Pontifical Council for Culture and Council for Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ the bearer of the water of life*, A Christian reflection on the ‘New Age’, no. 2.3.4.2 – 2.3.4.3, February 3, 2003)

PIUS X

Error of pernicious character: the divine action is one with the action of nature

Truly enormous errors both, the pernicious character of which will be seen clearly from an examination of their consequences. [...] Concerning immanence it is not easy to determine what Modernists mean by it, for their own opinions on the subject vary. Some understand it in the sense that God working in man is more intimately present in him than man is in even himself, and this conception, if properly understood, is free from reproach. Others hold that the divine action is one with the action of nature, as the action of the first cause is one with the action of the secondary cause, and this would destroy the supernatural order. Others, finally, explain it in a way which savours of pantheism and this, in truth, is the sense which tallies best with the rest of their

doctrines. (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 19, September 8, 1907)

PIUS XI

Whoever identifies, by pantheistic confusion, God and the universe, is not a believer in God

Take care, Venerable Brethren, that above all, faith in God, the first and irreplaceable foundation of all religion, be preserved in Germany pure and unstained. The believer in God is not he who utters the name in his speech, but he for whom this sacred word stands for a true and worthy concept of the Divinity. Whoever identifies, by pantheistic confusion, God and the universe, by either lowering God to the dimensions of the world, or raising the world to the dimensions of God, is not a believer in God. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mit brennender sorge*, no. 7, March 14, 1937)

III – THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH IS THE ONLY TRUE CHURCH: IT MAY NOT BE EQUALED TO OTHER RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONS

Making all beings equal brings as a logical consequence the equality of religions. The 'New Age' even goes to the point of identifying Buddha with Christ. The voice of the Church is the only true voice, the Magisterium has always declared it to be the only true Church, within which salvation is found.

FRANCIS

Outside the Catholic Church, other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions as well – have expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections on issues which all of us find disturbing. (*Encyclical Laudato Si'*, no. 7)

...yet by constantly returning to their sources, religions will be better equipped to respond to today's needs. (*Encyclical Laudato Si'*, no. 200)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Saint Paul's exhortation: instruct people not to teach false doctrines or to concern themselves with myths

I repeat the request I made of you when I was on my way to Macedonia, that you stay in

Ephesus to instruct certain people not to teach false doctrines or to concern themselves with myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the plan of God that is to be received by faith. (1Tim 1:3–4)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

AND COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

For the ‘New Age’, Jesus of Nazareth is simply one among many historical figures like Buddha and others

[For the New Age]: Jesus of Nazareth was not the Christ, but simply one among many **historical figures** in whom this ‘Christic’ nature is revealed, as is the case with **Buddha and others**. Every historical realization of the Christ shows clearly that all human beings are heavenly and divine, and leads them towards this realization. (Pontifical Council for Culture and Council for Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ the bearer of the water of life*, A Christian reflection on the ‘New Age’, no. 2.3.4.2, February 3, 2003)

PAUL VI

Only our religion effectively establishes with God an authentic and living relationship which other religions do not succeed in doing

On the contrary the Church holds that **these multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ – riches in which we believe that the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth.** [...] In other words, **our religion effectively establishes with God an authentic and living relationship which the other religions do not succeed in doing**, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 53, December 8, 1975)

BENEDICT XVI

Neither are all religions equal, nor should religious indifferentism be accepted

For this reason, while it may be true that development needs the religions and cultures of different peoples, it is equally true that adequate discernment is needed. **Religious freedom does not mean religious indifferentism, nor does it**

imply that all religions are equal. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 53, June 29, 2009)

JOHN PAUL II

There is a tendency to equate all religions and spiritual experiences as if they were all paths to salvation

You know well that the basis of the spread of the sects is often a great lack of religious formation, consequently leading to uncertainty about the need to believe in Christ and to belong to the Church he has established. **The tendency is to reduce religions and the various spiritual experiences to a least common denominator that makes them practically equivalent, with the result that everyone would be free to follow any of the various paths proposed to reach the goal of salvation.** If, in addition, one adds the brazen proselytism which is the hallmark of certain particularly active and invasive groups of these sects, **one understands right away how urgently necessary it is today to support the faith of Christians, and to give them an opportunity for ongoing religious formation to deepen their personal relationship with Christ. Your endeavours must give priority to preventing this danger, consolidating in the faithful the practice of the Christian life and fostering the growth of a truly fraternal spirit in the heart of each of your ecclesial communities.** (John Paul II. *Address to a group of Bishops of Brazil ad limina visit*, no. 2, January 23, 2003)

There is no path of salvation in a religion other than that founded in the faith in Christ – the inconsistency and superficiality of a relativistic and irenic attitude

They are not lacking who wish to interpret the missionary action [of the Church] as an attempt to impose on others one’s own convictions and options, in contrast with a certain modern spirit, which boasts, as though it was a definitive conquest, of an absolute liberty of thought and personal conscience. According to this perspective, evangelizing activity should be substituted with **an interreligious dialogue, which would consist**

in an exchange of opinions and information, whereby each party would expose his own 'creed' and be enriched by the thoughts of others, without any preoccupation of arriving at conclusions. [...] Consequently the path that each one wishes to follow according to one's own education and religious tradition would be respected. But this conception is irreconcilable with the commandment of Christ to the Apostles, transmitted by the Church. [...] [The Council] confirmed at the same time the role of the Church, in which it is necessary that man enter and persevere, if he wishes to be saved (*Ad Gentes*, no. 7) [...] This traditional doctrine of the Church exposes the inconsistency and superficiality of a relativistic and irenic attitude, regarding the way of salvation in a religion other than that founded in the faith in Christ. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1–2, May 10, 1995)

PAUL VI

Honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that the Christian religion is the one and only true religion

Obviously we cannot agree with these various forms of religion, [Jewish, Moslem and Afro-Asiatic religions] nor can we adopt an indifferent or uncritical attitude toward them on the assumption that they are all to be regarded as on an equal footing, and that there is no need for those who profess them to enquire whether or not God has Himself revealed definitively and infallibly how He wishes to be known, loved, and served. Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that the Christian religion is the one and only true religion, and it is our hope that it will be acknowledged as such by all who look for God and worship Him. (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 107, August 6, 1964)

JOHN XXIII

An absurd proposition: one religion is just as good as another. God, who is truth, cannot tolerate indifference with respect to eternal salvation

Some men, indeed do not attack the truth wilfully, but work in heedless disregard of it.

They act as though God had given us intellects for some purpose other than the pursuit and attainment of truth. This mistaken sort of action leads directly to that absurd proposition: one religion is just as good as another, for there is no distinction here between truth and falsehood. 'This attitude,' to quote Pope Leo again, 'is directed to the destruction of all religions, but particularly the Catholic faith, which cannot be placed on a level with other religions without serious injustice, since it alone is true' (Encyclical letter *Humanum genus*). Moreover, to contend that there is nothing to choose between contradictories and among contraries can lead only to this fatal conclusion: a reluctance to accept any religion either in theory or practice. How can God, who is truth, approve or tolerate the indifference, neglect, and sloth of those who attach no importance to matters on which our eternal salvation depends; who attach no importance to pursuit and attainment of necessary truths, or to the offering of that proper worship which is owed to God alone? (John XXIII. *Encyclical Ad Petre cathedram*, no. 17–18, June 29, 1959)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

It is only through Christ's Catholic Church that there is the plenitude of the means of salvation

For it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is 'the all-embracing means of salvation,' that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation. We believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, in order to establish the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 3, November 21, 1964)

PIUS XI

False opinion: to consider all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy

For since they hold it for certain that men destitute of all religious sense are very rarely to be found, they seem to have founded on that belief a hope that the nations, although they

differ among themselves in certain religious matters, will without much difficulty come to agree as brethren in professing certain doctrines, which form as it were a common basis of the spiritual life. [...] Certainly such attempts can nowise be approved by Catholics, founded as they are on **that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy, since they all in different ways manifest and signify that sense which is inborn in us all, and by which we are led to God and to the obedient acknowledgment of His rule. Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion they reject it, and little by little turn aside to naturalism and atheism,** as it is called; from which it clearly follows that one who supports those who hold these theories and attempt to realize them, is altogether abandoning the divinely revealed religion. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 2, January 6, 1928)

LEO XIII

The only true Religion can be recognized without difficulty, especially in Catholic states

Justice therefore forbids, and reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action which would end in godlessness – namely, **to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges.** Since, then, the profession of one religion is necessary in the State, that **religion must be professed which alone is true, and which can be recognized without difficulty, especially in Catholic States,** because the marks of truth are, as it were, engravers upon it. **This religion, therefore, the rulers of the State must preserve and protect,** if they would provide – as they should do – with prudence and usefulness for the good of the community. For public authority exists for the welfare of those whom it governs; and, although its proximate end is to lead men to the prosperity found in this life, yet, in so doing, it ought not to diminish, but rather to increase, man's capability of attaining to the supreme good in which his everlasting happiness consists: which never can be attained if religion be disregarded. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Libertas praestantissimum*, no. 21, June 20, 1888)

They can in no wise be counted among the children of God, unless they take Christ Jesus as their Brother and the Church as their mother

And with the same yearning Our soul goes out to those whom the foul breath of irreligion has not entirely corrupted, and who at least seek to have the true God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, as their Father. **Let such as these take counsel with themselves, and realize that they can in no wise be counted among the children of God, unless they take Christ Jesus as their Brother, and at the same time the Church as their mother.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 16, June 29, 1896)

Differing modes of divine worship cannot all be equally acceptable to God

To hold, therefore, **that there is no difference in matters of religion between forms that are unlike each other, and even contrary to each other, most clearly leads in the end to the rejection of all religion in both theory and practice.** And this is the same thing as atheism, however it may differ from it in name. Men who really believe in the existence of God must, in order to be consistent with themselves and to avoid absurd conclusions, **understand that differing modes of divine worship involving dissimilarity and conflict even on most important points cannot all be equally probable, equally good, and equally acceptable to God.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Immortale Dei*, no. 31, November 1, 1885)

PIUS IX

An agreement between Christ and Belial: the shocking theory that it makes no difference to which religion one belongs

Also perverse is the shocking theory that it makes no difference to which religion one belongs, a theory which is greatly at variance even with reason. By means of this theory, **those crafty men remove all distinction between virtue and vice, truth and error, honorable and vile action.** They pretend that men **as if there could ever be any sharing between justice and iniquity, any collaboration between light and darkness, or any agreement between Christ and Belial** (cf. 2Cor 6:15). (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 15, November 9, 1846)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

Not at all equal is the condition of those who have adhered to the Catholic truth, and of those who follow a false religion

For, the most benign God both excites the erring by His grace and aids them so that they can 'come to a knowledge of the truth' (1Tim 2:4), and also confirms in His grace those whom 'He has called out of darkness into his marvelous light' (1Pet 2:9), so that they may persevere in this same light, not deserting if He be not deserted [see no. 804]. Wherefore, **not at all equal is the condition of those, who, through the heavenly gift of faith, have adhered to the Catholic truth, and of those, who, led by human opinions, follow a false religion.** (Denzinger–Hünemann 3014. Vatican Council I, *Session III, Dogmatic constitution Dei Filius*, ch. 3, April 24, 1870)

GREGORY XVI

Indifferentism: fraud of the wicked, who claim it is possible to obtain salvation by professing any religion – they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith!

Now We consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: **indifferentism.** This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained. [...] With the admonition of the apostle that 'there is one God, one faith, one baptism' (Eph 4:5) may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever. They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that 'those who are not with Christ are against Him,' (Lk 11:23) and that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. Therefore '**without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate**' (Symbol .S. Athanasius). (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 13, August 15, 1832)

CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY OFFICE

No one will be saved who, knowing the Church to have been divinely established

by Christ, nevertheless refuses to submit to the Church

No one will be saved who, knowing the Church to have been divinely established by Christ, nevertheless refuses to submit to the Church or withholds obedience from the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth. [...] [Pius XII] mentions those who 'are related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer by a certain unconscious yearning and desire,' and these he by no means excludes from eternal salvation, but on the other hand **states that they are in a condition 'in which they cannot be sure of their salvation' since 'they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church'** (AAS, 1. c., p. 243). With these wise words he reproves both those who exclude from eternal salvation all united to the Church only by implicit desire, and those who falsely assert that men can be saved equally well in every religion. (Denzinger–Hünemann 3867.3871–3872. *Letter of the Congregation of the Holy Office*, August 8, 1949 – English translation)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered by relativistic theories attempting to justify religious pluralism

The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by **relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only de facto but also de iure (or in principle).** As a consequence, it is held that certain truths have been superseded; for example, **the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions,** [...] the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, [...] On the basis of such presuppositions, which may evince different nuances, certain theological proposals are developed – at times presented as assertions, and at times as hypotheses – in which **Christian revelation and the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church lose their character of absolute truth and salvific universality, or at least shadows of doubt and uncertainty**

are cast upon them. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 4, August 6, 2000)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

Those who are not united to the Church reject the Spirit and dig for themselves broken cisterns, drinking putrid water out of the mire

'For in the Church,' it is said, 'God hath set [...] all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behaviour. For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother's breasts, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ; but they dig for themselves broken cisterns (Jer 2:13) out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of

the mire, fleeing from the faith of the Church lest they be convicted; and rejecting the Spirit, that they may not be instructed. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*, III, 24, 1)

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

To seek anything other than Christ is to commit an offence against God

For, in giving us, as He did, His Son, which is His Word –and He has no other –He spake to us all together, once and for all, in this single Word, and He has no occasion to speak further. [...] Herein the Apostle declares that God has become, as it were, dumb, and has no more to say, since that which He spake aforetime, in part to the prophets, He has now spoken altogether in Him, giving us the All, which is His Son. Wherefore he that would now enquire of God, or seek any vision or revelation, would not only be acting foolishly, but would be committing an offence against God, by setting his eyes altogether upon Christ, and seeking no new thing or aught beside. (Saint John of the Cross. *Ascent of Mount Carmel II*, 22, 3–5)

IV – CHRIST IS THE CENTER AND THE EXEMPLARY CAUSE OF ALL CREATION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, 'the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things' (Col 1:15–16) is the 'book' wherein one may read and understand the entire Work of Creation. This nature which has shadows, vestiges or images of God was modeled according to the 'Eternal Wisdom', the 'Incarnate Word'. God created all beings from nothing and out of love. He created them in perfect harmony and order. The Most High put man and woman as sovereigns of all creation, and all of the other creatures were submitted to them by nature. But within this equilibrium and peace, man sinned and thus introduced disorder and confusion into the world. The Word, which had been the model of the first creation, 'took flesh' and made a 'new creation' through the cross and resurrection.

The Church has always considered the whole of creation in function of the Divine Person of Our Lord Jesus Christ and any consideration that omits this point ends up being naturalistic and is not in accordance with the Magisterium of the Church.

SACRED SCRIPTURE

All things came to be through the Word

All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. (Jn 1:3)

In Christ all the fullness dwells

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all

things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. **For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross (through him), whether those on earth or those in heaven.** (Col 1:15–20)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Christ is the perfect Image of God since He is one with the Father in his divine nature

The First–Born of creatures is the perfect Image of God, reflecting perfectly that of which He is the Image, and so He is said to be the ‘Image,’ and never ‘to the image.’ But **man is said to be both ‘image’ by reason of the likeness; and ‘to the image’ by reason of the imperfect likeness.** And since the perfect likeness to God cannot be except in an identical nature, **the Image of God exists in His first–born Son;** as the image of the king is in his son, who is of the same nature as himself: whereas it exists in man as in an alien nature, as the image of the king is in a silver coin, as Augustine says explains in *De decem Chordis* (Serm. ix, al, xcvi, *De Tempore*). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 93, a. 1)

JOHN PAUL II

Christian tradition has always seen the face of Christ in the Eternal Wisdom

In the marvelous hymn sung by Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs, which was presented at the start of our meeting, she says: ‘Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning’ (Prov 8:23). **Wisdom is present at the moment of creation ‘like a master workman’** (Prov 8:30), ready to delight in the sons of men’ (cf. Prov 8: 30–31). From these aspects **Christian tradition has seen in Wisdom the face of Christ, ‘the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ... all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together’** (Col 1:15–17; cf. Jn 1:3). (John Paul II. *General Audience*, no. 4, August 2, 2000)

BENEDICT XVI

Jesus Christ is the Lord of all creation and of all history

We must have no fears about facing this challenge: **Jesus Christ is indeed the Lord of all creation and of all history.** The believer knows well that ‘**all things were created through him and for him... and in him all things hold together**’ (Col 1:16, 17). By continually deepening our knowledge of Christ, the centre of the cosmos and of history, we can show the men and women of our time that faith in him is important for humanity’s future: indeed, it is the accomplishment of all that is authentically human. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants of the Plenary Assembly of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, February 10, 2006)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Christ introduced into time and into the world a new form of life, which is sublime and divine

Let us start with its Christological significance. **Christ is newness. He brings about a new creation.** His priesthood is new. He renews all things. Jesus, the Only–Begotten Son of the Father sent into the world, ‘became man in order that humanity which was subject to sin and death might be reborn, and through this new birth might enter the Kingdom of Heaven’. ‘Being entirely consecrated to the will of the Father, **Jesus brought forth this new creation by means of his Paschal Mystery; thus, he introduced into time and into the world a new form of life which is sublime and divine and which radically transforms the human condition**’ (*Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, no. 19). (Congregation for the Clergy. *Reflection by Cardinal Claudio Hummes on the 40th Anniversary of the Encyclical Sacerdotalis Caelibatus of Pope Paul VI*, February 24, 2007)

PAUL VI

In Christ all things were created, in heaven and on earth – He is truly the center of history

It is [Christ] who affirms that he is ‘the way,

and the truth, and the life' (Jn 14:6), 'the resurrection and the life' (Jn 11:25) of all men who believe in Him; it is he who goes to encounter death as a dominator and with his resurrection ruins the sordid plans of his opponents. **Jesus of Nazareth is truly the center of history**, as Saint Paul proclaimed: **'He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created through him and for him'** (Col 1:15). (Paul VI. *Homily*, Palm Sunday, March 19, 1978)

PIUS XII

All harmony in the world comes from Christ

In particular the **newly-born Christ is manifest and offers himself to the present world: 1. As a consolation for those who deplore disharmony and are discouraged about harmony in the world, 2. As a guarantee of harmony in the world, 3. As light and path for all efforts of human kind to establish harmony in the world.** (Pius XII. *Radio message for Christmas*, December 22, 1957)

LEO XIII

Christ: the exemplar cause whence all creatures borrow their form and beauty, their order and harmony

But the Son, the Word, the Image of God is also the exemplar cause, whence all creatures borrow their form and beauty, their order and harmony. He is for us the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Reconciler of man with God. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Divinum illud munus*, no. 3, May 9, 1897)

SAINT BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO

Christ the Son of God, who is the invisible Image of God by nature

For if the image is an expressive similitude, while our **mind contemplates in Christ the Son of God, who is the invisible Image of God by nature**, our humanity so wonderfully exalted, so ineffably united, by seeing together

(*simul*) in one thing (*in unum*) the First and last, the Most High and most deep (*imus*), the Circumference and center, the Alpha and the Omega, **the caused and the Cause, the Creator and the creature, that is the book written inside and out**; it has already arrived at a certain perfect reality (*rem*), so that it may with God arrive at the perfection of His illuminations on the sixth step as if on the sixth day... (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *The Journey of the Mind into God*, VI, 7)

The Divine Word is the prototype of which the human being was produced by exemplar causality

We are an express likeness of God, likeness according to the order of convenience, as the copy is similar to the Exemplar. (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *Commentary on the Sentences II*, d. 16, a. 1, q. 1)

Every creature by its nature is a certain likeness and similitude of that eternal Wisdom

Moreover, **these manner of creatures of this sensible world signify the invisible things of God, partly because God s the Origin, Exemplar and End, of every creature, and (because) every effect is a sign of a cause, and an example (*exemplatum*) of an exemplar, and a way for the end, towards which it leads: partly from its own representation; partly from a prophetic prefiguration; partly from angelic activity; partly from a superadded institution.** For **every creature by its nature (*ex natura*) is a certain likeness and similitude of that eternal Wisdom**, but especially that which has been employed (*assumpta est*) in the book of Scripture through the spirit of prophecy for the prefiguration of spiritual things; moreover, more especially those creatures, in the likeness of which God has willed to appear by angelic ministry; but most especially that which¹ He willed to institute for signification (*ad significandum*), which not only has a reckoning of 'sign' in the common sense of the word (*secundum nomen commune*), but also that of 'Sacrament'. (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *The Journey of the Mind into God*, II, 12)

JOHN PAUL II

The light of God's face shines in all its beauty on the countenance of Jesus Christ, 'the image of the invisible God'

The light of God's face shines in all its beauty on the countenance of Jesus Christ, 'the image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15), the 'reflection of God's glory' (Heb 1:3), 'full of grace and truth' (Jn 1:14). Christ is 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (Jn 14:6). Consequently the decisive answer to every one of man's questions, his religious and moral questions in particular, is given by Jesus Christ, or rather is Jesus Christ himself, as the Second Vatican Council recalls: 'In fact, it is only in the mystery of the Word incarnate that light is shed on the mystery of man. For Adam, the first man, was a figure of the future man, namely, of Christ the Lord. It is Christ, the last Adam, who fully discloses man to himself and unfolds his noble calling by revealing the mystery of the Father and the Father's love' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 22). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 2, August 6, 1993)

BENEDICT XVI

The first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new creation of Christ

Saint John says that the Word, the Logos, was with God in the beginning and that everything was done through the Word and nothing that exists was done without him (cf. Jn 1:1–13). The Evangelist is clearly alluding to the Creation narrative in the first chapters of the Book of Genesis, and reinterprets it in the light of Christ. This is a fundamental criterion in the Christian interpretation of the Bible: The Old and New Testaments should always be read together and, starting with the New, the deepest meaning of the Old Testament is also revealed. That same Word, who has always existed with God, who is God himself and through whom and for whom all things were created (cf. Col 1:16–17), became man: the eternal and infinite God immersed himself in human finiteness, in his creature, to bring back man and the whole of creation to himself. The Catechism of the Catholic Church says: 'the first creation finds its meaning and its summit in the new

creation in Christ, the splendour of which surpasses that of the first creation' (no. 349). The Fathers of the Church compared Jesus to Adam, even to the point of calling him 'the second Adam', or the definitive Adam, the perfect image of God. With the Incarnation of the Son of God a new creation was brought about that gave the complete answer to the question 'who is man?' (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, January 9, 2013)

Sin ruins ever anew the divine project of nature

The beauty of nature reminds us that we have been appointed by God to 'tend and care for' this 'garden' which is the earth (cf. Gen 2:8–17), and I see that you truly tend and take care of this beautiful garden of God, a true paradise. So, when people live in peace with God and one another, the earth truly resembles a 'paradise'. Unfortunately, sin ruins ever anew this divine project, causing division and introducing death into the world. Thus, humanity succumbs to the temptations of the Evil One and wages war against itself. Patches of 'hell' are consequently also created in this marvellous 'garden' which is the world. In the midst of this beauty, we must never forget the situations in which our brothers and sisters at times find themselves. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, July 22, 2007)

The arrogance of human beings who live 'as if God did not exist' leads them to exploit and disfigure nature

Engagement with the world, as demanded by God's word, makes us look with new eyes at the entire created cosmos, which contains traces of that word through whom all things were made (cf. Jn 1:2). As men and women who believe in and proclaim the Gospel, we have a responsibility towards creation. Revelation makes known God's plan for the cosmos, yet it also leads us to denounce that mistaken attitude which refuses to view all created realities as a reflection of their Creator, but instead as mere raw material, to be exploited without scruple. Man thus lacks that essential humility which would enable him to see creation as a gift from God, to be received and used in accordance with his plan. Instead, the arrogance of human beings who

live ‘as if God did not exist’ leads them to exploit and disfigure nature, failing to see it as the handiwork of the creative word. In this theological context, I would like to echo the statements of the Synod Fathers who reminded us that ‘accepting the word of God, attested to by Scripture and by the Church’s living Tradition, gives rise to a new way of seeing things, promotes an authentic ecology which has its deepest roots in the obedience of faith ... [and] develops a renewed theological sensitivity to the goodness of all things, which are created in Christ’ (*Propositio* 54). We need to be re-educated in wonder and in the ability to recognize the beauty made manifest in created realities (cf. Benedict XVI, *Sacramentum Caritatis*). (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 108, September 30, 2010)

JOHN PAUL II

Infinite is the power of forgiveness of the sacrifice of the Son – but man can oppose grace and truth in the face of the witness of the cross

It is precisely because sin exists in the world, which ‘God so loved...that he gave his only Son’ (Jn 3:16) that God, who ‘is love’ (1Jn 4:8), cannot reveal Himself otherwise than as mercy. This corresponds not only to the most profound truth of that love which God is, but also to the whole interior truth of man and of the world which is man’s temporary homeland. Mercy in itself, as a perfection of the infinite God, is also infinite. Also infinite therefore and inexhaustible is the Father’s readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to His home. **Infinite are the readiness and power of forgiveness which flow continually from the marvelous value of the sacrifice of the Son.** No human sin can prevail over this power or even limit it. On the part of man only a lack of good will can limit it, a lack of readiness to be converted and to repent, in other words persistence in obstinacy, opposing grace and truth, especially in the face of the witness of the cross and resurrection of Christ. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Dives in misericordia*, no. 13, November 30, 1980)

PIUS X

Human society today is suffering from a terrible and deep rooted malady – apostasy from God

Then again, to omit other motives, We were terrified beyond all else by **the disastrous state of human society today.** For who can fail to see that society is at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and deep-rooted malady which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is **dragging it to destruction?** You understand, Venerable Brethren, what **this disease is – apostasy from God,** than which in truth nothing is more allied with ruin, according to the word of the Prophet: ‘For behold they that go far from Thee shall perish’ (Ps 72:26). We saw therefore that, in virtue of the ministry of the Pontificate, which was to be entrusted to Us, We must hasten to find a remedy for this great evil, considering as addressed to Us that Divine command: ‘Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations and over kingdoms, to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant’ (Jer 1:10). But, cognizant of Our weakness, We recoiled in terror from a task as urgent as it is arduous. (Pius X. *Encyclical E supremi apostolatus*, no. 3, October 4, 1903)

PIUS XI

The greatest and most destructive evils transcend the material or natural sphere and lie within the supernatural and religious order

We wish to record, in addition to the evils already mentioned, other evils which beset society and which occupy a place of prime importance but whose very existence escapes the ordinary observer, the sensual man – he who, as the Apostle says, does not perceive ‘the things that are of the Spirit of God (1Cor 2:14), yet which cannot but be judged **the greatest and most destructive scourges of the social order of today.** We refer specifically to those evils which transcend the material or natural sphere and lie within the supernatural and religious order properly so-called; in other words, those evils which affect the spiritual life of souls. **These evils are all the more to be**

deplored since they injure souls whose value is infinitely greater than that of any merely material object. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ubi arcano*, no. 16, December 23, 1922)

JOHN PAUL II

It is not just the creation of living man as in the first creation, but that of introducing man into divine life – ‘if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation’

The first creation, unfortunately, was devastated by sin. However, God did not abandon it to destruction, but rather prepared its salvation, which would constitute a ‘new creation’ (cf. Is 65:17, Gal 6: 15; Rev 21:5). [...] In effect, the new creation had its beginning thanks to the action of the Holy Spirit in the death and resurrection of Christ. In his Passion, Jesus fully received the action of

the Holy Spirit in his human nature (cf. Heb 9:14), who conducted him, through death, to a new life (cf. Rom 6:10) that He had power to communicate to all believers, transmitting to them this same Spirit, first in an initial way through baptism, and then fully within the final resurrection. On the afternoon of the Passover, **Jesus resurrected, appearing to the disciples in the Cenacle, renewing over them the same action that God the Creator had performed over Adam. God had ‘breathed’ over the body of man to give him life. Jesus ‘breathed’ over the disciples and said to them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (Jn 20:22).** The human breath of Jesus thus serves toward the undertaking of a divine work that is even more marvelous than the initial one. **It is not just the creation of living man, as in the first creation, but that of introducing man into divine life. [...]** ‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ – writes Saint Paul – **he is a new creation’ (2Cor 5:17).** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 5, January 10, 1990)

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Laudato si' (III): 'I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality'

Being an important magisterial document, an Encyclical should be characterized by clear and defined ideas regarding the topic at hand, in order to delineate the path to be followed by the Hierarchy and the faithful; consequentially, by all men of goodwill, for the Church never ceases to be a moral reference point, even for those who don't follow her. Which brings us to the question: how is it possible that *Laudato si'* takes a position which, in certain points, contradicts the magisterial teaching of the Church regarding the ecological issue, while in other points it emphasizes these same teachings. It hurts us to say this, but it is a veritable hodgepodge of ideas... This jumble is evident in many paragraphs that claim to disapprove of the views and principles of fundamentalist and radical ecology (even citing documents of the preceding Magisterium regarding this topic), while at the same time leaving ample scope for ambiguities and irenicism: for example, on citing Teilhard de Chardin and the so-called 'Earth Charter', documents of a dubious or manifestly pantheistic nature that do not harmonize with the doctrine of the Church on numerous points. Or even in going so far as to omit the mediation of Jesus Christ in a public and official prayer of his Vicar on earth! All of this opens the doors of the Church to the conception of an interdenominational, neo-pagan and universal religion, for it turns a blind eye to Catholic doctrine in its entirety, hiding important aspects that have already been defined, so as to come together with the world. It's worthwhile to analyze these points and reveal these aspects, for as John Paul II so aptly affirmed, far more than the planet, the house common to all Catholics is the Holy Mother Church: 'In the baptismal waters you were born to a new life, that inserted you within the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church, One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic, the Ark of salvation and common house of those who invoke God as Father'. (John Paul II. *Message to the Peoples of America*, October 12, 1992)

FRANCIS

The rich heritage of Christian spirituality, the fruit of twenty centuries of personal and communal experience, has a precious contribution to make to the renewal of humanity. Here, **I would like to offer Christians a few suggestions for an ecological spirituality** grounded in the convictions of our faith, since the teachings of the Gospel have direct consequences for our way of thinking, feeling and living. **More than in ideas or concepts as such, I am interested in how such a spirituality can motivate us to a more passionate concern for the protection of our world. A commitment this lofty cannot be sustained by doctrine alone, without a spirituality capable of inspiring us, without an 'interior impulse which encourages, motivates, nourishes and gives meaning to our individual and communal activity'** (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 261). Admittedly, Christians have not always appropriated and developed the spiritual treasures bestowed by God upon the Church, where **the life of the spirit is not dissociated from the body or from nature or from worldly realities, but lived in and with them**, in communion with all that surrounds us. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, On care for our common home, no. 216, May 24, 2015)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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John Paul II

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Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

- ♦ Science and technology are not of themselves the cause of the exasperated secularization that leads to nihilism; the problem is the evolutionist rejection of the concept of Creation and the rupture of man with the Creator

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Pius XII

- ♦ A society that eliminates the idea of a Creator and His creatures loses the harmony of relations between man and the world and with his fellow men, based on Christian religious principles

John XXIII

- ♦ The risk of looking for solutions against the divinely established moral order, for example, to try to address the food supply problem by violating the laws of human procreation

John Paul II

- ♦ Exaggerated ecological positions demand to limit the birth rate, or inspired by egocentrism and biocentrism propose an egalitarian ‘dignity’ of all living beings

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

- ♦ One must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person himself, divinizing nature or the earth

Benedict XVI

- ♦ The idea of evolutionary determinism leads to considering nature an untouchable taboo or to abusing it. To view nature as something more important than the human person leads to attitudes of neo-paganism or a new pantheism. Human salvation cannot come from nature alone, understood in a purely naturalistic sense

- ♦ So-called integral ecology: egalitarian vision of the 'dignity' of living creatures that abolishes the superior role of human beings, opening the way to a new pantheism tinged with neo-paganism. Man must not abuse nature, but also may not abdicate his role of steward and administrator with responsibility over creation

C) Humans are put at the apex of material and visible creation: they are image and likeness of God, with a body and immortal soul, and with a final end that is not in this world

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

- ♦ Man, created in God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all that it contains, such that man himself and the totality of things be turned to the Lord and Creator of all

John XXIII

- ♦ A conception of ecology that appreciates the marvelous order placed by God in the world makes man realize his own greatness, as lord of creation, such that he can devise the means for harnessing natural forces for his own benefit as a gift received from God

Benedict XVI

- ♦ Authentic human development must include not just material but also spiritual growth, as the saints accomplished, since the human person is a 'unity of body and soul', born of God's creative love and destined for eternal life

Sacred Scripture

- ♦ Humans are worth 'more than many sparrows'; and so must not fear the death of the body but of the soul

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ The hierarchy of creatures is expressed by the order of the 'six days', from the less perfect to the more perfect; in creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence
 - ♦ In God's plan man and woman have the vocation of 'subduing' the earth as stewards of God

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

- ♦ In interior life, man discovers that he is superior to the material world, having 'a spiritual and immortal soul' and is not merely a pantheistic speck of nature or a nameless constituent of the city of man
 - ♦ God himself willed that man be the king of creation. The biblical message and the Church's Magisterium represent the essential reference points for evaluating the problems found in the relationship between man and the environment

II – The ecological problems of the planet are due to the neglect of the practice of the Commandments – immutable moral principles – by the greater part of humanity. The crisis of our world is a moral crisis, therefore, only a moral conversion will resolve ecological problems

A) The Christian should see the world as a setting where life evolves in accordance with moral principles, with his sights placed on eternity

Pius XII

- ♦ The moral life does not belong only to the interior sphere, but also has an effect on the harmony of the world: even the most individual acts have a repercussion in the surrounding world

John XXIII

- ♦ Only the moral order has the solution of problems relating to man's life as an individual and as a member of society, and problems concerning individual states and their inter-relations

- ♦ The disunity among individuals and among nations, which contrasts to the perfect order in the universe, are the consequence of a moral crisis, of the abandon of the immutable laws inscribed by God in man's nature

- ♦ Human society must be considered as being primarily a spiritual reality – and not a naturalistic one, whose spiritual values should exert a guiding influence on the relations between humans in all spheres

- ♦ Men must conduct themselves in conformity with the precepts of the moral order, obeying the providential designs of God regarding salvation, integrating the principal spiritual values with those of science, technology and the professions

B) The root of the environmental crisis is moral

John XXIII

- ♦ The frequent divorce between faith and practice in Christians – the root of the present crisis

John Paul II

- ♦ A moral question: the environmental problem results from unheeding the Creator's will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble 'master' and 'guardian'

- ♦ The true nature of the evil which faces us with respect to the development of peoples: it is a question of a moral evil, the fruit of many sins which lead to 'structures of sin'

- ♦ Fragments of the Centesimus annus omitted in the Laudato Si': the root of the ecological problem is the loss of the sense of God the Creator, whereby man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth

Benedict XVI

- ♦ Human beings interpret and shape the natural environment through culture, which in turn is given direction by the responsible use of freedom, in accordance with the dictates of the moral law

- ♦ Fragments of Caritas in Veritate omitted in the citations of Laudato Si': The ecological system is based not only on a good relationship with nature, but also on respect for a plan that affects the health of society – the decisive issue is the overall moral tenor of society

C) The solution for the world crisis is found in a society based on the religious principles of Christian morals

John Paul II

- ♦ More parts of the Centesimus annus 'forgotten' in the citations of Laudato Si': More than preserving the natural habitats of threatened species, greater effort must be made to safeguard the moral conditions of mankind

- ◆ Further elements of Centesimus annus ‘forgotten’ in the citations of Laudato Si’: An ‘integral ecology’ presents an idea of the family that contrasts with the Catholic ideal, which is founded on marriage, cradle of the moral formation of man
 - ◆ The ecological question finds in the Bible clear and strong ethical direction, leading to a solution which respects the great good of life

Benedict XVI

- ◆ If the relationship between human creatures and the Creator is forgotten, matter is reduced to a selfish possession; man becomes the ‘last word’
 - ◆ There is a need to safeguard the human patrimony of society that originates in and is part of the natural moral law, which is the foundation of respect for the human person and creation
 - ◆ Prerequisite for saving the ecology: saving our spiritual ozone layer and especially saving our spiritual rainforests – a real conversion, as faith understands it, toward the will of God

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ Use of the natural resources cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Some parts of the Catechism not cited in Laudato Si’

CELAM – Document of Aparecida

- ◆ The best way to respect nature is to promote a human ecology open to transcendence to recapitulate all things in Christ and praise the Father with Him

John Paul II

- ◆ True conversion fosters a new life, in which there is no separation between faith and works in our daily response to the universal call to holiness

III – An ecology of a spiritual and irenic character opens the doors toward a distortion of the Catholic religion, that must not – under the pretext of saving humanity and dialoguing with everybody, Catholics and non-Catholics – adapt to ways of thinking which constitute doctrines truly contrary to unchanging teachings

A) Dialogue and drawing closer, without transgressing the truth and the faith

Catechism of Saint Pius X

- ◆ We should beg graces of God in the Name of Jesus Christ because He is our Mediator, and it is through Him alone that we can approach the throne of God

John Paul II

- ◆ True ecumenical activity in no way means giving up or diminishing the treasures of divine truth, constantly confessed and taught by the Church

Paul VI

- ◆ The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth: our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith

Pius IX

- ◆ A very grave error: to believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life

- ♦ Errors condemned by the Syllabus

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ Jesus openly entrusts to his disciples the mystery of prayer to the Father: 'ask in his name'

John XXIII

- ♦ In relations with non-Catholics, Catholics bear themselves as Catholics, and must do nothing to compromise religion and morality

B) Authentic respect for nature and human beings will only exist within an authentically Catholic society

John XXIII

- ♦ Our concern is with the doctrine of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, whose light illumines, enkindles and enflames. Every age hears her warning voice, vibrant with heavenly wisdom, with effective remedies for the increasing needs of men, and the sorrows and anxieties of this present life

Benedict XVI

- ♦ Goodwill alone is not enough... Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is. The strength to fight and suffer for the common good comes from the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Apart from me you can do nothing'
- ♦ It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God
- ♦ Without a transcendent foundation founded on moral values – which are Christian values – society is a mere aggregation of neighbors, not a community of brothers and sisters called to form one great family

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ The union of the human family is possible only founded on Christ, uniting all as of the family of God's children – the innermost nature of the Church

C) The Christian vision of the Triune God cannot be reconciled with the spiritualist mask of an ecology that appears to be open toward interreligious dialogue, but is interwoven with religious syncretism and pantheism

Pius XII

- ♦ Christian action cannot renounce its title and character to collaborate with a 'human' action that signifies agnosticism toward Religion and the true values of life, which would be equal to a request of abdication, to which a Christian cannot consent

Vatican Council I (Ecumenical XX)

- ♦ God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth

Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio

- ♦ The things of this sensible world lead one to transcend and pass over to Christ, and the hidden Sacrament of God

Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church

- ♦ Only in dialogue with God does the human being find his truth, from which he draws inspiration and norms to make plans for the future of the world

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

- ◆ Solutions that propose a salvific action of God beyond the unique mediation of Christ would be contrary to Christian and Catholic faith

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ The true spirituality for all Christians in any state or walk of life called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness, in mystical union with Christ

Pius XII

- ◆ The perfection and the order of the world of some sort of immanent process, which is a return to the old superstition that deified nature; but is a vital happening of the same history as the divine Word – the form of this world passes and its final destiny to the glory of the Father and the triumph of the Word

John XXIII

- ◆ There will be no peace nor justice in the world until men return to a sense of their dignity as creatures and sons of God; separated from God a man is but a monster, in himself and toward others
- ◆ Scientific and technical progress: goods of this kind must be valued according to their true nature, as instruments used by man for the better attainment of his end in the natural and the supernatural order

Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue

- ◆ The growing conviction that there exists an essence of truth in the heart of every religious experience has led to the idea that they must gather elements from different religions in order to reach a universal form of religion

The ‘Earth Charter’: a document with notoriously pantheistic overtones, proposing the foundations of a new global society, that should change ‘values, institutions, and ways of living’, in other words a new universal ecological religion in which ‘the forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life’s evolution.’

I – SUSPICION OF THE CHURCH REGARDING ‘INTEGRAL ECOLOGY’; A NEW DOCTRINE INVOLVING AN IDEOLOGY WHICH IN MANY POINTS OPPOSES THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

FRANCIS

A CONTRADICTION:

Care for biodiversity to safeguard other forms of life; above all human beings need to change, for they lack awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone – but ‘biocentrism’ entails adding yet another imbalance, failing to solve present problems and adding new ones

In the protection of biodiversity, specialists insist on the need for particular attention to be shown to areas richer both in the number of species and in endemic, rare or less protected species. Certain places need greater protection because of their

immense importance for the global ecosystem, or because they represent important water reserves and thus safeguard **other forms of life** (*Encyclical Laudato si'* no. 37)

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. (*Encyclical Laudato si'* no.202)

A misguided anthropocentrism need not necessarily yield to 'biocentrism', for that would entail adding yet another imbalance, failing to solve present problems and adding new ones. Human beings cannot be expected to feel responsibility for the world unless, at the same time, their unique capacities of knowledge, will, freedom and responsibility are recognized and valued. (*Encyclical Laudato si'* no.118)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

A) Legitimate concerns of the Church for the environment

JOHN XXIII

God said 'Fill the earth, and subdue it.' Nothing is said about destroying nature. On the contrary, it must be brought into the service of human life

Genesis relates how God gave two commandments to our first parents: to transmit human life—'Increase and multiply' (Gen. 1:28) – and to bring nature into their service – 'Fill the earth, and subdue it'. These two commandments are complementary. Nothing is said in the second of these commandments about destroying nature. On the contrary, it must be brought into the service of human life. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 196-197, May 15, 1961)

JOHN PAUL II

Christian culture has always recognized the creatures that surround man as gifts of God: unbridled exploitation is due to secularization

Ecology, which arose as a name and a cultural message more than a century ago, very soon caught the attention of experts and is demanding ever greater interdisciplinary

efforts from biologists, physicians, economists, philosophers and politicians. It takes the form of a study of the relationship between living organisms and their environment, and especially between man and his surroundings. [...] At the same time, biblical anthropology has considered man, created in God's image and likeness, as a creature who can transcend worldly reality by virtue of his spirituality, and therefore, as a responsible custodian of the environment in which he has been placed to live. The Creator offers it to him as both a home and a resource. The consequence of this doctrine is quite clear: it is the relationship man has with God that determines his relationship with his fellows and with his environment. This is why Christian culture has always recognized the creatures that surround man as also gifts of God to be nurtured and safeguarded with a sense of gratitude to the Creator. Benedictine and Franciscan spirituality in particular has witnessed to this sort of kinship of man with his creaturely environment, fostering in him an attitude of respect for every reality of the surrounding world. In the secularized modern age we are seeing the emergence of a twofold temptation: a concept of knowledge no longer understood as wisdom and contemplation, but as power over nature, which is consequently regarded as an object to be conquered. The other temptation is the unbridled exploitation of resources under the urge of unlimited profit-seeking, according to the capitalistic mentality

typical of modern societies. (John Paul II. *Address to the participants in the International Congress on 'Environment and Health'*, no. 1. 3-4, March 24, 1997)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Science and technology are not of themselves the cause of the exasperated secularization that leads to nihilism; the problem is the evolutionist rejection of the concept of Creation and the rupture of man with the Creator

Primacy is given to doing and having rather than to being, and this causes serious forms of human alienation. Such attitudes do not arise from scientific and technological research but from scientism and technocratic ideologies that tend to condition such research. **The advances of science and technology do not eliminate the need for transcendence and are not of themselves the cause of the exasperated secularization that leads to nihilism.** With the progress of science and technology, questions as to their meaning increase and give rise to an ever greater need to respect the transcendent dimension of the human person and creation itself. [...] **A vision of man and things that is sundered from any reference to the transcendent has led to the rejection of the**

concept of creation and to the attribution of a completely independent existence to man and nature. The bonds that unite the world to God have thus been broken. This rupture has also resulted in separating man from the world and, more radically, has impoverished man's very identity. Human beings find themselves thinking that they are foreign to the environmental context in which they live. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 462. 464)

BENEDICT XVI

Respecting the environment means respecting the hierarchy within creation and not considering nature selfishly

We need to care for the environment: it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion. **Human beings, obviously, are of supreme worth vis-à-vis creation as a whole. Respecting the environment does not mean considering material or animal nature more important than man. Rather, it means not selfishly considering nature to be at the complete disposal of our own interests,** for future generations also have the right to reap its benefits and to exhibit towards nature the same responsible freedom that we claim for ourselves. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the 41st World Day for Peace*, no. 7, January 1, 2008)

FRANCIS

ANOTHER CONTRADICTION:

A universal communion: all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred respect – but this is not to put all living beings on the same level nor does it imply a divinization of the earth

This is the basis of our conviction that, as part of the universe, **called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect.** Here I would reiterate that **'God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement'** (Evangelii Gaudium, 215) (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 89)

This is not to put all living beings on the same level nor to deprive human beings of their unique worth and the tremendous responsibility it entails. Nor does it imply a divinization of the earth which would prevent us from working on it and protecting it in its fragility. Such notions would end up creating new imbalances which would deflect us from the reality which challenges us. At times we see an obsession with denying any preeminence to the human person; more zeal is shown in protecting other species than in defending the dignity which all human beings share in equal measure. (*Encyclical Laudato si'* no. 90)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

B) Grave misgivings of the Magisterium in relation to an 'ecological mentality' – contrary to the teachings of the Church

creature. (Pius XII. *Christmas message to the faithful*, December 22, 1957)

JOHN XXIII

PIUS XII

A society that eliminates the idea of a Creator and His creatures loses the harmony of relations between man and the world and with his fellow men, based on Christian religious principles

If this foundation of the spirit is removed, and as a consequence the image (in man) and the vestige (in creatures lacking reason) of the divine Being in created things, the harmony within the relations among man and the world are also lost. Man would be reduced to a simple point and the localization of an anonymous and irrational vitality. He would no longer be within the world as in his own home. The world would become something foreign, dark, dangerous, always inclined to lose the character of instrument and to become his enemy. And what would the regulating relations of life in society be without the light of the divine Spirit and without taking into account the relationship of Christ with the world? To this question answers the bitter reality of those who, preferring the obscurity of the world, declare themselves adorers of the exterior works of man. Their society achieves only, under the iron discipline of collectivism, to maintain the anonymous existence of some alongside others. Very different is the social life based on the example of the relations of Christ with the world and with man: a life of fraternal cooperation and mutual respect for the rights of others, a life worthy of the first principle and of the final end of every human

The risk of looking for solutions against the divinely established moral order, for example, to try to address the food supply problem by violating the laws of human procreation

The resources which God in His goodness and wisdom has implanted in Nature are well-nigh inexhaustible, and He has at the same time given man the intelligence to discover ways and means of exploiting these resources for his own advantage and his own livelihood. Hence, the real solution of the problem is not to be found in expedients which offend against the divinely established moral order and which attack human life at its very source, but in a renewed scientific and technical effort on man's part to deepen and extend his dominion over Nature. The progress of science and technology that has already been achieved opens up almost limitless horizons in this held. [...] We must solemnly proclaim that human life is transmitted by means of the family, and the family is based upon a marriage which is one and indissoluble and, with respect to Christians, raised to the dignity of a sacrament. The transmission of human life is the result of a personal and conscious act, and, as such, is subject to the all-holy, inviolable and immutable laws of God, which no man may ignore or disobey. He is not therefore permitted to use certain ways and means which are allowable in the propagation of plant and animal life. Human life is sacred—all men must recognize that fact. From its very inception it reveals the creating hand of God. Those who violate His

laws not only offend the divine majesty and degrade themselves and humanity, they also sap the vitality of the political community of which they are members. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 189.193-194, May 15, 1961)

JOHN PAUL II

Exaggerated ecological positions demand to limit the birth rate, or inspired by egocentrism and biocentrism propose an egalitarian 'dignity' of all living beings

Today we often witness the taking of opposite and exaggerated positions: on the one hand, in the name of the exhaustibility and insufficiency of environmental resources, demands are made to limit the birth rate, especially among the poor and developing peoples. On the other, in the name of an idea inspired by egocentrism and biocentrism it is being proposed that the ontological and axiological difference between men and other living beings be eliminated, since the biosphere is considered a biotic unity of indifferentiated value. Thus man's superior responsibility can be eliminated in favour of an egalitarian consideration of the 'dignity' of all living beings. (John Paul II. *Address to the participants in the International Congress on 'Environment and Health'*, no. 5, March 24, 1997)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

One must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person himself, divinizing nature or the earth

A correct understanding of the environment prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited. At the same time, it must not absolutize nature and place it above the dignity of the human person himself. In this latter case, one can go so far as to divinize nature or the earth, as can readily be seen in certain ecological movements that seek to gain an internationally guaranteed institutional status for their beliefs. The Magisterium finds the motivation for its opposition to a concept of the environment

based on ecocentrism and on biocentrism. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 463)

BENEDICT XVI

The idea of evolutionary determinism leads to considering nature an untouchable taboo or to abusing it. To view nature as something more important than the human person leads to attitudes of neo-paganism or a new pantheism. Human salvation cannot come from nature alone, understood in a purely naturalistic sense

Today the subject of development is also closely related to the duties arising from our relationship to the natural environment. The environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole. When nature, including the human being, is viewed as the result of mere chance or evolutionary determinism, our sense of responsibility wanes. In nature, the believer recognizes the wonderful result of God's creative activity, which we may use responsibly to satisfy our legitimate needs, material or otherwise, while respecting the intrinsic balance of creation. If this vision is lost, we end up either considering nature an untouchable taboo or, on the contrary, abusing it. Neither attitude is consonant with the Christian vision of nature as the fruit of God's creation. Nature expresses a design of love and truth. It is prior to us, and it has been given to us by God as the setting for our life. Nature speaks to us of the Creator (cf. Rom 1:20) and his love for humanity. It is destined to be 'recapitulated' in Christ at the end of time (cf. Eph 1:9-10; Col 1:19-20). Thus it too is a 'vocation' (John Paul II. *Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace*, 6). Nature is at our disposal not as 'a heap of scattered refuse' (*Heraclitus of Ephesus*, Fragment 22B124), but as a gift of the Creator who has given it an inbuilt order, enabling man to draw from it the principles needed in order 'to till it and keep it' (Gen 2:15). But it should also be stressed that it is contrary to authentic development to view nature as something more important than the human person. This position leads to attitudes of neo-paganism or a new pantheism – human salvation cannot come

from nature alone, understood in a purely naturalistic sense. This having been said, it is also necessary to reject the opposite position, which aims at total technical dominion over nature, because the natural environment is more than raw material to be manipulated at our pleasure; it is a wondrous work of the Creator containing a 'grammar' which sets forth ends and criteria for its wise use, not its reckless exploitation. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 48, June 29, 2009)

So-called integral ecology: egalitarian vision of the 'dignity' of living creatures that abolishes the superior role of human beings, opening the way to a new pantheism tinged with neo-paganism. Man must not abuse nature, but also may not abdicate his role of steward and administrator with responsibility over creation

There exists a certain reciprocity: as we care for creation, we realize that God, through creation, cares for us. On the other hand, a correct understanding of the relationship between man and the environment will not end by absolutizing nature or by considering it more important than the human person. **If the Church's magisterium expresses grave misgivings about notions of the environment inspired by ecocentrism and biocentrism, it is because such notions eliminate the difference of identity and worth between the human person and other living things. In the name of a supposedly egalitarian vision of the 'dignity' of all living creatures, such notions end up abolishing the distinctiveness and superior role of human beings. They also open the way to a new pantheism tinged with neo-paganism, which would see the source of man's salvation in nature alone, understood in purely naturalistic terms.** The Church, for her part, is concerned that the question be approached in a balanced way, with respect for the 'grammar' which the Creator has inscribed in his handiwork by **giving man the role of a steward and administrator with responsibility over creation, a role which man must certainly not abuse, but also one which he may not abdicate.** (Benedict XVI. *Message for the 43rd World Day of Peace*, no. 13, January 1, 2010)

B) Humans are put at the apex of material and visible creation: they are image and likeness of God, with a body and immortal soul, and with a final end that is not in this world

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

Man, created in God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all that it contains, such that man himself and the totality of things be turned to the Lord and Creator of all

The biblical vision inspires the behavior of Christians in relation to their use of the earth, and also with regard to the advances of science and technology. **The Second Vatican Council affirmed that man 'judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe, for he shares in the light of the divine mind'.** The Council Fathers recognized the progress made thanks to the tireless application of human genius down the centuries, whether in the empirical sciences, the technological disciplines or the liberal arts. **Today, 'especially with the help of science and technology, man has extended his mastery over nearly the whole of nature and continues to do so'.** For man, **'created in God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all that it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness, a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to him who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all.** Thus, by the subjection of all things to man, the name of God would be wonderful in all the earth.' [The Council teaches that] 'throughout the course of the centuries, men have labored to better the circumstances of their lives through a monumental amount of individual and collective effort. To believers, this point is settled: considered in itself, this human activity accords with God's will'. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 456)

JOHN XXIII

A conception of ecology that appreciates the marvelous order placed by God in

the world makes man realize his own greatness, as lord of creation, such that he can devise the means for harnessing natural forces for his own benefit as a gift received from God

Peace on Earth – which man throughout the ages has so longed for and sought after – can never be established, never guaranteed, except by the diligent observance of the divinely established order. **That a marvelous order predominates in the world of living beings and in the forces of nature, is the plain lesson which the progress of modern research and the discoveries of technology teach us.** And it is part of the greatness of man that he can appreciate that order, and devise the means for harnessing those forces for his own benefit. But what emerges first and foremost from the progress of scientific knowledge and the inventions of technology is the infinite greatness of God Himself, who created both man and the universe. **Yes; out of nothing He made all things, and filled them with the fullness of His own wisdom and goodness.** Hence, these are the words the holy psalmist used in praise of God: ‘O Lord, our Lord: how admirable is thy name in the whole earth!’ (Ps 8:1) And elsewhere he says: ‘How great are thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom’ (Ps 103:24). Moreover, **God created man ‘in His own image and likeness’ (cf. Gen 1:26), endowed him with intelligence and freedom, and made him lord of creation.** All this the psalmist proclaims when he says: ‘Thou hast made him a little less than the angels: thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, and hast set him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast subjected all things under his feet’ (Ps 8:5-6). (John XXIII. *Encyclical Pacem in terris*, no. 1-3, April 11, 1963)

BENEDICT XVI

Authentic human development must include not just material but also spiritual growth, as the saints accomplished, since the human person is a ‘unity of body and soul’, born of God’s creative love and destined for eternal life

One aspect of the contemporary technological mindset is the tendency to consider the problems and emotions of the interior life from a purely psychological point of view, even to

the point of neurological reductionism. **In this way man’s interiority is emptied of its meaning and gradually our awareness of the human soul’s ontological depths, as probed by the saints, is lost.** The question of development is closely bound up with our understanding of the **human soul**, insofar as we often reduce the self to the psyche and confuse the soul’s health with emotional well-being. **These over-simplifications stem from a profound failure to understand the spiritual life**, and they obscure the fact that the development of individuals and peoples depends partly on the resolution of problems of a spiritual nature. **Development must include not just material growth but also spiritual growth, since the human person is a ‘unity of body and soul’ (GS, 14), born of God’s creative love and destined for eternal life.** The human being develops when he grows in the spirit, when his soul comes to know itself and the truths that **God has implanted deep within**, when he enters into dialogue with himself and his Creator. When he is far away from God, man is unsettled and ill at ease. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 76, June 29, 2009)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Humans are worth ‘more than many sparrows’; and so must not fear the death of the body but of the soul

And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father’s knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. (Mt 10:28-31)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The hierarchy of creatures is expressed by the order of the ‘six days’, from the less perfect to the more perfect; in creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm, on which the believer can rely with confidence

The hierarchy of creatures is expressed by the order of the ‘six days’, from the less perfect to

the more perfect. God loves all his creatures (cf. Ps 145:9) and takes care of each one, even the sparrow. Nevertheless, Jesus said: 'You are of more value than many sparrows', or again: 'of how much more value is a man than a sheep!' (Lk 12:6-7; Mt 12:12). **Man is the summit of the Creator's work, as the inspired account expresses by clearly distinguishing the creation of man from that of the other creatures (cf. Gen 1-26). [...] In creation God laid a foundation and established laws that remain firm (Heb 4:3-4), on which the believer can rely with confidence, for they are the sign and pledge of the unshakeable faithfulness of God's covenant (cf. Jer 31:35-37; 33:19-26). For his part man must remain faithful to this foundation, and respect the laws which the Creator has written into it. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 342-343; 346)**

In God's plan humans have the vocation of 'subduing' the earth as 'stewards of God'

In God's plan man and woman have the vocation of 'subduing' the earth (Gen 1:28) as stewards of God. This sovereignty is not to be an arbitrary and destructive domination. God calls man and woman, made in the image of the Creator 'who loves everything that exists' (Wis 11:24), to share in his providence toward other creatures; hence their responsibility for the world God has entrusted to them. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 373)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

In interior life, man discovers that he is superior to the material world, having 'a spiritual and immortal soul' and is not merely a pantheistic speck of nature or a nameless constituent of the city of man

Through his spirituality man moves beyond the realm of mere things and plunges into the innermost structure of reality. **When he enters into his own heart, that is, when he reflects on his destiny, he discovers that he is superior to the material world because of his unique dignity as one who converses with God, under whose gaze he makes decisions about his life. In his inner life he recognizes that**

the person has 'a spiritual and immortal soul' and he knows that the person is not merely 'a speck of nature or a nameless constituent of the city of man'. Therefore, man has two different characteristics: he is a material being, linked to this world by his body, and he is a spiritual being, open to transcendence and to the discovery of 'more penetrating truths', thanks to his intellect, by which 'he shares in the light of the divine mind'. The Church affirms: 'The unity of soul and body is so profound that one has to consider the soul to be the 'form' of the body: i.e., it is because of its spiritual soul that the body made of matter becomes a living, human body; spirit and matter, in man, are not two natures united, but rather their union forms a single nature'. Neither the spiritualism that despises the reality of the body nor the materialism that considers the spirit a mere manifestation of the material do justice to the complex nature, to the totality or to the unity of the human being. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 128-129)

God himself willed that man be the king of creation. The biblical message and the Church's Magisterium represent the essential reference points for evaluating the problems found in the relationship between man and the environment

If man intervenes in nature without abusing it or damaging it, we can say that he 'intervenes not in order to modify nature but to foster its development in its own life, that of the creation that God intended. While working in this obviously delicate area, the researcher adheres to the design of God. God willed that man be the king of creation'. In the end, it is God himself who offers to men and women the honour of cooperating with the full force of their intelligence in the work of creation. The biblical message and the Church's Magisterium represent the essential reference points for evaluating the problems found in the relationship between man and the environment. The underlying cause of these problems can be seen in man's pretension of exercising unconditional dominion over things, heedless of any moral considerations which, on the contrary, must distinguish all human activity. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 460-461)

II – THE ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS OF THE PLANET ARE DUE TO THE NEGLECT OF THE PRACTICE OF THE COMMANDMENTS – IMMUTABLE MORAL PRINCIPLES – BY THE GREATER PART OF HUMANITY. THE CRISIS OF OUR WORLD IS A MORAL CRISIS, THEREFORE, ONLY A MORAL CONVERSION WILL RESOLVE ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

FRANCIS

What is needed is an ‘ecological conversion’

‘The external deserts in the world are growing, because the internal deserts have become so vast’. For this reason, **the ecological crisis is also a summons to profound interior conversion.** It must be said that some committed and prayerful Christians, with the excuse of realism and pragmatism, tend to ridicule expressions of concern for the environment. Others are passive; they choose not to change their habits and thus become inconsistent. **So what they all need is an ‘ecological conversion’,** whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them. Living our vocation to be protectors of God’s handiwork is essential to a life of virtue; it is not an optional or a secondary aspect of our Christian experience. (*Encyclical Laudato si’*, no. 217).

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

A)The Christian should see the world as a milieu where life proceeds in accordance with moral principles, with his sights placed on eternity

Pius XII

The moral life does not belong only to the interior sphere, but also has an effect on the harmony of the world: even the most individual acts have a repercussion in the surrounding world

The divine symphony of the cosmos, particularly on the earth and among men, is confided by its supreme Author to humanity itself, so that, as an immense orchestra, distant in times and multiform in ways but united under the direction of Christ, it be faithfully executed, interpreting with the greatest perfection possible its sole and brilliant theme. In effect, **God gave his plans to men, so that they could put them into act, personal and freely, pledging full moral responsibility** and demanding, when necessary, fatigue and sacrifices, following the example of

Christ. Under this aspect, **the Christian is, in the first place, an admirer of the divine order in the world, one who loves its presence and does everything to see it recognized and affirmed. He will be, therefore, necessarily, its ardent defender against the forces and tendencies that hinder the operation, be those that he has hidden in himself – the evil inclinations, or those that come from the exterior – Satan and his superstitions.** This is how Saint Paul saw the Christian in the world, when he pointed out the adversaries of God and exhorted to cloth oneself in his armor, in order to resist the assaults of the demon, girding the waist with truth and clothing oneself with the breastplate of justice (cf. Eph 6:11,14). **The vocation of Christianity is not, therefore, an invitation of God only for an aesthetic complacency in the contemplation of his admirable order, but rather the obligatory calling toward an incessant action, austere, and directed to all of the senses and aspects of life. His [the Christian’s] action is carried out, before all else, in the full observance of the moral law, no matter what its object, small or great, secret or public, of abstention or positive realization. The moral life does not only belong to the interior sphere in such a way**

that it also does not touch, through its effects, on the harmony of the world. Man is never so alone, so individual and segregated to himself, in any event, even the most singular, that his decisions and acts do not have a repercussion in the surrounding world. Executer of the divine symphony, no man may presume that his action as something exclusively his own, that speaks only with respect to himself. The moral life is, without doubt, in the first place, an individual and interior work, but not in the sense of a certain 'interiorism' and 'historicism', with which some try to weaken and slight the universal value of the moral norms. (Pius XII. *Christmas message to the faithful*, December 22, 1957)

JOHN XXIII

Only the moral order has the solution of problems relating to man's life as an individual and as a member of society, and problems concerning individual states and their inter-relations

The result is a vast expenditure of human energy and natural resources on projects which are disruptive of human society rather than beneficial to it; while a growing uneasiness gnaws at men's hearts and makes them less responsive to the call of nobler enterprises. The root cause of so much mistrust is the presence of ideological differences between nations, and more especially between their rulers. There are some indeed who go so far as to deny the existence of a moral order which is transcendent, absolute, universal and equally binding upon all. And where the same law of justice is not adhered to by all, men cannot hope to come to open and full agreement on vital issues. [...] Mutual trust among rulers of States cannot begin nor increase except by recognition of, and respect for, the moral order. But the moral order has no existence except in God; cut off from God it must necessarily disintegrate. Moreover, man is not just a material organism. He consists also of spirit; he is endowed with reason and freedom. He demands, therefore, a moral and religious order; and it is this order – and not considerations of a purely extraneous, material order – which has the greatest validity in the solution of problems relating to his life as an individual and as a member of

society, and problems concerning individual states and their inter-relations. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 204-205, 207-208, May 15, 1961)

The disunity among individuals and among nations, which contrasts to the perfect order in the universe, are the consequence of a moral crisis, of the abandon of the immutable laws inscribed by God in man's nature

And yet there is a disunity among individuals and among nations which is in striking contrast to this perfect order in the universe. One would think that the relationships that bind men together could only be governed by force. But the world's Creator has stamped man's inmost being with an order revealed to man by his conscience; and his conscience insists on his preserving it. Men 'show the work of the law written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness to them' (Rom 2:15). And how could it be otherwise? All created being reflects the infinite wisdom of God. It reflects it all the more clearly, the higher it stands in the scale of perfection (cf. Ps 18:8-11). But the mischief is often caused by erroneous opinions. Many people think that the laws which govern man's relations with the State are the same as those which regulate the blind, elemental forces of the universe. But it is not so; the laws which govern men are quite different. The Father of the universe has inscribed them in man's nature, and that is where we must look for them; there and nowhere else. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Pacem en terris*, no. 4-6, April 11, 1963)

Human society must be considered as being primarily a spiritual reality – and not a naturalistic one, whose spiritual values should exert a guiding influence on the relations between humans in all spheres

And so, dearest sons and brothers, we must think of human society as being primarily a spiritual reality. By its means enlightened men can share their knowledge of the truth, can claim their rights and fulfill their duties, receive encouragement in their aspirations for the goods of the spirit, share their enjoyment of all the wholesome pleasures of the world, and

strive continually to pass on to others all that is best in themselves and to make their own the spiritual riches of others. **It is these spiritual values which exert a guiding influence on culture, economics, social institutions, political movements and forms, laws, and all the other components which go to make up the external community of men and its continual development.** Now the order which prevails in human society is wholly incorporeal in nature. Its foundation is truth, and it must be brought into effect by justice. It needs to be animated and perfected by men's love for one another, and, while preserving freedom intact, it must make for an equilibrium in society which is increasingly more human in character. But such an order – universal, absolute and immutable in its principles – finds its source in the true, personal and transcendent God. **He is the first truth, the sovereign good, and as such the deepest source from which human society, if it is to be properly constituted, creative, and worthy of man's dignity, draws its genuine vitality.** This is what Saint Thomas means when he says: 'Human reason is the standard which measures the degree of goodness of the human will, and as such it derives from the eternal law, which is divine reason . . . Hence it is clear that **the goodness of the human will depends much more on the eternal law than on human reason.**' (John XXIII. *Encyclical Pacem in terris*, no. 36-38, April 11, 1963)

Men must conduct themselves in conformity with the precepts of the moral order, obeying the providential designs of God regarding salvation, integrating the principal spiritual values with those of science, technology and the professions

And yet even this must be reckoned insufficient to bring the relationships of daily life into conformity with a more human standard, based, as it must be, on truth, tempered by justice, motivated by mutual love, and holding fast to the practice of freedom. If these policies are really to become operative, **men must first of all take the utmost care to conduct their various temporal activities in accordance with the laws which govern each and every such activity, observing the principles which correspond to their respective natures.** Secondly, men's actions must be made to conform with the precepts of the moral order.

This means that their behavior must be such as to reflect their consciousness of exercising a personal right or performing a personal duty. Reason has a further demand to make. **In obedience to the providential designs and commands of God respecting our salvation and neglecting the dictates of conscience, men must conduct themselves in their temporal activity in such a way as to effect a thorough integration of the principal spiritual values with those of science, technology and the professions.** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Pacem in terris*, no. 149-150, April 11, 1963)

B) The root of the environmental crisis is moral

JOHN XXIII

The frequent divorce between faith and practice in Christians – the root of the present crisis

In traditionally Christian States at the present time, civil institutions evince a high degree of scientific and technical progress and possess abundant machinery for the attainment of every kind of objective. And yet it must be owned that **these institutions are often but slightly affected by Christian motives and a Christian spirit.** One may well ask the reason for this, since the men who have largely contributed – and who are still contributing – to the creation of these institutions are men who are professed Christians, and who live their lives, at least in part, in accordance with the precepts of the gospels. **In Our opinion the explanation lies in a certain cleavage between faith and practice. Their inner, spiritual unity must be restored,** so that faith may be the light and love the motivating force of all their actions. We consider too that a further reason for **this very frequent divorce between faith and practice in Christians is an inadequate education in Christian teaching and Christian morality.** In many places the amount of energy devoted to the study of secular subjects is all too often out of proportion to that devoted to the study of religion. Scientific training reaches a very high level, whereas religious training generally does not advance beyond the elementary stage. **It is essential, therefore, that the instruction given to our young people be complete and continuous, and imparted in such a way**

that moral goodness and the cultivation of religious values may keep pace with scientific knowledge and continually advancing technical progress. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Pacem in terris*, no. 151-153, April 11, 1963)

JOHN PAUL II

A moral question: the environmental problem results from unheeding the Creator's will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble 'master' and 'guardian'

This state of menace for man from what he produces shows itself in various directions and various degrees of intensity. We seem to be increasingly aware of the fact that the exploitation of the earth, the planet on which we are living, demands rational and honest planning. At the same time, exploitation of the earth not only for industrial but also for military purposes and the uncontrolled development of technology outside the framework of a long-range authentically humanistic plan often bring with them a threat to man's natural environment, alienate him in his relations with nature and remove him from nature. [...] Yet it was the Creator's will that man should communicate with nature as an intelligent and noble 'master' and 'guardian', and not as a heedless 'exploiter' and 'destroyer'. The development of technology and the development of contemporary civilization, which is marked by the ascendancy of technology, demand a proportional development of morals and ethics. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptor hominis*, no. 15, March 4, 1979)

The true nature of the evil which faces us with respect to the development of peoples: it is a question of a moral evil, the fruit of many sins which lead to 'structures of sin'

I have wished to introduce this type of analysis above all in order to point out the true nature of the evil which faces us with respect to the development of peoples: it is a question of a moral evil, the fruit of many sins which lead to 'structures of sin' To diagnose the evil in this way is to identify precisely, on the level of human

conduct, the path to be followed in order to overcome it. This path is long and complex, and what is more it is constantly threatened because of the intrinsic frailty of human resolutions and achievements, and because of the mutability of very unpredictable and external circumstances. Nevertheless, one must have the courage to set out on this path, and, where some steps have been taken or a part of the journey made, the courage to go on to the end. In the context of these reflections, the decision to set out or to continue the journey involves, above all, a moral value which men and women of faith recognize as a demand of God's will, the only true foundation of an absolutely binding ethic. One would hope that also men and women without an explicit faith would be convinced that the obstacles to integral development are not only economic but rest on more profound attitudes which human beings can make into absolute values. Thus one would hope that all those who, to some degree or other, are responsible for ensuring a 'more human life' for their fellow human beings, whether or not they are inspired by a religious faith, will become fully aware of the urgent need to change the spiritual attitudes which define each individual's relationship with self, with neighbor, with even the remotest human communities, and with nature itself; and all of this in view of higher values such as the common good or, to quote the felicitous expression of the Encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, the full development 'of the whole individual and of all people.' For Christians, as for all who recognize the precise theological meaning of the word 'sin,' a change of behavior or mentality or mode of existence is called 'conversion,' to use the language of the Bible (cf. Mk 13:3, 5, Is 30:15). This conversion specifically entails a relationship to God, to the sin committed, to its consequences and hence to one's neighbor, either an individual or a community. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Sollicitudo rei socialis*, no. 37-38, December 30, 1987)

Fragments of the Centesimus annus omitted in the Laudato Si': the root of the ecological problem is the loss of the sense of God the Creator, whereby man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth

Equally worrying is the ecological question [...] In his desire to have and to enjoy rather

than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way. [...] Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. [...] In all this, one notes first the poverty or narrowness of man's outlook, motivated as he is by a desire to possess things rather than to relate them to the truth, and lacking that disinterested, unselfish and aesthetic attitude that is born of wonder in the presence of being and of the beauty which enables one to see in visible things the message of the invisible God who created them. In this regard, humanity today must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future generations. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 37, May 1, 1991)

BENEDICT XVI

Human beings interpret and shape the natural environment through culture, which in turn is given direction by the responsible use of freedom, in accordance with the dictates of the moral law

Today much harm is done to development precisely as a result of these distorted notions. Reducing nature merely to a collection of contingent data ends up doing violence to the environment and even encouraging activity that fails to respect human nature itself. **Our nature, constituted not only by matter but also by**

spirit, and as such, endowed with transcendent meaning and aspirations, is also normative for culture. Human beings interpret and shape the natural environment through culture, which in turn is given direction by the responsible use of freedom, in accordance with the dictates of the moral law. Consequently, projects for integral human development cannot ignore coming generations, but need to be marked by solidarity and inter-generational justice, while taking into account a variety of contexts: ecological, juridical, economic, political and cultural. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 48, June 29, 2009)

Fragments of Caritas in Veritate omitted in the citations of Laudato Si': The ecological system is based not only on a good relationship with nature, but also on respect for a plan that affects the health of society – the decisive issue is the overall moral tenor of society

The Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. [...] **Just as human virtues are interrelated, such that the weakening of one places others at risk, so the ecological system is based on respect for a plan that affects both the health of society and its good relationship with nature. In order to protect nature, it is not enough to intervene with economic incentives or deterrents; not even an apposite education is sufficient. These are important steps, but the decisive issue is the overall moral tenor of society.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 51, June 29, 2009)

FRANCIS

An integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, which calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order. The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures; all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God.

An integral ecology is inseparable from the notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics. The common good is 'the sum of those conditions of social life which allow social groups and their individual members relatively thorough and ready access to their own fulfillment' (GS, 26). (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no.156)

Underlying the principle of the common good is respect for the human person as such, endowed with basic and inalienable rights ordered to his or her integral development. It has also to do with the overall welfare of society and the development of a variety of intermediate groups, applying the principle of subsidiarity. Outstanding among those groups is the family, as the basic cell of society. Finally, **the common good calls for social peace, the stability and security provided by a certain order** which cannot be achieved without particular concern for distributive justice; whenever this is violated, violence always ensues. Society as a whole, and the state in particular, are obliged to defend and promote the common good. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 157)

The ultimate destiny of the universe is in the fullness of God, which has already been attained by the risen Christ, the measure of the maturity of all things (note 53: **Against this horizon we can set the contribution of Fr. Teilhard de Chardin**). Here we can add yet another argument for rejecting every tyrannical and irresponsible domination of human beings over other creatures. The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, **all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things**. Human beings, endowed with intelligence and love, and drawn by the fullness of Christ, are called to lead all creatures back to their Creator. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 83)

TEACHING OF THE MAGISTERIUM

C) **The solution for the world crisis is found in a society based on the religious principles of Christian morals**

Further elements of Centesimus annus 'forgotten' in the citations of Laudato Si': An 'integral ecology' presents an idea of the family that contrasts with the Catholic ideal, which is founded on marriage, cradle of the moral formation of man

JOHN PAUL II

More parts of the Centesimus annus 'forgotten' in the citations of Laudato Si': More than preserving the natural habitats of threatened species, greater effort must be made to safeguard the moral conditions of mankind

In addition to the irrational destruction of the natural environment, we must also mention the more serious destruction of the human environment, something which is by no means receiving the attention it deserves. **Although people are rightly worried – though much less than they should be about preserving the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction**, because they realize that each of these species makes its particular contribution to the balance of nature in general, **too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic 'human ecology'**. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 38, May 1, 1991)

The first and fundamental structure for 'human ecology' is the family, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the family founded on marriage, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny. But it often happens that people are discouraged from creating the proper conditions for human reproduction and are led to consider themselves and their lives as a series of sensations to be experienced rather than as a work to be accomplished. The result is a lack of freedom, which causes a person to reject a commitment to enter into a stable relationship with another person and to bring children into the world, or which leads people to consider children as one of the many 'things' which an individual can

have or not have, according to taste, and which compete with other possibilities. **It is necessary to go back to seeing the family as the sanctuary of life.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 39, May 1, 1991)

The ecological question finds in the Bible clear and strong ethical direction, leading to a solution that respects the great good of life

To defend and promote life, to show reverence and love for it, is a task which God entrusts to every man, calling him as his living image to share in his own lordship over the world: ‘God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’ (Gen 1:28). **The biblical text clearly shows the breadth and depth of the lordship which God bestows on man. It is a matter first of all of dominion over the earth and over every living creature, as the Book of Wisdom makes clear:** ‘O God of my fathers and Lord of mercy ... by your wisdom you have formed man, to have dominion over the creatures you have made, and rule the world in holiness and righteousness’ (Wis 9:1, 2-3). **The Psalmist too extols the dominion given to man as a sign of glory and honour from his Creator:** ‘You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea’ (Ps 8:6-8). As one called to till and look after the garden of the world (cf. Gen 2:15), **man has a specific responsibility towards the environment in which he lives, towards the creation which God has put at the service of his personal dignity, of his life, not only for the present but also for future generations. It is the ecological question – ranging from the preservation of the natural habitats of the different species of animals and of other forms of life to ‘human ecology’ properly speaking – which finds in the Bible clear and strong ethical direction, leading to a solution which respects the great good of life, of every life.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Evangelium vitae*, no. 42, March 25, 1995)

BENEDICT XVI

If the relationship between human creatures and the Creator is forgotten, matter is reduced to a selfish possession; man becomes the ‘last word’

The Earth is indeed a precious gift of the Creator who, in designing its intrinsic order, has given us bearings that guide us as stewards of his creation. **Precisely from within this framework, the Church considers matters concerning the environment and its protection intimately linked to the theme of integral human development.** In my recent Encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, I referred more than once to such questions, recalling the ‘**pressing moral need for renewed solidarity**’ (no. 49) not only between countries but also between individuals, since the natural environment is given by God to everyone, and our use of it entails a personal responsibility towards humanity as a whole, and in particular towards the poor and towards future generations (cf. no. 48). Bearing in mind our common responsibility for creation (cf. no. 51), **the Church is not only committed to promoting the protection of land, water and air as gifts of the Creator destined to everyone but above all she invites others and works herself to protect mankind from self-destruction.** In fact, ‘when ‘**human ecology**’ is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits’ (ibid.). Is it not true that an irresponsible use of creation begins precisely where God is marginalized or even denied? **If the relationship between human creatures and the Creator is forgotten, matter is reduced to a selfish possession, man becomes the ‘last word’, and the purpose of human existence is reduced to a scramble for the maximum number of possessions possible.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, August 26, 2009)

There is a need to safeguard the human patrimony of society that originates in and is part of the natural moral law, which is the foundation of respect for the human person and creation

The Church has a responsibility towards creation, and she considers it her duty to exercise that responsibility in public life, in order to protect earth, water and air as gifts of God the Creator meant for everyone, and above all to save mankind from the danger of

self-destruction. The degradation of nature is closely linked to the cultural models shaping human coexistence: consequently, 'when 'human ecology' is respected within society, environmental ecology also benefits' (*Caritas in Veritate*, 51). **Young people cannot be asked to respect the environment if they are not helped, within families and society as a whole, to respect themselves. The book of nature is one and indivisible; it includes not only the environment but also individual, family and social ethics (cf. *ibid.*, 15, 51).** Our duties towards the environment flow from our duties towards the person, considered both individually and in relation to others. Hence I readily encourage efforts to promote a greater sense of ecological responsibility which, as I indicated in my Encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, would safeguard an authentic 'human ecology' and thus forcefully reaffirm the inviolability of human life at every stage and in every condition, the dignity of the person and the unique mission of the family, where one is trained in love of neighbour and respect for nature (cf. *ibid.*, 28, 51, 61; John Paul II. *Centesimus Annus*, 38-39). **There is a need to safeguard the human patrimony of society. This patrimony of values originates in and is part of the natural moral law, which is the foundation of respect for the human person and creation.** (Benedict XVI. *Message for the 43rd World Day of Peace*, no. 12, January 1, 2010)

Prerequisite for saving the ecology: saving our spiritual ozone layer and especially saving our spiritual rainforests – a real conversion, as faith understands it, toward the will of God

We have acknowledged the problem of environmental destruction. However, **the fact that saving our spiritual ozone layer and especially saving our spiritual rainforests is the prerequisite for saving the ecology seems to penetrate our consciousness only very slowly.** Shouldn't we have asked long ago: What about the contamination of our thinking, the pollution of our souls? Many things that we permit in this media and commerce driven society are basically the equivalent of a toxic load that almost inevitably must lead to a spiritual poisoning. There is no overlooking the fact that there is a poisoning of thought, which in advance leads us into false perspectives. To

free ourselves again from it by means of a real conversion – to use that fundamental word of the Christian faith – is one of the challenges that by now are becoming obvious to everyone. In our modern world, which is so scientifically oriented, such concepts no longer had any meaning. A conversion, as faith understands it, toward the will of God who shows us a way was considered old-fashioned and outmoded. I believe, though, that gradually it is becoming evident that there is something to it when we say that we must reconsider all this. (Benedict XVI. *Light of the World. A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, p. 26)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Use of the natural resources cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives. Some parts of the Catechism not cited in *Laudato Si'*

The seventh commandment enjoins respect for the integrity of creation. Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity (cf. Gen 128-31). **Use of the mineral, vegetable, and animal resources of the universe cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives.** Man's dominion over inanimate and other living beings granted by the Creator is not absolute; it is limited by concern for the quality of life of his neighbor, **including generations to come; it requires a religious respect for the integrity of creation.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2415)

CELAM – DOCUMENT OF APARECIDA

The best way to respect nature is to promote a human ecology open to transcendence to recapitulate all things in Christ and praise the Father with Him

The best way to respect nature is to promote a human ecology open to transcendence, which, while respecting the person and the family, environments and cities, follows Paul's urging to recapitulate all things in Christ and praise the Father with Him (cf. 1Cor 3:21-23). (Fifth Conference of the Episcopate of Latin America and the Caribbean, Aparecida Document, no. 126, June 29, 2007)

JOHN PAUL II

True conversion fosters a new life, in which there is no separation between faith and works in our daily response to the universal call to holiness

In speaking of conversion, the New Testament uses the word *metanoia*, which means a change of mentality. It is not simply a matter of thinking differently in an intellectual sense, but of revising the reasons behind one's actions in the light of the Gospel. In this regard, Saint Paul speaks of 'faith working through love' (Gal 5:6). This means that true conversion needs to be prepared and nurtured through the prayerful reading of Sacred Scripture and the practice of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. Conversion leads to fraternal communion, because it enables us to understand that Christ is the head of the Church, his Mystical Body; it urges solidarity,

because it makes us aware that whatever we do for others, especially for the poorest, we do for Christ himself. Conversion, therefore, fosters a new life, in which there is no separation between faith and works in our daily response to the universal call to holiness. In order to speak of conversion, the gap between faith and life must be bridged. Where this gap exists, Christians are such only in name. To be true disciples of the Lord, believers must bear witness to their faith, and 'witnesses testify not only with words, but also with their lives'. We must keep in mind the words of Jesus: 'Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord!' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven' (Mt 7:21). Openness to the Father's will supposes a total self-giving, including even the gift of one's life: 'The greatest witness is martyrdom' (*Propositio* 30). (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in America*, no. 26, January 22, 1999)

III – AN ECOLOGY OF A SPIRITUAL AND IRENIC CHARACTER OPENS THE DOORS TOWARD A DISTORTION OF THE CATHOLIC RELIGION, THAT MUST NOT – UNDER THE PRETEXT OF SAVING HUMANITY AND DIALOGUING WITH EVERYBODY, CATHOLICS AND NON CATHOLICS – ADAPT TO WAYS OF THINKING WHICH CONSTITUTE DOCTRINES TRULY CONTRARY TO IMMUTABLE TEACHINGS

FRANCIS

Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age, but we do need to slow down and look at reality in a different way. returning to the sources of their ethical and spiritual treasures, religions will be better equipped to respond to today's needs; spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature; An open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning.

All of this shows the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution. Science and technology are not neutral; from the beginning to the end of a process, various intentions and possibilities are in play and can take on distinct shapes. Nobody is suggesting a return to the Stone Age, but we do need to slow down and look at reality in a different way, to appropriate the positive and sustainable progress which has been made, but also to recover the values and the great goals swept away by our unrestrained delusions of grandeur. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 114)

We need to develop a new synthesis capable of overcoming the false arguments of recent centuries. Christianity, in fidelity to its own identity and the rich deposit of truth which it has received from Jesus Christ, continues to reflect on these issues in fruitful dialogue with changing historical situations. In doing so, it reveals its

eternal newness. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 121)

Any technical solution which science claims to offer will be powerless to solve the serious problems of our world if humanity loses its compass, if we lose sight of the great motivations which make it possible for us to live in harmony, to make sacrifices and to treat others well. Believers themselves must constantly feel challenged to live in a way consonant with their faith and not to contradict it by their actions. They need to be encouraged to be ever open to God's grace and to draw constantly from their deepest convictions about love, justice and peace. If a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us to justify mistreating nature, to exercise tyranny over creation, to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence, we believers should acknowledge that by so doing we were not faithful to the treasures of wisdom which we have been called to protect and preserve. **Cultural limitations in different eras often affected the perception of these ethical and spiritual treasures, yet by constantly returning to their sources, religions will be better equipped to respond to today's needs.** (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 200)

The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity. Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge. This prevents us from confronting environmental problems effectively. **An open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements, among which ideological conflicts are not infrequently encountered.** The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that 'realities are greater than ideas' (*Evangelii Gaudium*). (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 201)

Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centered on scientific information, consciousness-raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the 'myths' of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market). It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. **Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning.** (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 210)

I propose that we offer prayers that we can share with all who believe in a God who is the all-powerful Creator

At the conclusion of this lengthy reflection which has been both joyful and troubling, I propose that we offer two prayers. The first we can share with all who believe in a God who is the all-powerful Creator, while in the other we Christians ask for inspiration to take up the commitment to creation set before us by the Gospel of Jesus.

A prayer for our earth

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures. You embrace with your tenderness all that exists. Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty. Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one. O God of the poor, help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth, so precious in your eyes. Bring healing to our lives, that we may protect the world and not prey on it, that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction. Touch the hearts of those who look only for gain at the expense of the poor and the earth. **Teach us to discover the worth of each thing, to be filled with awe and contemplation, to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature as we journey towards your infinite light.** We thank you for being with us each day. Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 246)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

A) Dialogue and drawing closer, without transgressing the truth and the faith

Jesus Christ because He is our Mediator, and it is through Him alone that we can approach the throne of God. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, Prayer, no. 6-9)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

We should beg graces of God in the Name of Jesus Christ because He is our Mediator, and it is through Him alone that we can approach the throne of God

What is public prayer?

Public prayer is that said by the Sacred Ministers in the name of the Church and for the salvation of the faithful. That prayer also which is said in common and publicly by the faithful, in processions, pilgrimages and in God's house, may also be called public prayer.

Have we a well founded hope of obtaining by means of prayer the helps and graces of which we stand in need?

The hope of obtaining from God the graces of which we stand in need is founded on the promises of the omnipotent, merciful and all-faithful God, and on the merits of Jesus Christ.

In whose name should we ask of God the graces we stand in need of?

We should ask of God the graces we stand in need of in the Name of Jesus Christ, as He Himself has taught us and as is done by the Church, which always ends her prayers with these words: **Through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Why should we beg graces of God in the Name of Jesus Christ?

We should beg graces of God in the Name of

JOHN PAUL II

True ecumenical activity in no way means giving up or diminishing the treasures of divine truth, constantly confessed and taught by the Church

True ecumenical activity means openness, drawing closer, availability for dialogue, and a shared investigation of the truth in the full evangelical and Christian sense; but **in no way does it or can it mean giving up or in any way diminishing the treasures of divine truth that the Church has constantly confessed and taught.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptor hominis*, no. 6, March 4, 1979)

PAUL VI

The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth: our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith

But the danger remains. Indeed, the worker in the apostolate is under constant fire. **The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth. Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith.** Our apostolate must not make vague compromises concerning the principles which regulate and govern the profession of the Christian faith both in theory

and in practice. An immoderate desire to make peace and sink differences at all costs (irenism and syncretism) is ultimately nothing more than skepticism about the power and content of the Word of God which we desire to preach. **The effective apostle is the man who is completely faithful to Christ's teaching. He alone can remain unaffected by the errors of the world around him, the man who lives his Christian life to the full.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 88, August 6, 1964)

PIUS IX

A very grave error: to believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life

And here, beloved Sons and Venerable Brothers, We should mention again and censure a very grave error in which some Catholics are unhappily engaged, who believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life. Indeed, this is certainly quite contrary to Catholic teaching. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2865. Pius IX, *Encyclical Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863)

Errors condemned by the Syllabus

Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which he, led by the light of reason, thinks to be the true religion (8, 26)

In the worship of any religion whatever, men can find the way to eternal salvation, and can attain eternal salvation (1, 3, 17).

The Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile and adapt himself to progress, liberalism, and the modern civilization (24). (Denzinger-Hünemann 2915-2916.2980. Pius IX, *Syllabus: Comprising the particular errors of our age*, December 8, 1864)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Jesus openly entrusts to his disciples the mystery of prayer to the Father: 'ask in his name'

When Jesus openly entrusts to his disciples the mystery of prayer to the Father, he reveals

to them what their prayer and ours must be, once he has returned to the Father in his glorified humanity. What is new is to 'ask in his name' (Jn 14:13). Faith in the Son introduces the disciples into the knowledge of the Father, because Jesus is 'the way, and the truth, and the life' (Jn 14:6). Faith bears its fruit in love: it means keeping the word and the commandments of Jesus, it means abiding with him in the Father who, in him, so loves us that he abides with us. In this new covenant the certitude that our petitions will be heard is founded on the prayer of Jesus (Cf. Jn 14:13-14). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2614)

JOHN XXIII

In relations with non-Catholics, Catholics bear themselves as Catholics, and must do nothing to compromise religion and morality

The principles We have set out in this document take their rise from the very nature of things. They derive, for the most part, from the consideration of man's natural rights. **Thus the putting of these principles into effect frequently involves extensive co-operation between Catholics and those Christians who are separated from this Apostolic See.** It even involves the cooperation of Catholics with men who may not be Christians but who nevertheless are reasonable men, and men of natural moral integrity. **'In such circumstances they must, of course, bear themselves as Catholics, and do nothing to compromise religion and morality.** Yet at the same time they should show themselves animated by a spirit of understanding and unselfishness, ready to co-operate loyally in achieving objects which are good in themselves, or conducive to good' (*Mater et Magistra*). It is always perfectly justifiable to distinguish between error as such and the person who falls into error – even in the case of men who err regarding the truth or are led astray as a result of their inadequate knowledge, in matters either of religion or of the highest ethical standards. A man who has fallen into error does not cease to be a man. He never forfeits his personal dignity; and that is something that must always be taken into account. Besides, there exists in man's very nature an undying capacity to break through the barriers of error and seek the road to truth. God, in His great providence, is ever present with His

aid. Today, maybe, a man lacks faith and turns aside into error; tomorrow, perhaps, illumined by God's light, he may indeed embrace the truth. Catholics who, in order to achieve some external good, collaborate with unbelievers or with those who through error lack the fullness of faith in Christ, may possibly provide the occasion or even the incentive for their conversion to the truth. **Again it is perfectly legitimate to make a clear distinction between a false philosophy of the nature, origin and purpose of men and**

the world, and economic, social, cultural, and political undertakings, even when such undertakings draw their origin and inspiration from that philosophy. True, the philosophic formula does not change once it has been set down in precise terms, but the undertakings clearly cannot avoid being influenced to a certain extent by the changing conditions in which they have to operate. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Pacem in terris*, no. 157-159, April 11, 1963)

FRANCIS

The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal. It is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions: For them, land is a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. They themselves care for it best.

Many intensive forms of environmental exploitation and degradation not only exhaust the resources which provide local communities with their livelihood, but also undo the social structures which, for a long time, shaped cultural identity and their sense of the meaning of life and community. **The disappearance of a culture can be just as serious, or even more serious, than the disappearance of a species of plant or animal. The imposition of a dominant lifestyle linked to a single form of production can be just as harmful as the altering of ecosystems.** (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 145)

In this sense, it is essential to show special care for indigenous communities and their cultural traditions. They are not merely one minority among others, but should be the principal dialogue partners, especially when large projects affecting their land are proposed. For them, land is not a commodity but rather a gift from God and from their ancestors who rest there, a sacred space with which they need to interact if they are to maintain their identity and values. When they remain on their land, **they themselves care for it best.** Nevertheless, in various parts of the world, pressure is being put on them to abandon their homelands to make room for agricultural or mining projects which are undertaken without regard for the degradation of nature and culture. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 146)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

B) Authentic respect for nature and human beings will only exist within an authentically Catholic society

with heavenly wisdom, with effective remedies for the increasing needs of men, and the sorrows and anxieties of this present life

JOHN XXIII

Our concern is with the doctrine of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, whose light illumines, enkindles and enflames. Every age hears her warning voice, vibrant

This era in which we live is in the grip of deadly errors; it is torn by deep disorders. But it is also an era which offers to those who work with the Church immense possibilities in the field of the apostolate. And therein lies our hope. Venerable Brethren and dear sons, We

began with that wonderful Encyclical of Pope Leo, and passed in review before you the various problems of our modern social life. We have given principles and directives which We exhort you earnestly to think over, and now, for your part, to put into effect. **Your courageous co-operation in this respect will surely help to bring about the realization of Christ's Kingdom in this world, 'a kingdom of truth and life; a kingdom of holiness and grace; a kingdom of justice, of love and of peace'** (The Preface of the feast of *Christ the King*), which assures the enjoyment of those heavenly blessings for which we were created and for which we long most ardently. **For here Our concern is with the doctrine of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. She is the Mother and Teacher of all nations. Her light illumines, enkindles and enflames. No age but hears her warning voice, vibrant with heavenly wisdom. She is ever powerful to offer suitable, effective remedies for the increasing needs of men, and the sorrows and anxieties of this present life.** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 260-262, May 15, 1961)

BENEDICT XVI

Goodwill alone is not enough... Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is. The strength to fight and suffer for the common good comes from the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ: 'Apart from me you can do nothing'

Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is. In the face of the enormous problems surrounding the development of peoples, which almost make us yield to discouragement, we find solace in the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches us: 'Apart from me you can do nothing' (Jn 15:5) and then encourages us: 'I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Mt 28:20). As we contemplate the vast amount of work to be done, we are sustained by our faith that God is present alongside those who come together in his name to work for justice. Paul VI recalled in *Populorum progressio* that **man cannot bring about his own progress unaided**, because by himself he cannot establish an authentic humanism. Only if we are aware of our calling, as individuals and as a community, to be part of God's family as his sons and daughters, will we be able to generate a new vision and

muster new energy in the service of a truly integral humanism. **The greatest service to development, then, is a Christian humanism (*Populorum progressio*) that enkindles charity and takes its lead from truth, accepting both as a lasting gift from God.** Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity. **On the other hand, ideological rejection of God and an atheism of indifference, oblivious to the Creator and at risk of becoming equally oblivious to human values, constitute some of the chief obstacles to development today.** A humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism. **Only a humanism open to the Absolute can guide us in the promotion and building of forms of social and civic life – structures, institutions, culture and ethos – without exposing us to the risk of becoming ensnared by the fashions of the moment.** Awareness of God's undying love sustains us in our laborious and stimulating work for justice and the development of peoples, amid successes and failures, in the ceaseless pursuit of a just ordering of human affairs. God's love calls us to move beyond the limited and the ephemeral, it gives us the courage to continue seeking and working for the benefit of all, even if this cannot be achieved immediately and if what we are able to achieve, alongside political authorities and those working in the field of economics, is always less than we might wish (*Spe salvi*, 35). **God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because he is our All, our greatest hope.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 78, June 29, 2009)

It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God

By responding to this charge, entrusted to them by the Creator, men and women can join in bringing about a world of peace. **Alongside the ecology of nature, there exists what can be called a 'human' ecology, which in turn demands a 'social' ecology.** All this means that humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa. **It becomes more**

and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the 40th World Day of Peace*, no. 8, January 1, 2007)

Without a transcendent foundation founded on moral values – which are Christian values – society is a mere aggregation of neighbors, not a community of brothers and sisters called to form one great family

The social community, if it is to live in peace, is also called to draw inspiration from the values on which the family community is based. **This is as true for local communities as it is for national communities; it is also true for the international community itself, for the human family which dwells in that common house which is the earth.** Here, however, we cannot forget that the family comes into being from the responsible and definitive ‘yes’ of a man and a woman, and it continues to live from the conscious ‘yes’ of the children who gradually join it. The family community, in order to prosper, needs the generous consent of all its members. **This realization also needs to become a shared conviction on the part of all those called to form the common human family. We need to say our own ‘yes’ to this vocation which God has inscribed in our very nature.** We do not live alongside one another purely by chance; all of us are progressing along a common path as men and women, and thus as brothers and sisters. Consequently, **it is essential that we should all be committed to living our lives in an attitude of responsibility before God, acknowledging him as the deepest source of our own existence and that of others.** By going back to this supreme principle we are able to perceive the unconditional worth of each human being, and thus to lay the premises for building a humanity at peace. **Without this transcendent foundation society is a mere aggregation of neighbours, not a community of brothers and sisters called to form one great family.** (Benedict XVI. *Message for the 41st World Day of Peace*, no. 6, January 1, 2008)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The union of the human family is possible only founded on Christ, uniting

all as of the family of God’s children – the innermost nature of the Church

The union of the human family is greatly fortified and fulfilled by the unity, founded on Christ, of the family of God’s sons. Christ, to be sure, gave His Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order. The purpose which He set before her is a religious one. But out of this religious mission itself come a function, a light and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law. As a matter of fact, when circumstances of time and place produce the need, she can and indeed should initiate activities on behalf of all men, especially those designed for the needy, such as the works of mercy and similar undertakings. The Church recognizes that worthy elements are found in today’s social movements, especially an evolution toward unity, a process of wholesome socialization and of association in civic and economic realms. **The promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church, for she is, ‘thanks to her relationship with Christ, a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of the whole human race’ (cf. 1Cor 7:5).** Thus she shows the world that an authentic union, social and external, results from a union of minds and hearts, namely from that faith and charity by which her own unity is unbreakably rooted in the Holy Spirit. For the force which the Church can inject into the modern society of man consists in that faith and charity put into vital practice, not in any external dominion exercised by merely human means. Moreover, since in virtue of her mission and nature she is bound to no particular form of human culture, nor to any political, economic or social system, the Church by her very universality can be a very close bond between diverse human communities and nations, provided these trust her and truly acknowledge her right to true freedom in fulfilling her mission. For this reason, the Church admonishes her own sons, but also humanity as a whole, to overcome all strife between nations and race in this family spirit of God’s children, and in the same way, to give internal strength to human associations which are just. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 42, December 7, 1965)

FRANCIS

Outside the Catholic Church, other religions have offered valuable reflections on these issues. To accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbors on a global scale. I suggest that we now consider some elements of an 'integral ecology'. What is the purpose of our life in this world? Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan; creating an 'ecological citizenship'

Outside the Catholic Church, other Churches and Christian communities – and other religions as well – have expressed deep concern and offered valuable reflections on issues which all of us find disturbing. To give just one striking example, I would mention the statements made by the beloved Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, with whom we share the hope of full ecclesial communion. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 7)

As Christians, we are also called 'to accept the world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbors on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's creation, in the last speck of dust of our planet' (Patriarch Bartholomew 'Global Responsibility and Ecological Sustainability', Closing Remarks, Halki Summit I, Istanbul, 20 June 2012). (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 9)

In this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation. This leads us to think of the whole as open to God's transcendence, within which it develops. Faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 79)

Since everything is closely interrelated, and today's problems call for a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis, I suggest that we now consider some elements of an integral ecology, one which clearly respects its human and social dimensions. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 137)

When we ask ourselves what kind of world we want to leave behind, we think in the first place of its general direction, its meaning and its values. Unless we struggle with these deeper issues, I do not believe that our concern for ecology will produce significant results. But if these issues are courageously faced, we are led inexorably to ask other pointed questions: What is the purpose of our life in this world? Why are we here? What is the goal of our work and all our efforts? What need does the earth have of us? It is no longer enough, then, simply to state that we should be concerned for future generations. We need to see that what is at stake is our own dignity. Leaving an inhabitable planet to future generations is, first and foremost, up to us. The issue is one which dramatically affects us, for it has to do with the ultimate meaning of our earthly sojourn. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 160)

Beginning in the middle of the last century and overcoming many difficulties, there has been a growing conviction that our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home. An interdependent world not only makes us more conscious of the negative effects of certain lifestyles and models of production and consumption which affect us all; more importantly, it motivates us to ensure that solutions are proposed from a global perspective, and not simply to defend the interests of a few

countries. Interdependence obliges us to think of one world with a common plan. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no.164)

Yet this education, aimed at creating an 'ecological citizenship', is at times limited to providing information, and fails to instill good habits. The existence of laws and regulations is insufficient in the long run to curb bad conduct, even when effective means of enforcement are present. If the laws are to bring about significant, long-lasting effects, the majority of the members of society must be adequately motivated to accept them, and personally transformed to respond. (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 211)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

C) The Christian vision of the Triune God cannot be reconciled with the spiritualist mask of an ecology that appears to be open toward interreligious dialogue, but is interwoven with religious syncretism and pantheism

PIUS XII

Christian action cannot renounce its title and character to collaborate with a 'human' action that signifies agnosticism toward Religion and the true values of life, which would be equal to a request of abdication, to which a Christian cannot consent

Christian action cannot, neither today nor formerly, renounce its title and character, merely because some see in the contemporary human consortia a so-called pluralist society, divided by opposed mentalities, inalterable in their respective positions and incapable of admitting any collaboration that is not established upon the plan that is simply 'human'. If this 'human' signifies, as it seems to, agnosticism toward Religion and the true values of life, every invitation to this collaboration would be equal to a request for abdication, to which a Christian cannot consent. For the rest, from where would this 'human' obtain the strength to oblige, to found liberty of conscience for all, if not on the vigor of the order and of the divine harmony? This 'human' would end up creating a new kind of 'ghetto', but deprived of a universal character. (Pius XII. *Christmas message to the faithful*, December 22, 1957)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth

[The one, living, and true God and His distinction from all things.] The holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one, true, living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will, and in every perfection; who, although He is one, singular, altogether simple and unchangeable spiritual substance, must be proclaimed distinct in reality and essence from the world; most blessed in Himself and of Himself, and ineffably most high above all things which are or can be conceived outside Himself [can. 1-4]. (Denzinger-Hünermann 3001. Vatican Council I, *Session III, Dogmatic Constitution Dei Filius*, Ch.1, April 24, 1870)

SAINT BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO

The things of this sensible world lead one to transcend and pass-over to Christ, and the hidden Sacrament of God

In the First and Most High Principle and the Mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ, one gazes upon those things the like of which can in nowise be discovered (*reperiri*) among creatures, and which exceed every perspicacity of the human intellect: it follows, that this (mind) by gazing transcends and passes over not only this sensible world, but also its very self; in which transitus Christ is the Way and the Gate, Christ is the Stair and the Vehicle as the propitiatory located above the ark of God and the Sacrament hidden from the ages. (Saint

Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *The Journey into the Mind of the God*, VII, 1)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

Only in dialogue with God does the human being find his truth, from which he draws inspiration and norms to make plans for the future of the world

The relationship of man with the world is a constitutive part of his human identity. This relationship is in turn the result of another still deeper relationship between man and God. **The Lord has made the human person to be a partner with him in dialogue. Only in dialogue with God does the human being find his truth, from which he draws inspiration and norms to make plans for the future of the world**, which is the garden that God has given him to keep and till (cf. Gen 2: 15). Not even sin could remove this duty, although it weighed down this exalted work with pain and suffering (cf. Gen 3:17-19). (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 452)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Solutions that propose a salvific action of God beyond the unique mediation of Christ are contrary to Christian and Catholic faith

It must therefore be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith that the universal salvific will of the One and Triune God is offered and accomplished once for all in the mystery of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Bearing in mind this article of faith, theology today, in its reflection on the existence of other religious experiences and on their meaning in God's salvific plan, is invited to explore if and in what way the historical figures and positive elements of these religions may fall within the divine plan of salvation. In this undertaking, theological research has a vast field of work under the guidance of the Church's Magisterium. **The Second Vatican Council, in fact, has stated that: 'the unique mediation of the Redeemer does not exclude, but rather gives rise to a manifold cooperation which is but a participation in this one source'. The content of this participated mediation should**

be explored more deeply, but must remain always consistent with the principle of Christ's unique mediation: 'Although participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value only from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his'. Hence, those solutions that propose a salvific action of God beyond the unique mediation of Christ would be contrary to Christian and Catholic faith. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 14, August 6, 2000)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The true spirituality for all Christians in any state or walk of life called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity. All are called to holiness, in mystical union with Christ

'We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him . . . For those whom he fore knew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren and those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified' (Rom 8:28-30). **'All Christians in any state or walk of life are called to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity'** (LG 40 # 2). **All are called to holiness:** 'Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt 5:48). **In order to reach this perfection the faithful should use the strength dealt out to them by Christ's gift, so that... doing the will of the Father in everything, they may wholeheartedly devote themselves to the glory of God and to the service of their neighbor.** Thus the holiness of the People of God will grow in fruitful abundance, as is clearly shown in the history of the Church through the lives of so many saints (LG 40, no. 2). Spiritual progress tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ. **This union is called 'mystical' because it participates in the mystery of Christ through the sacraments – 'the holy mysteries' – and, in him, in the mystery of the Holy Trinity.** God calls us all to this intimate union with him, even if the special graces or extraordinary signs of this mystical life are granted only to some for the sake of manifesting the gratuitous gift given

to all. **The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle** (Cf. 2Tim 4). **Spiritual progress entails the ascesis and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes:** He who climbs never stops going from beginning to beginning, through beginnings that have no end. He never stops desiring what he already knows (Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. in Cant.* 8). **The children of our holy mother the Church rightly hope for the grace of final perseverance and the recompense of God their Father for the good works accomplished with his grace in communion with Jesus** (cf. Council of Trent). Keeping the same rule of life, believers share the 'blessed hope' of those whom the divine mercy gathers into the 'holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband' (Rev 21:2). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2012-2016)

PIUS XII

The perfection and the order of the world of some sort of immanent process, which is a return to the old superstition that deified nature; but is a vital happening of the same history as the divine Word – the form of this world passes and its final destiny to the glory of the Father and the triumph of the Word

Therefore, it is useless to await the perfection and the order of the world of some sort of immanent process, in which man would be merely a spectator, according to what some have affirmed. This **obscure immanentism is a return to the old superstition that deified nature;** and cannot be based, as some wish, on history without **artificially falsifies the explication of the facts. The history of humanity in the world is very different than that of a process of blind forces;** it is an admirable and vital happening of the same history as the divine Word, that had its beginning in Him and will be fulfilled by Him, on the day of the universal return to the first principle, when the Incarnate Word will offer to the Father, as testimony of his glory, his property redeemed and illuminated by the Spirit of God. Therefore, many facts, especially those of history, that seem now as disharmonies, will be revealed as elements of authentic harmony: as, for

example, the continuous ensuing of new things, while the old things disappear, because one and the other participate or will participate in some way in the truth and divine goodness. The passing nature of something or of a happening does not take from them, when they possess it, the dignity of expressing the divine Spirit. The entire world, as well, is like this, **as the Apostle adverted: 'For the form of this world is passing away'** (1Cor 7:31) **but its final destiny to the glory of the Father and the triumph of the Word,** that is in the foundation of all process, conferred it and conserved in the world the dignity of the testimony and instrument of the truth, goodness and eternal harmonies. (Pius XII. *Christmas message to the faithful*, December 22, 1957)

JOHN XXIII

There will be no peace nor justice in the world until men return to a sense of their dignity as creatures and sons of God; separated from God a man is but a monster, in himself and toward others

The most fundamental modern error is that of imagining that man's natural sense of religion is nothing more than the outcome of feeling or fantasy, to be eradicated from his soul as an anachronism and an obstacle to human progress. **And yet this very need for religion reveals a man for what he is: a being created by God and tending always toward God.** As we read in Saint Augustine: 'Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts can find no rest until they rest in you' (*Confessions* I, 1). Let men make all the technical and economic progress they can, **there will be no peace nor justice in the world until they return to a sense of their dignity as creatures and sons of God,** who is the first and final cause of all created being. **Separated from God a man is but a monster, in himself and toward others; for the right ordering of human society presupposes the right ordering of man's conscience with God, who is Himself the source of all justice, truth and love.** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 214-215, May 15, 1961)

Scientific and technical progress: goods of this kind must be valued according to

their true nature, as instruments used by man for the better attainment of his end in the natural and the supernatural order

In Our paternal care as universal Pastor of souls, We earnestly beg Our sons, immersed though they be in the business of this world, not to allow their consciences to sleep; not to lose sight of the true hierarchy of values. Certainly, the Church teaches – and has always taught – that scientific and technical progress and the resultant material well-being are good things and mark an important phase in human civilization. But the Church teaches, too, that goods of this kind must be valued according to their true nature: as instruments used by man for the better attainment of his end. They help to make him a better man, both in the natural and the supernatural order. May these warning words of the divine Master ever sound in men's ears: 'For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?' (Mt 16:26) (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 245-247, May 15, 1961)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE AND

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The growing conviction that there exists an essence of truth in the heart of every religious experience has led to the idea that they must gather elements from different religions in order to reach a universal form of religion

Today, together with Archbishop Fitzgerald, I have the honour of presenting a Document on the phenomenon, which was drafted by Rev. Peter Fleetwood, at that time an official of the Pontifical Council for Culture, and by Dr. Teresa Osório Gonçalves of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. It is the fruit, therefore, of a long and authentic collaboration between offices [of the Holy See] in order to help provide an answer, with 'gentleness and respect', as the Apostle Peter once recommended (1Pt 3,15) to this religious and cultural challenge. [...] The reasons for such a change are numerous and diverse, but they all come down to the noticeable cultural shift from traditional forms of religion to more personal and individualistic expressions of what is now being called

'spirituality'. It seems that there are three specific reasons at the heart of such a change. The first lies in the feeling that traditional religions or institutions no longer give what they once claimed they could provide. Some people in their view of the world are really unable to find any room for believing in a transcendent, personal God, and the experience for many has driven them to ask whether this God has the power to bring about change in this world, or if He really even exists at all. The dreadful experiences that have convulsed the world have made some people very cynical towards religion. [...] There is another reason to explain a certain anxiety and a certain rejection of the traditional Church. Let us not forget that in ancient Europe, pre-Christian, pagan religions were very strong, and often, unseemly conflicts took place linked to political change that have been inevitably labelled as Christian oppression of ancient religions. One of the most significant developments in what may roughly be called the 'spiritual' sphere in the last century was a return to pre-Christian forms of religion. [...] The complex series of phenomena, known by the term of 'neo-pagan' religions, reveal the need felt by some to invent new ways to 'counter-attack' Christianity and return to a more authentic form of religion, a religion more closely bound to nature and the earth. For this reason, one has to recognize that there is no place for Christianity in the neo-pagan religions. Like it or not, a struggle is taking place to win the hearts and minds of people in the interrelations between Christianity, ancient, pre-Christian religions, and their more recently developed 'cousins'. The third reason, at the origin of the rather wide-spread disillusionment with institutional religion, derives from a growing obsession in Western culture with Oriental religions and the paths of wisdom. When it became easier to travel outside of their own continent, adventurous Europeans began exploring places that they had previously known only by consulting the pages of ancient texts. The lure of the exotic put them into a closer contact with the religions and esoteric practices of various Oriental cultures from Ancient Egypt to India and Tibet. The growing conviction that there exists a deep-down truth, an essence of truth in the heart of every religious experience has led to the idea that they can and must gather the various elements from different religions in order to reach a universal form of religion.

Once again, in such an enterprise there is little room for institutionalized religions, especially for Judaism and Christianity. (Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious

Dialogue. *Presentation by Cardinal Paul Poupard of the Holy See's Document on the 'New Age'*, no. 1. 3-5, February 3, 2003)

FRANCIS

The 'Earth Charter' asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge

The Earth Charter asked us to leave behind a period of self-destruction and make a new start, but we have not as yet developed a universal awareness needed to achieve this. Here, I would echo that courageous challenge: 'As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning... Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life' (Earth Charter, The Hague, 29 June 2000). (*Encyclical Laudato si'*, no. 207)

THE 'EARTH CHARTER': A DOCUMENT WITH NOTORIOUSLY PANTHEISTIC OVERTONES, PROPOSING THE FOUNDATIONS OF A NEW GLOBAL SOCIETY, THAT SHOULD CHANGE 'VALUES, INSTITUTIONS, AND WAYS OF LIVING', IN OTHER WORDS A NEW UNIVERSAL ECOLOGICAL RELIGION IN WHICH 'THE FORCES OF NATURE MAKE EXISTENCE A DEMANDING AND UNCERTAIN ADVENTURE, BUT EARTH HAS PROVIDED THE CONDITIONS ESSENTIAL TO LIFE'S EVOLUTION.'

To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution. The salience of the community of life and the well-being of humanity depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure waters, and clean air. The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all

peoples. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust. [...] The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. [...] To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature. (Text of 'The Earth Charter', Preamble, The Hague, June 29, 2000)

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DOGMA

CHRISTOLOGY

GOD

THEOLOGY

ECCLESIOLOGY

PAPACY

ESCHATOLOGY

HEAVEN

HELL

JUDGMENT

DEATH

GRACE

MARIOLOGY

HOLY BIBLE

Clarity and doctrinal security: defects of restorationism and legalism that leads to finding nothing

On a certain occasion, Saint Thomas Aquinas revealed one of the secrets that permit us to better understand the integrity and brilliance of his intellectual work. He basically explained that he never advanced in the development of a thought or in the search for an answer, without being absolutely sure that the steps he had previously taken were founded upon unquestionable truths.

Along this line, it is easy to encounter words of praise from the Magisterium to the great Doctors of the Church for their clarity and security; characteristics which permitted the Church to expound its doctrine on firm ground, making it accessible to the faithful with facility and clarity. That is how the teachings of the Popes have been for the past two thousand years, fulfilling the prerequisite of the Savior for transmitting the good news: 'Let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No"; anything more than this comes from evil' (Mt 5:37).

The method the Church employs in presenting its disciplinary norms with clarity in order to orient the faithful along the path of salvation, is also no novelty. So, is this by chance a path that leads to finding nothing, a static and inward-directed view of things that transforms the faith into any other type of ideology? Let us briefly examine what the Church has said for the past 2000 years.

FRANCIS

If the Christian is a restorationist, a legalist, if he wants everything clear and safe, then he will find nothing. Tradition and memory of the past must help us to have the courage to open up new areas to God. **Those who today always look for disciplinarian solutions, those who long for an exaggerated doctrinal 'security,' those who stubbornly try to recover a past that no longer exists — they have a static and inward-directed view of things.** In this way, faith becomes an ideology among other ideologies (*Interview with Antonio Spadaro, August 19, 2013*)

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- ♦ Those eager for novelties present the Magisterium as a hindrance to progress

Pius X

A Modernist tactic – presenting doctrine without order and clarity

But since the Modernists (as they are commonly and rightly called) employ a very clever artifice, namely, to present their doctrines without order and systematic arrangement into one whole, scattered and disjointed one from another, so as to appear to be in doubt and uncertainty, while they are in reality firm and steadfast, it will be of advantage, Venerable Brethren, to bring their teachings together here into one group, and to point out the connexion between them, and thus to pass to an examination of the sources of the errors, and to prescribe remedies for averting the evil. (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 4, September 8, 1907)

In Modernists the passion for novelties is always united with hatred for scholasticism

They recognise that the three chief difficulties for them are scholastic philosophy, the authority of the fathers and tradition, and the magisterium of the Church, and on these they wage unrelenting war. For scholastic philosophy and theology they have only ridicule and contempt. Whether it is ignorance or fear, or both, that inspires this conduct in them, certain it is that the passion for novelty is always united in them with hatred of scholasticism, and there is no surer sign that a man is on the way to Modernism than when he begins to show his dislike for this system. (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 42, September 8, 1907)

Far, far from the clergy be the love of novelty!

Equal diligence and severity are to be used in examining and selecting candidates for Holy Orders. Far, far from the clergy be the love of novelty! God hates the proud and the obstinate. (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 49, September 8, 1907)

Pius IX

Condemned: The proposition opposed to former theological methods

[Condemned proposition:] The method and principles according to which the ancient scholastic doctors treated theology are by no means suited to the necessities of our times and to the progress of the sciences. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2913. *Pius IX*, Syllabus of the errors of our times, December 8, 1864)

Leo XIII

Homage to the doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas: Clarity and soundness of principles

Among the Scholastic Doctors, the chief and master of all towers Thomas Aquinas [...] in such a manner that in him there is wanting neither a full array of questions, nor an apt disposal of the various parts, nor the best method of proceeding, nor soundness of principles or strength of argument, nor clearness and elegance of style, nor a facility for explaining what is abstruse. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Aeterni patris*, no. 17, August 4, 1879)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The People of God should deepen their faith by means of reflection

In order to exercise the prophetic function in the world, the People of God must continually reawaken or ‘rekindle’ its own life of faith (cf. 2Tim 1:6). It does this particularly by contemplating ever more deeply, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the contents of the faith itself and by dutifully presenting the reasonableness of the faith to those who ask for an account of it (cf. 1Pet 3:15). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Donum veritatis*, no. 5, March 24, 1990)

Faith appeals to reason to penetrate more profoundly

By its nature, faith appeals to reason because it reveals to man the truth of his destiny and the way to attain it. Revealed truth, to be sure, surpasses our telling. All our concepts fall short of its ultimately unfathomable grandeur (cf. Eph 3:19). Nonetheless, revealed truth beckons reason – God’s gift fashioned for the assimilation of truth – to enter into its light and thereby come to understand in a certain measure what it has believed. Theological science responds to the invitation of truth as it seeks to understand the faith. It thereby aids the People of God in fulfilling the Apostle’s command (cf. 1Pet 3:15) to give an accounting for their hope to those who ask it. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Donum veritatis*, no. 5, March 24, 1990)

PIUS XII

Theologians should always have recourse to Tradition

It is also true that theologians must always have recourse to the sources of divine Revelation; for it is their duty to indicate how what is taught by the living magisterium is found, either explicitly or implicitly, in Sacred Scripture and in divine ‘tradition.’ In addition,

both sources of doctrine, divinely revealed, contain so many and such great treasures of truth that they are in fact never exhausted. (Denzinger-Hünermann 3886. Pius XII, *Encyclical Humani Generis*, August 12, 1950)

Abandoning traditional theological terminology constitutes the highest imprudence

Therefore, to neglect, or to reject, or to deprive so many great things of their value, which in many instances have been conceived, expressed, and perfected after long labor, by men of no ordinary genius and sanctity, under the watchful eye of the holy Magisterium, and not without the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit for the expression of the truths of faith ever more accurately, so that in their place conjectural notions may be substituted, as well as certain unstable and vague expressions of a new philosophy, which like a flower of the field exists today and will die tomorrow, not only is the highest imprudence, but also makes dogma itself as a reed shaken by the wind. Moreover, the contempt for the words and ideas which the scholastic theologians customarily use, tends to weaken so-called speculative philosophy, which they think is void of true certitude, since it rests on theological reasoning. (Denzinger-Hünermann 3883. Pius XII, *Encyclical Humani generis*, August 12, 1950)

Those eager for novelties present the Magisterium as a hindrance to progress

Surely it is lamentable that those eager for novelty easily pass from a contempt for scholastic theology to a neglect, and even a disrespect for the Magisterium of the Church, which supports that theology by its authority. For, this Magisterium is considered by them as a hindrance to progress and an obstacle to science; indeed, by certain non-Catholics it is looked upon as an unjust restraint by which some learned theologians are prevented from pursuing their science. (Denzinger-Hünermann 3884. Pius XII, *Encyclical Humani generis*, August 12, 1950)



**God is the Spirit of the world;
and each one can interpret Him in his own way**

If we analyze the concept of God in different religions we will encounter the most varied and contradictory interpretations. But for Francis, God is not Catholic, He is universal, and each one is free to conceive an idea of God as he wills.

FRANCIS

[Eugenio Scalfari]: Francis does not discuss dogmas and speaks as little as possible about them. At times he contradicts them directly. It has happened at least twice in the conversation we had and which I hope will continue. Once he said, **on his own initiative** and without me questioning him: ‘God is not Catholic’. And explained: ‘**God is the Spirit of the world. There are many readings on God, as many as the souls who think about Him, to accept him or to refute his existence, each one in his own way.** But God is above these readings and so I say that He is not catholic, but universal’. To my next question about these alarming affirmations, Pope Francis clarified: ‘We, Christians, conceive God as Christ revealed to us in his preaching. But **God belongs to everyone and each one reads Him in his own way. Due to which I say that He is not catholic because He is universal**’. (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari*, December 29, 2013)¹

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¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine should be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

Pius XI

An aberration: Considering God as a meaningless label. Our God is a Personal God.

Beware, Venerable Brethren, of that growing abuse, in speech as in writing, of the name of God as though it were a meaningless label, to be affixed to any creation, more or less arbitrary, of human speculation. Use your influence on the Faithful, that they refuse to yield to this aberration. Our God is the Personal God, supernatural, omnipotent, infinitely perfect, one in the Trinity of Persons, tri-personal in the unity of divine essence, the Creator of all existence. Lord, King and ultimate Consummator of the history of the world, who will not, and cannot, tolerate a rival God by His side. The peak of the revelation as reached in the Gospel of Christ is final and permanent. It knows no retouches by human hand; it admits no substitutes or arbitrary alternatives such as certain leaders pretend to draw from the so-called myth of race and blood. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge*, no. 9, March 14, 1937)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The differences between Christianity and the other religions cannot be minimized

For this reason, the distinction between theological faith and belief in the other religions, must be firmly held. If faith is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth, which 'makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently', then belief, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has

conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute. This distinction is not always borne in mind in current theological reflection. Thus, theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often identified with belief in other religions, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself. This is one of the reasons why the differences between Christianity and the other religions tend to be reduced at times to the point of disappearance. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 7, August 6, 2000)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Christ is the perfect Word – In Him the Father has said everything

'In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son' (Heb 1:1-2). Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. Saint John of the Cross (The Ascent of Mount Carmel 2,22,3-5), among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1-2: 'In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word – and he has no more to say... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 65)

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I would not speak about ‘absolute’ truths – truth is a relationship

‘The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is’. With these words Churchill well expressed the consistency and resilience of truth, so often unappreciated in our days, where unabashed cynical relativism, subjectivism and changing values have so often deviated humanity from He who is the Way, Truth and Life. Our confused generation questions just as Pilate did: ‘What is truth?’ (Jn 18:38). Is it a sign of the times that the Successor of Peter doesn’t wish to speak of an absolute truth?

FRANCIS

Secondly, you ask me whether it is erroneous or a sin to follow the line of thought which holds that there is no absolute, and therefore no absolute truth, but only a series of relative and subjective truths. To begin with, **I would not speak about ‘absolute’ truths, even for believers**, in the sense that absolute is that which is disconnected and bereft of all relationship. Truth, according to the Christian faith, is the love of God for us in Jesus Christ. Therefore, **truth is a relationship. As such each one of us receives the truth and expresses it from within, that is to say, according to one’s own circumstances, culture and situation in life, etc. This does not mean that truth is variable and subjective, quite the contrary. But it does signify that it comes to us always and only as a way and a life. Did not Jesus himself say: ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life?’** (*Letter to Eugenio Scalfari*, September 11, 2013)

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CATECHISM OF TRENT

If there is only one God, there is only one absolute Being

From what is said it must also be confessed that there is but one God, not many gods. For we attribute to God supreme goodness and infinite perfection, and it is impossible that what is supreme and most perfect could be common to many. If a being lack anything that constitutes supreme perfection, it is therefore imperfect and cannot have the nature of God. The unity of God is also proved from many passages of Sacred Scripture. It is written: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord; again the Lord commands: Thou shalt not have strange gods before me; and further He often admonishes us by the Prophet: I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God. **The Apostle also openly declares: One Lord, one faith, one baptism.** (Catechism of Trent, 1012)

GREGORY XVI

There is only one Faith: salvation is not obtained just anywhere

Now We consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: **indifferentism**. This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained. Surely, in so clear a matter, you will drive this deadly error far from the people committed to your care. With the admonition of the Apostle that **'there is one God, one faith, one baptism'** (Eph 4:5) may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever. They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that 'those who are not with Christ are against Him,' (Lk 11:23) and that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. Therefore 'without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate' (*Symb. s. Athan.*). Let them hear Jerome who, while the Church was torn into three parts by schism, tells us that whenever someone tried to persuade him to join his group he always

exclaimed: 'He who is for the See of Peter is for me' (epist. 57). A schismatic flatters himself falsely if he asserts that he, too, has been washed in the waters of regeneration. Indeed Augustine would reply to such a man: 'The branch has the same form when it has been cut off from the vine; but of what profit for it is the form, if it does not live from the root?' (*In ps. contra part. Donat.*) (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 13, August 15, 1832)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

There is only one true God, therefore, only one Truth

The holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one, true, living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will, and in every perfection; who, although He is one, singular, altogether simple and unchangeable spiritual substance, must be proclaimed distinct in reality and essence from the world; most blessed in Himself and of Himself, and ineffably most high above all things which are or can be conceived outside Himself (can. 1-4). (Denzinger-Hünemann 3001. Vatican Council I, *Session III, Dogmatic constitution Dei Filius*, April 24, 1870)

JOHN PAUL II

Grave consequences of doctrinal relativism – heresies have been promoted

It is essential to realistically admit, with deep and pained sentiment, that in part, Christians today feel lost, confused, perplexed and even disillusioned; ideas conflicting with the revealed and consistently taught truth have been widely spread; real heresies in dogmatic and moral fields have been promoted, creating doubts, confusions, rebellions, even the Liturgy has been manipulated; immersed in the intellectual and moral 'relativism', and consequent permissiveness, Christians are tempted toward atheism, agnosticism, vaguely moralistic illuminism, and a sociological Christianity, without defined dogmas and without objective morality. (John Paul II. Address to the First National Conference

on 'Popular Missions during the 80s', no. 2, February 6, 1981)

Errors of denying the moral implications of the existence of absolute truth

In their desire, however, to keep the moral life in a Christian context, certain moral theologians have introduced a sharp distinction, contrary to Catholic doctrine, (cf. Council of Trent, *Cum Hoc Tempore*: DS 1569-1571) between an ethical order, which would be human in origin and of value for this world alone, and an order of salvation, for which only certain intentions and interior attitudes regarding God and neighbour would be significant. **This has then led to an actual denial that there exists, in Divine Revelation, a specific and determined moral content, universally valid and permanent. The word of God would be limited to proposing an exhortation, a generic paraenesis, which the autonomous reason alone would then have the task of completing with normative directives which are truly 'objective', that is, adapted to the concrete historical situation. Naturally, an autonomy conceived in this way also involves the denial of a specific doctrinal competence on the part of the Church and her Magisterium with regard to particular moral norms which deal with the so-called 'human good'. Such norms would not be part of the proper content of Revelation, and would not in themselves be relevant for salvation. No one can fail to see that such an interpretation of the autonomy of human reason involves positions incompatible with Catholic teaching.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 37, August 6, 1993)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

One should not avoid placing emphasis on the absolute character of the Christian Truth

The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only de facto but also *de iure* (or in principle). [...] **On the basis of such presuppositions**, which may evince different nuances, certain theological proposals are developed – at times presented as assertions,

and at times as hypotheses – **in which Christian revelation and the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church lose their character of absolute truth** and salvific universality, or at least shadows of doubt and uncertainty are cast upon them. [...] Not infrequently it is **proposed that theology should avoid the use of terms like 'unicity, 'universality', and 'absoluteness', which give the impression of excessive emphasis on the significance and value of the salvific event of Jesus Christ in relation to other religions.** In reality, however, such language is simply being faithful to revelation, since it represents a development of the sources of the faith themselves. From the beginning, the community of believers has recognized in Jesus a salvific value such that he alone, as Son of God made man, crucified and risen, by the mission received from the Father and in the power of the Holy Spirit, bestows revelation (cf. Mt 11:27) and divine life (cf. Jn 1:12, 5:25-26, 17:2) to all humanity and to every person.

In this sense, one can and must say that Jesus Christ has a significance and a value for the human race and its history, which are unique and singular, proper to him alone, exclusive, universal, and absolute. Jesus is, in fact, the Word of God made man for the salvation of all. In expressing this consciousness of faith, the Second Vatican Council teaches: 'The Word of God, through whom all things were made, was made flesh, so that as perfect man he could save all men and sum up all things in himself. The Lord is the goal of human history, the focal point of the desires of history and civilization, the centre of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfilment of all aspirations. It is he whom the Father raised from the dead, exalted and placed at his right hand, constituting him judge of the living and the dead'.⁴⁵ "It is precisely this uniqueness of Christ which gives him an absolute and universal significance whereby, while belonging to history, he remains history's centre and goal: 'I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end' (Rev 22:13)" (John Paul II. *Redemptoris missio*, 6).

[Note 45: Second Vatican Council, Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 45. The necessary and absolute singularity of Christ in human history is well expressed by Saint Irenaeus in contemplating the preeminence of Jesus as

firstborn Son: 'In the heavens, as firstborn of the Father's counsel, the perfect Word governs and legislates all things; on the earth, as firstborn of the Virgin, a man just and holy, reverencing God and pleasing to God, good and perfect in every way, he saves from hell all those who follow him since he is the firstborn from the dead and Author of the life of God' (*Demonstratio apostolica*, 39: SC 406, 138)]. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 4. 15, August 6, 2000)

BENEDICT XVI

Love – caritas – originates in Absolute Truth

Love – caritas – is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace. It is a force that **has its origin in God, Eternal Love and Absolute Truth.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 1, June 29, 2009)

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It seems as if they rebel against God.

Asking God ‘why?’ is also a prayer

Why does suffering exist? What have I done to deserve suffering? These are some of the questions that people ask themselves ever since the world began. But one can never find the right answer entirely without placing Christ in the center, because only Jesus taught this truth with the example of his own life.

However, if it is true that Christ was the example of suffering, can it be said that He, at any moment, rebelled against the Father? In the desolation felt by the soul in the ‘dark night’ of life, is it licit to blaspheme against God? Or rebel? Or become impatient? Let us see what the Church has always taught her children...

FRANCIS

Jesus, when he laments – ‘Father, why have you abandoned me?’ – is he blaspheming? What a mystery! Many times I have heard people who are living in difficult, sorrowful situations, who have lost so much or who feel alone and abandoned and come to complain and to ask these questions: ‘Why?’ ‘Why?’ It seems as if they rebel against God. And I answer them: ‘Continue to pray this way, because this too is a prayer’, as was that of Jesus, when he asked the Father: ‘Why have you abandoned me’. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae*, September 30, 2014 – English synopsis)

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- ◆ What Jesus said, and the way he said it, is as the Father willed
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- ◆ In the Our Father, Jesus taught us to pray: ‘Your will be done, on earth as in heaven’
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II – The true meaning of Jesus’ cry: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’

Sacred Scripture

♦ ‘He has not hid his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him’ – the cry of the just who is persecuted and confides in God

Saint John Chrysostom

♦ He honors the Father, and is not against Him

Origen

♦ Jesus compared the glory which He had with the Father with the shame He endured the cross

Saint Hilary of Poitiers

♦ His complaint that He is left to death: He is Man. His promise of Paradise as He is dying: He is God

Origen

♦ You must not imagine that the Savior said this after the manner of men; He said it that the people who were honored by the Father may receive the things that deserved

Benedict XVI

♦ Jesus identifies himself with the suffering of the just of every age

Catechism of the Catholic Church

♦ Jesus assumed us in the state of our waywardness of sin, to the point that he could say in our name from the cross: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me’

John Paul II

♦ Even when the darkness is deepest, faith points to trusting and adoring acknowledgment

♦ Suffering and trust in the anguished ‘why’ addressed to the Father – the opening words of Psalm 22 that ends in triumph

♦ Jesus’ cry on the Cross is not a sign of loss of hope, but of loving offering

Benedict XVI

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Benedict XVI

♦ Prayer requires faith in God’s goodness

♦ We must ask what is worthy of God

Catechism of Trent

♦ By prayer we acknowledge and proclaim God to be the author of all good

Catechism of the Catholic Church

♦ If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name

Congregation of the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

- ◆ Prayer should be humble and in conformity with God's nature

John Paul II

- ◆ Prayer is in fact the recognition of our limitation and our dependence

Benedict XVI

- ◆ Prayer does not exempt us from suffering, but permits us to face it with the confidence of Jesus

I – JESUS PREACHED AND PRACTICED TOTAL OBEDIENCE, HIS SUBMISSION TO THE FATHER IS WITNESS TO THE FACT THAT HE DID NOT REBEL AGAINST HIM ON THE CROSS

SACRED SCRIPTURE

'If it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done'

Withdrawing a second time, he prayed again, 'My Father, if it is not possible that this cup pass without my drinking it, your will be done!' (Mt 26:42)

He was in such agony and he prayed more fervently

'Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, **not my will but yours be done.**' (And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. **He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently** that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.) (Lk 22:42-44)

'My food is to do the will of the one who sent me'

Jesus said to them, 'My food is to do the will of the one who sent me and to finish his work'. (Jn 4:34)

Jesus came to this world to obey

Because I came down from heaven not to do my own will but the will of the one who sent me. (Jn 6:38)

'I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me'

I cannot do anything on my own; I judge as I

hear, and my judgment is just, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the one who sent me. (Jn 5:30)

What Jesus said, and the way he said it, is as the Father willed

'Because I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. So **what I say, I say as the Father told me.**' (Jn 12:49-50)

There is no wrong in Him

Whoever speaks on his own seeks his own glory, but whoever seeks the glory of the one who sent him is truthful, and there is no wrong in him.' (Jn 7:16-18)

In the Our Father, Jesus taught us to pray: 'Your will be done, on earth as in heaven'

'This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, **your will be done, on earth as in heaven.** (Mt 6:10)

To listen to the words of the Lord, and act on them, is to build on rock

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? Did we not drive out demons in your name? Did we not do mighty deeds in your name?' Then I will declare to them solemnly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.' **'Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.'** (Mt 7:21-24)

Obedience makes us Jesus' brothers and sisters

'For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother'. (Mt 12:50)

God only listens to those who do His will

We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if one is devout and does his will, he listens to him. (Jn 9:31)

II – THE TRUE MEANING OF JESUS' CRY: 'MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?'

SACRED SCRIPTURE

'He has not hid his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him' – the cry of the just who is persecuted and confides in God

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but thou dost not answer; and by night, but find no rest. Yet thou art holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. **In thee our fathers trusted; they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. To thee they cried, and were saved; in thee they trusted, and were not disappointed.** [...] Many bulls encompass me, strong bulls of Bashan surround me; they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; thou dost lay me in the dust of death. Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet – I can count all my bones – they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots. But thou, O Lord, be not far off! O thou my help, hasten to my aid! Deliver my soul from the sword, my life from the power of the dog! Save me from the mouth of the lion, my afflicted soul from the horns of the wild oxen! I will tell of thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise thee: You who fear the Lord, praise

him! All you sons of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him, all you sons of Israel! **For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; and he has not hid his face from him, but has heard, when he cried to him.** From thee comes my praise in the great congregation. (Ps 22:1-6; 11-31)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

He honors the Father, and is not against Him

He uttered this word of prophecy, that He might bear witness to the very last hour to the Old Testament, and that they might see that He honours the Father, and is not against God. And therefore too, He used the Hebrew tongue, that what He said might be intelligible to them. (Saint John Chrysostom quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea* in Mt 27:45-50)

ORIGEN

Jesus compared the glory which He had with the Father with the shame He endured the cross

But it must be asked, What means this, that Christ is forsaken of God? Some, unable to explain how Christ could be forsaken of God, say that this was spoken out of humility. But you will be able clearly to comprehend His meaning if you make a comparison of the glory which He had with the Father with the shame which He despised when He endured the cross. (Origen quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*, in Mt 27:45-50)

SAINT HILARY OF POITIERS

His complaint that He is left to death: He is Man. His promise of Paradise as He is dying: He is God

From these words heretical spirits contend either that God the Word was entirely absorbed into the soul at the time it discharged the function of a soul in quickening the body; or that Christ could not have been born man, because the Divine Word dwelt in Him after the manner of a prophetic spirit. As

though Jesus Christ was a man of ordinary soul and body, having His beginning then when He began to be man, and thus now deserted upon the withdrawal of the protection of God's word cries out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' Or at least that the nature of the Word being transmuted into soul, Christ, who had depended in all things upon His Father's support, now deserted and left to death, mourns over this desertion, and pleads with Him departing. **But amidst these impious and feeble opinions, the faith of the Church imbued with Apostolic teaching does not sever Christ that He should be considered as Son of God and not as Son of Man. The complaint of His being deserted is the weakness of the dying man; the promise of Paradise is the kingdom of the living God. You have Him complaining that He is left to death, and thus He is Man; you have Him as He is dying declaring that He reigns in Paradise; and thus He is God. Wonder not then at the humility of these words, when you know the form of a servant, and see the offence of the cross.** (Saint Hilary of Poitiers quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea in Mt 27:45-50*)

ORIGEN

You must not imagine that the Savior said this after the manner of men; He said it that the people who were honored by the Father may receive the things that deserved

When He saw darkness over the whole land of Judaea He said this, Father, 'why hast thou forsaken me?' meaning, Why hast thou given Me over exhausted to such sufferings? that the people who were honoured by Thee may receive the things that they have dared against Me, and should be deprived of the light of Thy countenance. Also, Thou hast forsaken Me for the salvation of the Gentiles. But what good have they of the Gentiles who have believed done, that I should deliver them from the evil one by shedding My precious blood on the ground for them? Or will they, for whom I suffer these things, ever do aught worthy of them? Or foreseeing the sins of those for whom He suffered, He said, 'Why hast thou forsaken me?' that I should become 'as one that

gathereth stubble in the harvest, and gleanings in the vintage' (Mic 9:1). **But you must not imagine that the Saviour said this after the manner of men by reason of the misery which encompassed Him on the cross; for if you take it so you will not hear His 'loud voice' and mighty words which point to something great hidden.** (Origen quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*, in Mt 27:45-50)

BENEDICT XVI

Jesus identifies himself with the suffering of the just of every age

We sang the second part of the Psalm of the Passion as the Responsorial Psalm. **It is the Psalm of the righteous sufferer, in the first place suffering Israel who, before the mute God who abandoned it, cries: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me?... Now I am almost spent... you do not act... you do not answer... why have you forsaken me? (cf. 22).** **Jesus identifies himself with the suffering Israel, with the suffering just ones of every age abandoned by God, and he cries out at God's abandonment; the pain of being forgotten he carries to the Heart of God himself, and in this way transforms the world.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, during the Holy Mass with the members of the Bishops' Conference of Switzerland, November 7, 2006)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Jesus assumed us in the state of our waywardness of sin, to the point that He could say in our name: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me'

Jesus did not experience reprobation as if he himself had sinned (Jn 8:46). **But in the redeeming love that always united him to the Father, he assumed us in the state of our waywardness of sin, to the point that he could say in our name from the cross: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me' (Mk 15:34, Ps 22:2, Jn 8:29)?** Having thus established him in solidarity with us sinners, God 'did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all', **so that we might be 'reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Rom 8:32, Rom 5:10).** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 603)

JOHN PAUL II

Even when the darkness is deepest, faith points to trusting and adoring acknowledgment

More than anything else, it is the problem of suffering which challenges faith and puts it to the test. How can we fail to appreciate the universal anguish of man when we meditate on the Book of Job? The innocent man overwhelmed by suffering is understandably led to wonder: 'Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures' (Job 3:20-21)? **But even when the darkness is deepest, faith points to a trusting and adoring acknowledgment of the 'mystery': 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted'** (Job 42:2). (John Paul II. Encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, no. 31, March 25, 1995)

Suffering and trust in the anguished 'why' addressed to the Father -the opening words of Psalm 22 that ends in triumph

In contemplating Christ's face, we confront the most paradoxical aspect of his mystery, as it emerges in his last hour, on the Cross. The mystery within the mystery, before which we cannot but prostrate ourselves in adoration. The intensity of the episode of the agony in the Garden of Olives passes before our eyes. Oppressed by foreknowledge of the trials that await him, and alone before the Father, **Jesus cries out to him in his habitual and affectionate expression of trust: 'Abba, Father'.** He asks him to take away, if possible, the cup of suffering (cf. Mk 14:36). **But the Father seems not to want to heed the Son's cry. In order to bring man back to the Father's face, Jesus not only had to take on the face of man, but he had to burden himself with the 'face' of sin.** 'For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2Cor 5:21). **We shall never exhaust the depths of this mystery.** All the harshness of the paradox can be heard in Jesus' seemingly desperate cry of pain on the Cross: '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*' which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Mk 15:34). Is it possible to imagine a greater agony, a more impenetrable darkness? In reality, **the**

anguished 'why' addressed to the Father in the opening words of the Twenty-second Psalm expresses all the realism of unspeakable pain; but it is also illumined by the meaning of that entire prayer, in which the Psalmist brings together suffering and trust, in a moving blend of emotions. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 25, January 6, 2001)

Jesus' cry on the Cross is not a sign of loss of hope, but of loving offering

Jesus' cry on the Cross, dear Brothers and Sisters, is not the cry of anguish of a man without hope, but the prayer of the Son who offers his life to the Father in love, for the salvation of all. At the very moment when he identifies with our sin, 'abandoned' by the Father, he 'abandons' himself into the hands of the Father. His eyes remain fixed on the Father. Precisely because of the knowledge and experience of the Father which he alone has, even at this moment of darkness he sees clearly the gravity of sin and suffers because of it. **He alone, who sees the Father and rejoices fully in him, can understand completely what it means to resist the Father's love by sin.** More than an experience of physical pain, his Passion is an agonizing suffering of the soul. Theological tradition has not failed to ask how Jesus could possibly experience at one and the same time his profound unity with the Father, by its very nature a source of joy and happiness, and an agony that goes all the way to his final cry of abandonment. The simultaneous presence of these two seemingly irreconcilable aspects is rooted in the fathomless depths of the hypostatic union. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 26, January 6, 2001)

BENEDICT XVI

Christ's passion is our consolation

It was the Father's love that permitted the Son to confidently face his last 'baptism', which he himself defines as the apex of his mission (cf. Lk 12: 50). **Jesus received that baptism of sorrow and love for us, for all of humanity.** He has suffered for truth and justice, bringing the Gospel of suffering to human history, which is the other aspect of the Gospel of love. God cannot suffer, but he can and wants to be com-

passionate. **Through Christ's passion he can bring his con-solatio to every human suffering, 'the consolation of God's compassionate love –and so the star of hope rises'** (*Spe Salvi*, no. 39). (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, Basilica of Saint Sabina, Ash Wednesday, February 6, 2008)

III – WHAT KIND OF PRAYER IS PLEASING TO GOD?

BENEDICT XVI

Prayer requires faith in God's goodness

If one does not believe in God's goodness, one cannot pray in a truly appropriate manner. (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, October 17, 2010)

We must ask what is worthy of God

When we pray properly we undergo a process of inner purification which opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings as well. **In prayer we must learn what we can truly ask of God-what is worthy of God.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical letter Spe salvi*, no. 33, November 30, 2007)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

By prayer we acknowledge and proclaim God to be the author of all good

By prayer we confess our subjection to God; we acknowledge and proclaim Him to be the author of all good, in whom alone we center all our hopes, who alone is our refuge, in all dangers and the bulwark of our salvation. **Of this fruit we are admonished also in these words: Call upon me in the day of trouble** (Ps 49:15). (Catechism of Trent, no. 4000, The Lord's prayer: the fruits of prayer)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name

Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. **It always presupposes**

effort. the great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and he himself, all teach us this: prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray. If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name. The 'spiritual battle' of the Christian's new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2725)

CONGREGATION OF THE DIVINE WORSHIP

AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Prayer should be humble and in conformity with God's nature

Jesus has commanded us to do as he did. On many occasions he said: 'Pray,' 'ask,' 'seek' 'in my name.' He taught us how to pray in what is known as the Lord's Prayer. He **taught us that prayer is necessary, that it should be humble, watchful, persevering, confident in the Father's goodness, single-minded, and in conformity with God's nature** (Mt 6:5-8, 23:14; Lk 20:47, Jn 4:23). (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *General instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours*, Ch. I-II, 5)

JOHN PAUL II

Prayer is in fact the recognition of our limitation and our dependence

Prayer is in fact the recognition of our limitation and our dependence: we come from God, we belong to God and we return to God! **We cannot, therefore, but abandon ourselves to him, our Creator and Lord, with full and complete confidence.** Prayer, therefore, is first of all an act of intelligence, a feeling of humility and gratitude, an attitude of trust and abandonment to him who gave us life out of love. (John Paul II. *Address to the young people gathered in the Vatican Basilica*, March 14, 1979)

BENEDICT XVI

Prayer does not exempt us from suffering, but permits us to face it with the confidence of Jesus

We understand that with prayer we are not liberated from trials and suffering, but we can live through them in union with Christ, with his suffering, in the hope of also participating in his glory (cf. Rom 8:17). Many times, in our prayer, we ask God to be freed from physical and spiritual evil, and we do it with great trust. However, often we have the impression of not being heard and we may well feel discouraged and fail to persevere. In reality, there is no human cry that is not heard by God and it is precisely in constant and faithful prayer that we comprehend with St Paul that ‘the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us’ (Rom 8:18). Prayer does not exempt us from trial and suffering, indeed – St Paul says – we ‘groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies’ (Rom 8:23). Prayer does not exempt us from trial and suffering, indeed – St Paul says – we ‘groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies’ (Rom 8:23). He says that prayer does not exempt us from suffering but prayer does permit us to live through it and face it with a new strength, with the confidence of Jesus, who – according to the Letter to the Hebrews – ‘In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him [God] who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear’ (Heb 5:7). The answer of God the Father to the Son, to his loud cries and tears, was not freedom from suffering, from the cross, from death, but a much greater fulfillment, an answer much more profound; through the cross and death God responded with the Resurrection of the Son, with new life. Prayer animated by the Holy Spirit leads us too to live every day a journey of life with its trials and sufferings, with the fullness of hope, with trust in God who answers us as he answered the Son. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, May 16, 2012)

Recently, during his flight from the United States to Rome, Francis took the initiative to exemplify this doctrine that condones rebellion against God:

Recounting the (real or supposed) case of a person faced with the tragic and dramatic situation of a child suffering abuse, Francis had nothing better to say than to declare that a total lack of conformity to God’s permission of evil that goes even to the point of revolt, blasphemy, loss of faith and negation of God taken to the final moment of life is ‘understandable’: ‘I understand that woman. I understand her. And God, who is much better than me, he understands. I am sure that God has received that woman’. (In-flight press conference from the United States to Rome, September 27, 2015)

Obviously, confiding such a person to God’s infinite mercy is part of basic Catholic common-sense. But, a public guarantee of eternal salvation? By the one who should occupy the chair of the Supreme Teacher of the peoples?

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To live the Christian faith denotes service to the person, as a whole and to all peoples, starting with those living on the margins

The Catholic faith we received on the day of our Baptism is centered on the person of Jesus Christ, only begotten Son of the Father, Lord of all creation, and Redeemer of humanity. At first glance, no one would dare to differ with this simple affirmation, so very evident for anyone who prays the Creed with devotion. Sincerely permeated with the faith, a Christian lives according to the Commandments, and is not frightened by the sufferings and difficulties of life. Encountering someone in need, he spares no effort to assist them; recalling, however, that 'not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord (Deut 8:3)'.

To live the faith in our days demands constant courage and heroism, because many do not understand, fail to support and even persecute those who radically reject sin, confess regularly, attend Sunday Mass, and strive to conform their hearts and their minds to Jesus. These everyday heroes would be surprised to hear someone say that it is not necessary to go against the tide of this world, because to live the faith it is enough to help others, without distinction. In other words, more than living for Christ, it's enough to dedicate oneself to others. Is it really that simple? How does the Magisterium teach us to live our faith, keeping our salvation in sight?

FRANCIS

While the Church is called to introduce the leaven and be the salt of the Gospel, that is, the love and mercy of God which reach all men and women, and which point to the heavenly and definitive goal of our destiny, it falls to civil society and political society to articulate and build a life which is more humane, through justice, solidarity, law and peace. **For those who live their Christian faith, this does not mean either fleeing from the world or seeking dominance, but rather it denotes service to the person, as a whole and to all peoples, starting with those living on the margins**, all the while keeping alive the sense of hope that compels us to work for the good of all, looking to the future. (*Letter to Eugenio Scalfari*, September 4, 2013)

[Journalist] As we speak there is a refugee crisis. How are you experiencing this situation?

[Francis] It is the tip of an iceberg. These poor people are fleeing war, hunger, but that is the tip of the iceberg. Because **underneath that is the cause; and the cause is a bad and unjust socioeconomic system, in everything, in the world – speaking of the environmental problem –, in the socioeconomic society, in politics, the person always has to be in the centre. That is the dominant economic system nowadays, it has removed the person from the centre**, placing the god money in its place, the idol of fashion. There are statistics, I don't remember precisely, (I might have this wrong), but that 17% of the world's population has 80% of the wealth. (*Interview with Radio Renascença*, September 14, 2015)

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**I – THE FAITH IS CENTERED ON CHRIST,
NOT MAN**

SACRED SCRIPTURE

**Christ raised from the dead is the reason
of our faith**

And if Christ has not been raised, then empty (too) is our preaching; empty, too, your faith. (1Cor 15:14)

BENEDICT XVI

**The Popes of the XX century proclaimed
Jesus as the centre of the cosmos, of
history, of the Christian faith**

The Year of Faith which we launch today is linked harmoniously with the Church's whole path over the last fifty years: from the Council, through the Magisterium of the Servant of God Paul VI, who proclaimed a Year of Faith in 1967, up to the Great Jubilee of the year 2000, with which Blessed John Paul II re-proposed to all humanity Jesus Christ as the one Saviour, yesterday, today and forever. Between these two Popes, Paul VI and John Paul II, there was a deep and complete convergence, precisely upon Christ as the centre of the cosmos and of history, and upon the apostolic eagerness to announce him to the world. **Jesus is the centre of the Christian faith.** The Christian believes in God whose face was revealed by Jesus Christ. He is the fulfilment of the Scriptures and their definitive interpreter. **Jesus Christ is not only the object of the faith but,** as it says in the Letter to the Hebrews, he is 'the pioneer and the perfecter of our faith' (Heb 12:2). (Benedict XVI. *Homily during the Mass for the opening of the Year of Faith*, October 11, 2012)

**In pierced side of Christ, we deposit our
faith**

In my first Encyclical on the theme of love, the point of departure was exactly 'contemplating the pierced side of Christ', which John speaks of in his Gospel (cf. 19: 37; *Deus Caritas Est*, n. 12). And **this centre of faith is also the font of hope in which we have been saved,**

the hope that I made the object of my second Encyclical. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, June 1, 2008)

JOHN PAUL II

**Every young person should build his life
and faith upon the rock, who is Christ**

The principal objective of the Days is to make the person of Jesus the centre of the faith and life of every young person so that he may be their constant point of reference and also the inspiration of every initiative and commitment for the education of the new generations. This is the slogan of every Youth Day, and through this decade, the Days have been like an **uninterrupted and pressing call to build life and faith upon the rock, who is Christ.** (John Paul II. *Letter on the occasion of the Seminar on World Youth Days*, no. 1, May 8, 1996)

**Our faith is strengthened by knowing
the love with which Jesus assumed our
human nature**

Jesus Christ is our hope because he, the Eternal Word of God, who is always with the Father (cf. Jn 1:18), loved us so much that he assumed our human nature in all things but sin and shared in our life, for the sake of our salvation. **The profession of this truth stands at the very heart of our faith.** The loss of the truth about Jesus Christ, or a failure to comprehend that truth, prevent us from appreciating and entering into the mystery of God's love and the Trinitarian communion. Jesus Christ is our hope because he reveals the mystery of the Trinity. **This is the core of the Christian faith,** and it can still make a significant contribution, as it has in the past, to the creation of structures which, inspired by the great values of the Gospel or measuring itself against them, are capable of promoting the life, history and culture of the different peoples of the Continent. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 19, June 28, 2003)

**The Christian faith is kept by believing in
the resurrection of Christ**

Easter is the center of the liturgical year and

at the *heart* of Christian life, precisely because it is the living memorial of the central mystery of salvation: the death and resurrection of the Lord. [...] A well known scholar of our century, Romano Guardini, meditating on the Paschal Mystery and its consequences in the life of the believer and the Church, affirms that **'Christian faith is kept or lost according to whether one believes or not in the resurrection of the Lord'**. The resurrection is not a phenomena marginal to this faith, and neither is it a mythological development, which faith drew from history, and which could later be annulled without losing its content: it is the heart [of faith] (*Il Signore*, Part VI, 1)'. **The proclamation of the death and resurrection of the Lord is the center of our faith.** From docile and joyful adherence to this mystery blossoms the authentic following of the Lord and the salvific mission confided to the people of God, pilgrim on earth in awaiting Jesus' glorious return. **In the light of this fundamental evangelical truth, it is fully understood that Jesus Christ, and only Jesus Christ, is really 'the Way, the Truth and the Life'**, He who is the 'light of the world' and the 'human image' of the Father. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, 3, April 14, 1993)

Those who accept Christ seek in him the solid foundation for the construction of a better and more united world

Many centuries have gone by since Christ. **The heredity of God has been growing** marvelously, not without repetition of the rejection, the incomprehension and the struggles – over the corner stone: **Christ dead and resurrected.** Each day, there are more **persons and peoples who accept him with faith** and with love, who **seek in him the solid foundation for the construction of a better and more united world**, where they feel safe under the loving gaze of only one God and Father. **Among these peoples which did not reject, but which made Jesus the center of their history, is our dear Spain, profoundly Christian;** among these men, heirs of God by Baptism who accept the Son, dead and resurrected, you yourselves are also counted, brothers and sisters of the Orcasitas parish of Madrid, united around the altar of the same Christ. I feel you all to be very much within me, and I receive you as dearest members of his Church. (John Paul II. *Homily*, no. 2, November 3, 1982)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Son of God is always the center of the apostolic faith

Such is not the case for **Simon Peter** when he **confesses Jesus as 'the Christ, the Son of the living God'**, for Jesus responds solemnly: 'Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven' (Mt 16:16 – 17). Similarly Paul will write, regarding his conversion on the road to Damascus, 'When he who had set me apart before I was born, and had called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles' (Gal 1:15 – 16), and in the synagogues immediately [Paul] proclaimed Jesus, saying, 'He is the Son of God' (Acts 9:20). **From the beginning** this acknowledgment of Christ's divine sonship will be the centre of the apostolic faith, **first professed by Peter as the Church's foundation** (Mt 16:18). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 442)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

The Christian faith: conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps

The Christian faith is, above all, conversion to Jesus Christ, full and sincere adherence to his person and the decision to walk in his footsteps. Faith is a **personal encounter with Jesus Christ making, of oneself a disciple of him.** This demands a permanent commitment to think like him, to judge like him and to live as he lived. In this way the believer unites himself to the community of disciples and appropriates the faith of the Church. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 53)

II – THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS LIVED THROUGH THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE AND OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDMENTS

BENEDICT XVI

To live the faith implies daily sacrifice, implies suffering

The theology of the Cross is not a theory it is the reality of Christian life. To live in the

belief in Jesus Christ, to live in truth and love implies daily sacrifice, implies suffering. Christianity is not the easy road, it is, rather, a difficult climb, but one illuminated by the light of Christ and by the great hope that is born of him. **Saint Augustine** says: Christians are not spared suffering, indeed they must suffer a little more, because **to live the faith expresses the courage to face in greater depth the problems that life and history present.** But only in this way, through the **experience of suffering,** can we know life in its profundity, in its beauty, in the great hope born from Christ crucified and risen again. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, November 5, 2008)

JOHN PAUL II

To reach eternal life it is necessary to fulfill the commandments and live according to the teachings of Christ

You well know the answer. You know that to reach eternal life it is necessary to fulfill the commandments, it is necessary to live according to the teachings of Christ, which are transmitted to us continually by his Church. For this reason, dear brethren, I encourage you to comport yourselves always as good Christians, to fulfill the commandments, to attend Mass on Sundays, to care for your Christian formation by attending the catechesis offered by your pastors, to confess frequently, to work, to be good parents and faithful spouses, to be good children. Do not fall into the seduction of vices such as alcohol abuse, which causes so much damage: do not collaborate with drug trafficking, cause of the destruction of so many people in the world. (John Paul II. *Homily in the 'Patria Nueva' Colony in Mexico*, no. 5, May 11, 1990)

Sanctity is the practice of virtue in a heroic manner

It is appropriate to recall here the solemn proclamation of beatification and canonization of lay men and women which took place during the month of the Synod. The entire People of God, and the lay faithful in particular, can find at this moment new models of holiness and new witnesses of heroic virtue lived in the ordinary everyday circumstances of human existence. The Synod Fathers have

said: 'Particular Churches especially should be attentive to recognizing among their members the younger men and women of those Churches who have given witness to holiness in such conditions (everyday secular conditions and the conjugal state) and who can be an example for others, so that, if the case calls for it, they (the Churches) might propose them to be beatified and canonized'. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Christifideles laici*, no. 17, December 30, 1988)

PIUS XII

Without sacrifice there is no profession of the Christian Faith, rather there is desertion

Who among 'the Soldiers of Christ' – ecclesiastic or layman – does not feel himself incited and spurred on to a greater vigilance, to a more determined resistance, by the sight of the ever – increasing host of Christ's enemies; as he perceives the spokesmen of these tendencies deny or in practice neglect the vivifying truths and the values inherent in belief in God and in Christ; as he perceives them wantonly break the Tables of God's Commandments to substitute other tables and other standards stripped of the ethical content of the Revelation on Sinai, standards in which the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and of the Cross has no place? Who could observe without profound grief the tragic harvest of such desertions among those who in days of calm and security were numbered among the followers of Christ, but who – Christians unfortunately more in name than in fact – in the hour that called for endurance, for effort, for suffering, for a stout heart in face of hidden or open persecution, fell victims of cowardice, weakness, uncertainty; who, terror-stricken before the sacrifices entailed by a profession of their Christian Faith, could not steel themselves to drink the bitter chalice awaiting those faithful to Christ? (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no. 7 – 8, October 20, 1939)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The fulfillment of a Christian vocation demands notable virtue

The constant fulfillment of the duties of this

Christian vocation demands notable virtue. For this reason, strengthened by grace for holiness of life, the couple will painstakingly cultivate and pray for steadiness of love, large heartedness and the **spirit of sacrifice.** (Vatican Council II. Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*, no. 49, December 7. 1965)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Faith involves a profound transformation of mind and heart in adhesion to Jesus Christ

Faith involves a change of life, a *'metanoia'*, that is a profound transformation of mind and heart; it causes the believer to live that conversion. **This transformation of life manifests itself at all levels of the Christian's existence: in his interior life** of adoration and acceptance of the divine will, **in his action, participation in the mission of the Church,** in his married and family life; in his professional life; in fulfilling economic and social responsibilities. Faith and conversion arise from the 'heart', that is, they arise from the depth of the human person and they involve all that he is. **By meeting Jesus Christ and by adhering to him** the human being sees all of his deepest aspirations completely fulfilled. He finds what he had always been seeking and he finds it superabundantly. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 55)

III – TO LIVE THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO SERVE THE POOR

SACRED SCRIPTURE

He who gives alms to be honored will not be rewarded

(But) take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father. **When you give alms,** do not blow a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets to win the praise of others. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. (Mt 6:1-2)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The purity of one's intentions is necessary for the practice of true charity

In order that the exercise of charity on this scale may be unexceptionable in appearance as well as in fact, it is altogether necessary that one should consider in one's neighbor the image of God in which he has been created, and also Christ the Lord to Whom is really offered whatever is given to a needy person. It is imperative also that the freedom and dignity of the person being helped be respected with the utmost consideration, that **the purity of one's charitable intentions be not stained by seeking one's own advantage or by striving for domination,** and especially that the demands of justice be satisfied lest the giving of what is due in justice be represented as the offering of a charitable gift. Not only the effects but also the causes of these ills must be removed and the help be given in such a way that the recipients may gradually be freed from dependence on outsiders and become self-sufficient. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Apostolican actuositatem*, November 18, 1965)

PIUS XI

Beware of charitable undertakings that do not seek the sanctification of souls

On the other hand, the spiritual formation and the interior life fostered in these your collaborators, will put them on their guard against dangers and possible deviations. Keeping in mind the ultimate aim of Catholic Action, which is the sanctification of souls, according to the Gospel precept: See ye first the Kingdom of God (Lk 12:31), you will not run the risk of sacrificing principles for immediate and secondary ends, and **that supreme end will never be forgotten to which must be subordinated even social and economic works and charitable undertakings.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Firmissimam constantiam*, no. 12, March 28, 1937)

PIUS XII

Our hearts must be inflamed with charity at the sight of so many brothers and sisters misled by error

Can there be, Venerable Brethren, a greater or more urgent duty than to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph 3:8) to the men of our time? Can there be anything nobler than to unfurl the 'Ensign of the King' before those who have followed and still follow a false standard, and to win back to the victorious banner of the Cross those who have abandoned it? **What heart is not inflamed, is not swept forward to help at the sight of so many brothers and sisters who, misled by error, passion, temptation and prejudice, have strayed away from faith in the true God and have lost contact with the joyful and life-giving message of Christ?** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no. 6, October 20, 1939)

LEO XIII

The enemies of the Church always zealously declare their love for the poor

Thus, with a fraudulent external appearance, and with a style of simulation which is always the same, the Freemasons, like the Manichees of old, strive, as far as possible, to conceal themselves, and to admit no witnesses but their own members. As a convenient manner of concealment, they assume the character of literary men and scholars associated for purposes of learning. **They speak of their zeal for a more cultured refinement, and of their love for the poor; and they declare their one wish to be the amelioration of the condition of the masses, and to share with the largest possible number all the benefits of civil life.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Humanum genus*, no. 9, April 20, 1884)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Pastors run the risk of being diverted to works which are just as damaging as the poverty which is being fought

The zeal and the compassion which should dwell in the hearts of all pastors nevertheless

run the risk of being led astray and diverted to works which are just as damaging to man and his dignity as is the poverty which is being fought, if one is not sufficiently attentive to certain temptations. **The feeling of anguish at the urgency of the problems cannot make us lose sight of what is essential nor forget the reply of Jesus to the Tempter: 'It is not on bread alone that man lives, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God' (Mt 4:4, cf. Deut 8:3).** Faced with the urgency of sharing bread, **some are tempted to put evangelization into parentheses, as it were, and postpone it until tomorrow: first the bread, then the Word of the Lord. It is a fatal error to separate these two and even worse to oppose the one to the other.** In fact, the Christian perspective naturally shows they have a great deal to do with one another. **To some it even seems that the necessary struggle for human justice and freedom in the economic and political sense constitutes the whole essence of salvation. For them, the Gospel is reduced to a purely earthly gospel.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation'*, VI, no. 2-4, August 6, 1984)

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

The fruit of envy is a hypocritical outward semblance of charity

Surely, you are aware of how great an evil hypocrisy is, and it is the fruit of envy. This vice, above all others, causes double-dealing among men. Hypocrites maintain an **outward semblance of charity**, while keeping their hatred deeply hidden within, **like rocks under the surface of the sea, which, being covered with shallow water, bring unforeseen disaster to the unwary.** (Saint Basil the Great. *Ascetical Works*, Homily 11: Concerning envy, pg. 474 – Spanish)

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

True charity leads us to a general practice of all God's Commandments

Even so sinners do not rise towards God, for **all their movements are earthly and earthbound.** Well-meaning people, who have

not as yet attained a true devotion, attempt a manner of flight by means of their good actions, but rarely, slowly and heavily; while really devout men rise up to God frequently, and with a swift and soaring wing. In short, devotion is simply a spiritual activity and liveliness by means of which Divine Love works in us, and causes us to work briskly and lovingly; and just as **charity leads us to a general practice of all God's Commandments**, so devotion leads us to practise them readily and diligently. And **therefore we cannot call him who neglects to observe all God's Commandments either good or devout, because in order to be good, a man must be filled with love, and to be devout, he must further be very ready and apt to perform the deeds of love.** (Saint Francis de Sales. *Introduction to the devout life*, I, 4)

IV – TO SERVE THE PEOPLE ON THE PERIPHERIES IS NOT THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE THE FAITH

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The contemplation of Mary merits greater praise than the good works of Martha

The Lord said to her in reply, 'Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. **Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her**'. (Lk 10:41-42)

BENEDICT XVI

All the ways of holiness are important in God's eyes

Hence there is a **fundamental will of God for us all, which is identical for us all. However its application is different in every life, for God has a specific project for each person.** Saint Francis de Sales once said: perfection, that is, being good, living faith and love, is substantially one but comes in many different forms. **The holiness of a Carthusian and of a politician, of a scientist or of a peasant, and so forth, is very different.** Thus God has a plan for every person and I must find, in my own circumstances, my way of living this one and, at the same time, common will of God whose great rules are indicated in these explanations of love. [...] Thus **each person**

will find different possibilities in his life: he may devote himself to volunteer work in a community of prayer, in a movement or in the activity of his parish, in his own profession. Finding my vocation and living it everywhere is important and fundamental, whether I am a great scientist or a farmer. **Everything is important in God's eyes:** life is beautiful if it is lived to the full with that love which really redeems the world. (Benedict XVI. *Address during the meeting with the youth in preparation for World Youth Day*, March 25, 2010)

The Saints' lives are hymns to God, despite their thousand different tones

In the Encyclical published last Wednesday, by referring to the primacy of charity in the life of Christians and of the Church, I wanted to recall that the **privileged witnesses of this primacy are the Saints, who made their lives a hymn to God – Love despite their thousands of different tones.** We celebrate them every day of the year in the liturgy. I am thinking, for example, of those whom we are commemorating in these days: the Apostle Paul with his disciples Timothy and Titus, Saint Angela Merici, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint John Bosco. **These saints are very different:** the first belong to the beginnings of the Church and were **missionaries of the first evangelization;** in the Middle Ages, **Thomas Aquinas is the model of a Catholic theologian** who found in Christ the supreme synthesis of truth and love; in the Renaissance, **Angela Merici presented a path of holiness also to those who were living in a secular environment;** in the modern epoch, **Don Bosco, inflamed with love for Jesus the Good Shepherd, cared for the most underprivileged children** and became their father and teacher. In truth, the Church's entire history is a history of holiness, animated by the one Love whose source is God. Indeed, only supernatural love, like the love that flows ever new from Christ's heart, can explain the miraculous flourishing down the centuries of Orders, male and female religious Institutes and other forms of consecrated life. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, January 29, 2006)

Each one receives at baptism a personal vocation in accordance with the Father's particular plan of love

Today, through the sacrament of Baptism, he consecrates them and calls them to follow Jesus, through the realization of their personal vocation in accordance with that particular plan of love that the Father has in mind for each one of them; the destination of this earthly pilgrimage will be full communion with him in eternal happiness. (Benedict XVI. *Homily for the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, January 9, 2011)

JOHN PAUL II

The search for God has always stirred the human heart in many ways

In this important work, they must always be helped to strengthen their consecration to the Lord through their daily living of the evangelical counsels. 'All who have embraced the consecrated life are called to become leaders in the search for God, a search which has always stirred the human heart and which is particularly visible in Asia's many forms of spirituality and asceticism' (*Ecclesia in Asia*, 44). For this reason, Religious can have an essential role in the Church's overall commitment to evangelization. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Indonesia on their ad limina visit*, no.6, March 29, 2003)

PAUL VI

The illusion of false happiness considers only affliction and poverty

Hence the condition of the Christian, and above all of the apostle, who must become the 'model of the flock' (1Pet 5:3) and associate himself freely with the Redeemer's passion. [...] Unfortunately, in our century which is so threatened by the illusion of false happiness, we do not lack opportunities of noting the psychic inability of man to accept 'the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned' (1Cor 2:14). The world—that world which is unfitted to receive the Spirit of Truth, whom

it neither sees nor knows—only sees one side of things. It considers only the affliction and poverty of the disciple, while the latter always remains, in his inmost being, in joy, because he is in communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Gaudete in Domino*, no. III, May 9, 1975)

PIUS XII

The Holy Spirit enlightens and guides souls to sanctity – the Church on earth, like the Church in heaven, has many mansions

As regards the different methods employed in these exercises, it is perfectly clear to all that in the Church on earth, no less in the Church in heaven, there are many mansions, and that asceticism cannot be the monopoly of anyone. It is the same spirit who breatheth where He will (Jn 3:8), and who with differing gifts and in different ways enlightens and guides souls to sanctity. Let their freedom and the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit be so sacrosanct that no one presume to disturb or stifle them for any reason whatsoever. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 179, November 20, 2011)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The love of God is by itself more meritorious than the love of our neighbor

Whether the active life is of greater merit than the contemplative?

The root of merit is charity; and, while, as stated above (q 25, a. 1), charity consists in the love of God and our neighbor, the love of God is by itself more meritorious than the love of our neighbor, as stated above (q. 27, a. 8). Wherefore that which pertains more directly to the love of God is generically more meritorious than that which pertains directly to the love of our neighbor for God's sake. [...] On the other hand, the active life is more directly concerned with the love of our neighbor, because it is 'busy about much serving' (Lk 10:40). Wherefore the contemplative life is generically of greater merit than the active life. This is moreover asserted by Gregory (*Hom. iii in Ezech.*): 'The contemplative life surpasses in

merit the active life, because the latter labors under the stress of present work', by reason of the necessity of assisting our neighbor, 'while the former with heartfelt relish has a foretaste of the coming rest', i.e. the contemplation of God. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 182, a. 2)

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Those who are Christians with the Bible and those who are Muslims with the Koran, with the faith you have received from your fathers.

There is one single God, the same God

Some of the most beautiful pages of the History of the Church are doubtlessly those written with the blood of the Martyrs who, giving their lives for love of Jesus Christ, received from the hands of their executioners both the death of their mortal bodies and the everlasting glory of immolating themselves for the One who had rescued them on the Cross. Defenseless children, heroic virgins, robust men, venerable ancients, throughout the ages and in all places, have heard the summons to give a resplendent and moving testimony to the power of the Gospel.

A memorable page of Church History was written in the lands of Andalusia, around the year 850, when the Iberian Peninsula was suffering under the yoke of the Crescent. A certain priest, Perfecto by name, who had been born of Christian parents in Cordoba, was questioned by two Muslims regarding his opinion of Mohammed and of Christ. The valiant priest clearly proclaimed his faith regarding Christ, the Son of God, but preferred to withhold any comment on Mohammed. At the insistence of his listeners, and receiving their word that he would be saved harmless, he finally told what he thought (and what they would have preferred not to hear) about Allah's prophet. In a short time, Perfecto was denounced, arrested, and after two months of torture, condemned to death by decapitation.

The date chosen for the execution was the solemn Muslim feast which follows Ramadan. Perfecto reached the banks of the Guadalquivir River led by his assassins, and used the platform where he would be executed as his pulpit for a last sermon about Jesus Christ and the truth regarding Mohammed and the Koran. History followed its course, and Perfecto received the palm of martyrdom. But let's imagine that at the moment the executioner was to give the mortal blow, a shout from the crowd were to stop the deadly scimitar in mid-air, and someone were to rush forward and say: 'Perfecto, think it over, what are you going to die for? Say that you adore Allah, and that you accept his prophet, and everything is solved. Don't Catholics and Muslims adore one and the same God, who is just and the creator of all things? Isn't he the same God?'

What would our martyr have thought of such words? Could the holy, just and merciful God that his parents had taught him to love, and whose marvelous deeds he had learned about in Bible History be the same as the one in whose name he would now be killed? Were all of his sufferings because of his fidelity to the true God in vain? Was he dying merely because of a question of names? Is it true that Catholics and Muslims adore the same God?

The answer to these questions was immediate for Saint Perfecto, who, closing his eyes to this vale of tears, and opening them to eternity understood everything when he beheld his glorious Redeemer awaiting him to reward him for his courageous witness. It will be the same Jesus who answers these questions for us, through the voice of the Magisterium, the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church.

FRANCIS

And share our experiences of carrying the cross, so as to be cured of this illness of the heart which embitters our life: this is important for you to do in the meetings. It is important you do this when you meet. **Those who are Christians with the Bible and**

those who are Muslims with the Koran, with the faith you have received from your fathers, a faith that will always help you move forward. Share your faith, because there is one single God, the same God. Some have spoken in one way, others in another...but move forward. Share. (*Meeting with refugees at Sacred Heart Parish in Rome, January 19, 2015 – principal parts in English*)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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a) In His infinite goodness, the One true God revealed Himself to man in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

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- ♦ God revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit

IV Lateran Council (Ecumenical XII)

- ♦ Revelation that was begun in the Old Testament and reached its fullness in Christ

Catechism of Trent

- ♦ The Trinity was clearly revealed to us by Christ

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ♦ God is three Persons

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the mystery of God in Himself

Synod of Rome

- ♦ The salvation of Christians, is by believing in the Trinity

b) Denying the Trinity after revelation is an affront to the divine wisdom and goodness, it is to call God a liar

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ God cannot lie

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c) To speak of monotheism without the Trinity is to create another 'god'

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ There is no other God other than the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Saint Augustine of Hippo

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Pius XI

- ◆ Beware to not abuse the name of God as a meaningless label: God is one in the Trinity of Persons

Saint John Damascene

- ◆ Mohammed does not accept the Trinity

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ The Mohammedans ridicule the Trinity, and think we are insane for professing three persons in God

Saint John Damascene

- ◆ The superstition of the Ishmaelites is an error that is a forerunner of the Antichrist

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Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ True adoration requires the truth of faith
- ◆ Since God is absolutely simple, there cannot be false knowledge of him – he who denies that God is triune neither knows God nor adores Him

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

- ◆ Theological faith in the Triune God is distinct from belief in Allah

II – To deny Jesus is to deny the Father

a) To deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is to deny the Father

Sacred Scriptures

- ◆ No one goes to the Father except for through the Son
- ◆ No one who denies the Son has the Father
- ◆ Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him
- ◆ Who hates the Son hates also the Father
- ◆ No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ Christ is the fulfillment of Revelation

Saint John of the Cross

- ◆ In giving us His Son, God spoke to us all together, once and for all – to seek other revelations is an offence to God

Saint Cyril of Jerusalem

- ◆ The Father has indignation on behalf of his only-begotten Son – let them worship the Son, since otherwise the Father accepts not their service offence to God

b) It is, therefore, to deny the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ It is not only necessary to believe in one God, the Creator, but also that God is the Father and that Christ is the true Son of God

Sacred Scripture

- ◆ They are in the True God, who are in his Son Jesus Christ

Benedict XVI

- ◆ To believe in God and to believe in Jesus are not two separate acts but one single act of faith
- ◆ Believing in God means accepting Jesus of Nazareth

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ Believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his 'beloved Son'

John Paul II

- ◆ No one can enter into communion with God except through Christ

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ◆ The faith the holy patriarchs and prophets received preaches that the Trinity is but one God

Sacred Scripture

- ◆ Only those who belong to Christ are Abraham's descendants and his heirs

Saint John Damascene

- ◆ Mohammed denies that Christ is truly the Son of God
- ◆ Mohammed says that it was sinful men who wrote that Jesus said: 'I am the Son of God and God'

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ Muslims ridicule us for holding that Christ is the Son of the living God since they are carnal

Saint John Damascene

- ◆ The Muslims end up with an idea of God that is mutilated
-

III – There are enormous differences between the true God and Allah: God is neither irrational nor immoral

a) God cannot act against his supremely good nature: He cannot, therefore desire evil nor do that which contradicts reason

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ God is the highest good
- ◆ For God does things because He wills so to do, according to His nature
- ◆ Voluntarism is an error – The end of the divine will is its goodness
- ◆ God cannot will evil
- ◆ God cannot will something that is opposed to the nature of being as such – He cannot will anything implying a contradiction

Benedict XVI

- ◆ Acting unreasonably contradicts God's nature

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ◆ Truth cannot be contradicted by God – His omnipotence does not mean that he can make good evil or make true what is false

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ It is incompatible with God to cause anyone to sin
- ◆ God preserves the order of justice and of nature

John Paul II

- ◆ It is the Trinity who guarantees the intelligibility and reasonableness of the natural order of things

b) Allah, on the contrary, is considered so 'transcendent' that his will is not linked to anything, not even reason. Thus, he can command evil to be done, act against reason, and even contradict himself, since he is not bound by his word. In this way, Islam confesses extreme voluntarism, which also includes fatalism

Benedict XVI

- ◆ Allah's will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality
- ◆ This extreme voluntarism leads to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness
- ◆ Allah can contradict himself, as he does with regard to 'holy war'
- ◆ Allah is not bound even by his own word. He can even order sin. Were it his will, he could even command us to practice idolatry...

Saint John Damascene

- ◆ ...or even command that adultery be committed

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ Because of the uncontainable will of Allah, what is left to man? Fatalism

Benedict XVI

- ◆ In face of the ways that God's image can be destroyed, it is important to state clearly the God in whom we believe

c) The true God 'cannot deny himself', because he is faithful, his Will is immutable

Benedict XVI

- ◆ The true God is He who acts in harmony with reason

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ God is not subject to caprice or impulse; His will is entirely unchangeable

Sacred Scripture

- ◆ God cannot deny himself
- ◆ God is faithful

d) Another difference which proceeds from the previous: the concept of the true God about morality. Muslim matrimony and the heaven Allah promises are contrary to the teachings of the Church

Saint John Damascene

- ◆ Mohammed prescribed polygamy and divorce

Sacred Scripture

- ◆ The true God established indissoluble and monogamy matrimony

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ Human felicity is not in bodily pleasures, which the followers of Mohammed seek as their reward

Sacred Scripture

- ◆ When they rise from the dead, humans neither marry nor are given in marriage
- ◆ For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness
- ◆ The impure will not inherit the kingdom of God

To help to understand the topic:

IV – Brief doctrinal appendix on the question of evil and God vs. Allah

- a) If the will of Allah is linked to nothing, not to the truth, nor to goodness, he can desire evil per se, since the criteria of good and evil is his supreme will. The true God, on the other hand, permits evil, but does not desire it. Therefore per accidens He can permit something evil, but per se derive something good from it**

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ God is in no way, the cause of moral evil but He permits it

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ◆ Almighty God only permits any evil among His works so as to bring good out of it

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ♦ The good that God derives from an evil he permits is always greater than the privation of good by the evil permitted

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ From the greatest moral evil ever committed, God brought the greatest of goods

b) Regarding a possible objection: the use of violence in the Old Testament

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ♦ If the health of the whole body demands the excision of a member, it will be both praiseworthy and advantageous to have it cut away
- ♦ Inasmuch as He wills the good of justice or of the order of the universe, God is said to hate the things whose punishment or corruption He wills

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ♦ The punishment of the wicked is among God's good works

Sacred Scripture

- ♦ Nations exterminated for ingrained malice – even these were often spared and given space for repentance

Benedict XVI

- ♦ The Lord was prepared to forgive, but the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were locked into a totalizing and paralyzing evil

V – Some passages of the Koran, clearly proving everything that has been presented

a) On the Trinity and the Divine Filiation of Jesus Christ

Koran

- ♦ It is a blasphemy and merits grievous penalty to speak of a Trinity
- ♦ Say not 'Trinity': God is far exalted above having a son
- ♦ It is most monstrous to say that God had a Son
- ♦ Those who profess the divinity of Jesus are condemned to hell
- ♦ Jesus did not preach his own divinity, but rather that of Allah, his Lord
- ♦ Before Allah, Jesus is as Adam...
- ♦ ...with no distinction between Jesus and the prophets
- ♦ ...and no more than an apostle as those that passed away before him

b) Other passages of the Koran. As shown earlier, each phrase manifests the imperious will of Allah

- ♦ Allah cannot be questioned for His acts
- ♦ Allah has power over all things
- ♦ For those whom Allah has thrown out of the Way, never shall they find salvation
- ♦ Kill the unbelievers wherever you overtake them
- ♦ Fight them until justice and faith in Allah prevails
- ♦ Those who reject Allah shall be thrown into fire
- ♦ Punishment of execution, or crucifixion, or amputating hands and feet, or exile
- ♦ Strike their necks with a sword, and cut off their fingertips
- ♦ Those who fight in the cause of Allah, for them is the forgiveness of sins and a generous provision
- ♦ Fight and slay. Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful

- ◆ Fight the unbelievers and let them find firmness in you
- ◆ Allah will admit to Paradise those who fight the unbelievers

I – TO DENY THE TRINITY IS TO DENY THE ONE TRUE GOD

a) In His infinite goodness, the One true God revealed Himself to man in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

PAUL VI

God revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit

God alone can give us right and full knowledge of this reality by revealing Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in whose eternal life we are by grace called to share, here below in the obscurity of faith and after death in eternal light. (Paul VI. *Apostolic letter*, Credo of the People of God, no. 9 June 30, 1968)

IV LATERAN COUNCIL (ECUMENICAL XII)

Revelation that was begun in the Old Testament and reached its fullness in Christ

This Holy Trinity according to common essence undivided, and according to personal properties distinct, granted the doctrine of salvation to the human race, first through Moses and the holy prophets and his other servants according to the most methodical disposition of the time. And finally the only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, incarnate by the whole Trinity in common, conceived of Mary ever Virgin with the Holy Spirit cooperating, made true man, formed of a rational soul and human flesh, one Person in two natures, clearly pointed out the way of life. (Denzinger-Hünemann 800-801. IV *Lateran Council*, *The Catholic Faith*, November 11-30, 1215)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

The Trinity was clearly revealed to us by Christ

He has said: Teach ye all nations, baptising

them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and again, there are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. (Catechism of Trent, no. 1013, The Father)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God is three Persons

The divine essence is not only really the same as one person, but it is really the same as the three persons. Whence, one person, and two, and three, can be predicated of the essence as if we were to say, 'The essence is the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost'. And because this word 'God' can of itself stand for the essence, as above explained (4, ad 3), hence, as it is true to say, 'The essence is the three persons'; so likewise it is true to say, 'God is the three persons'. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 39, a. 6)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the mystery of God in Himself

The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the central mystery of Christian faith and life. It is the mystery of God in himself. It is therefore the source of all the other mysteries of faith, the light that enlightens them. It is the most fundamental and essential teaching in the 'hierarchy of the truths of faith'. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 234)

SYNOD OF ROME

The salvation of Christians is by believing in the Trinity

This then is the salvation of Christians, that believing in the Trinity, that is, in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit, [and] baptized in this, we believe without doubt that there is only one true divinity and power, majesty and substance of the same. (Denzinger-Hünemann 177. Synod of Rome, *Profession of Faith of Bishop Paulinus of Antioch*, 382)

- b) Denying the Trinity after revelation is an affront to the divine wisdom and goodness, it is to call God a liar

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

God cannot lie

Faith is certain. It is more certain than all human knowledge because it is founded on the very word of God who cannot lie. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 157)

PIUS IX

God can neither deceive nor be deceived

For who does not know, or cannot know that all faith is to be given to God who speaks, and that nothing is more suitable to reason itself than to acquiesce and firmly adhere to those truths which it has been established were revealed by God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived? (Denzinger-Hünermann 2778. Pius IX, Encyclical *Qui pluribus*, November 9, 1846)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

The human reply to God who reveals Himself can only be full obedience of the intellect and the will in faith

Since man is wholly dependent on God as his Creator and Lord, and since created reason is completely subject to uncreated truth, we are bound by faith to give full obedience of intellect and will to God who reveals [can. 1]. But the Catholic Church professes that this faith, which 'is the beginning of human salvation' [cf. n. 801], is a supernatural virtue by which we, with the aid and inspiration of the grace of God, believe that the things revealed by Him are true, not because the intrinsic truth of the revealed things has been perceived by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God Himself who reveals them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived [can. 2] (Denzinger-Hünermann 3008. Vatican Council I, Session III, Dogmatic constitution concerning the Catholic Faith, April 23, 1870)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

To doubt the word of God is the extreme of folly and misery

We should be satisfied with the assurance and certitude which faith gives us that we have been taught these truths by God Himself, to doubt whose word is the extreme of folly and misery. (Catechism of Trent, 1013, The Father)

II COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (ECUMENICAL V)

Anathema upon those who do not confess one God in Three Persons

If anyone does not confess that (there is) one nature or substance of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and one power and one might, and that the Trinity is consubstantial, one Godhead being worshipped in three substances, or persons, let such a one be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünermann 421. II Council of Constantinople, Session III, June 2, 553)

- c) To speak of monotheism without the Trinity is to create another 'god'

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

There is no other God other than the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

We must believe in no one but God: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 178)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The only true God is Trinity

Because in that only true God, which is Trinity, it is naturally true not only that he is only one God, but also that he is Trinity, thus the same true God is Trinity in persons, and is only one in nature. (Saint Augustine of Hippo, On Faith, dedicated to Peter, Ch. 1, no. 4)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

There is one true God, three in Persons

The sacrosanct Roman Church, founded

by the voice of our Lord and Savior, firmly believes, professes, and preaches **one true God omnipotent, unchangeable, and eternal, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; one in essence, three in persons; Father unborn, Son born of the Father, Holy Spirit proceeding from Father and Son.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 1330. *Council of Florence, Bull Cantata Domino*, February 4, 1442)

I SYNOD OF TOLEDO

Outside of the Trinity, there is no nature which may be believed to be God

This Trinity, distinct in Persons, [is] **one indivisible and undifferentiated substance, [a united substance, indivisible and undifferentiated in its] strength, power, and majesty; [we believe that] apart from it [this] there is no nature that is divine, whether of an angel or of a spirit or of any other power, which may be believed to be God.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 188. Synod of Toledo, *Symbolum Toletanum I, and its longer form, called Libellus in modum symboli*, September of 400)

- d) **The fact that ‘Allah’ can be translated as ‘the god’ does not mean that he is the true God. It would be like affirming that ‘Baal’ is the ‘Adonai’, for both can be translated as ‘Lord’**

PIUS XI

Beware to not abuse the name of God as a meaningless label: God is one in the Trinity of Persons

Beware, Venerable Brethren, of that growing abuse, in speech as in writing, of the name of God as though it were a meaningless label, to be affixed to any creation, more or less arbitrary, of human speculation. Use your influence on the Faithful, that they refuse to yield to this aberration. Our God is the Personal God, supernatural, omnipotent, infinitely perfect, one in the Trinity of Persons, tri-personal in the unity of divine essence, the Creator of all existence. Lord, King and

ultimate Consummator of the history of the world, who will not, and cannot, tolerate a rival God by His side. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mit brennender sorge*, no. 9, March 14, 1937)

SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE

Mohammed does not accept the Trinity

He [Mohammed] says that there is one God, Creator of all things created, Who has neither been begotten nor has begotten. (Saint John Damascene. *Concerning Heresies*, no. 101)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The Mohammedans ridicule the Trinity, and think we are insane for professing three persons in God

The Christian faith principally consists in acknowledging the holy Trinity, and it specially glories in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. [...] **The following are the things you say the Muslims attack and ridicule: They ridicule the fact that we say Christ is the Son of God, when God has no wife (Qur’ân 6:110; 72:3); and they think we are insane for professing three persons in God, even though we do not mean by this three gods.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Compendium on reasons for the Faith against Muslim objections*, Ch. 1)

SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE

The superstition of the Ishmaelites is an error that is a forerunner of the Antichrist

There is also the superstition of the Ishmaelites which until this day prevails and keeps people in error, being a forerunner of the Antichrist. They are descended from Ishmael, was born to Abraham of Agar, and for this reason they are called both Agarenes and Ishmaelites. [...] And so down to the time of Heraclius they were very great idolaters. From that time to the present **a false prophet named Mohammed has appeared in their midst. This man, after having chanced upon the Old and New Testaments and likewise, it seems, having conversed with an Arian monk, devised his own heresy.** (Saint John Damascene. *Concerning Heresies*, 101)

Pius XI

Those who say that all religions are good and praiseworthy distort the idea of true religion

For since they hold it for certain that men destitute of all religious sense are very rarely to be found, they seem to have founded on that belief a hope that the nations, although they differ among themselves in certain religious matters, will without much difficulty come to agree as brethren in professing certain doctrines, which form as it were a common basis of the spiritual life. For which reason conventions, meetings and addresses are frequently arranged by these persons, at which a large number of listeners are present, and at which all without distinction are invited to join in the discussion, both infidels of every kind, and Christians, even those who have unhappily fallen away from Christ or who with obstinacy and pertinacity deny His divine nature and mission. **Certainly such attempts can nowise be approved by Catholics, founded as they are on that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy, since they all in different ways manifest and signify that sense which is inborn in us all, and by which we are led to God and to the obedient acknowledgment of His rule. Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion they reject it, and little by little, turn aside to naturalism and atheism, as it is called; from which it clearly follows that one who supports those who hold these theories and attempt to realize them, is altogether abandoning the divinely revealed religion.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 2, January 6, 1928)

Pius X

To consider all religious experiences as true is the Modernist error what believes all religions are truly equal

For the Modernist believer, on the contrary, it is an established and certain fact that the **divine reality** does really exist in itself and quite independently of the person who believes in it. If you ask on what foundation this assertion of the Believer rests, they answer:

In the experience of the individual. [...] Here it is well to note at once that, **given this doctrine of experience united with the other doctrine of symbolism, every religion, even that of paganism, must be held to be true.** What is to prevent such experiences from being met within every religion? In fact that they are to be found is asserted by not a few. **And with what right will Modernists deny the truth of an experience affirmed by a follower of Islam? With what right can they claim true experiences for Catholics alone? Indeed Modernists do not deny but actually admit, some confusedly, others in the most open manner, that all religions are true.** That they cannot feel otherwise is clear. For on what ground, according to their theories, could falsity be predicated of any religion whatsoever? (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 14, September 8, 1907)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

True adoration requires the truth of faith

In spirit and in truth [But the hour is coming, and is now here, when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Jn 4:23] can be understood in a third way, as indicating the characteristics of true worship. For two things are necessary for a true worship: one is that the worship be spiritual; [...] Secondly, the worship should be in truth. First, in the truth of faith, because no fervent spiritual desire is meritorious unless united to the truth of faith [...] This prayer, then, requires three things: first, the fervor of love; secondly, the truth of faith. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John*, Ch. 4, lecture 2, no. 611)

Since God is absolutely simple, there cannot be false knowledge of him – he who denies that God is triune neither knows God nor adores Him

As to his saying, ‘You people worship’, [‘what you do not understand’, Jn 4:22] and so on, it should be pointed out that, as the Philosopher says, **knowledge of complex things is different than knowledge of simple things. For something can be known about complex things in such a way that something else about them remains unknown; thus there can be false knowledge about them.** For example, if someone has true

knowledge of an animal as to its substance, he might be in error touching the knowledge of one of its accidents, such as whether it is black or white; or of a difference, such as whether it has wings or is four-footed. **But there cannot be false knowledge of simple things: because they are either perfectly known** inasmuch as their quiddity is known; or **they are not known at all**, if one cannot attain to a knowledge of them. Therefore, since God is absolutely simple, there cannot be false knowledge of him in the sense that something might be known about him and something remain unknown, but only in the sense that knowledge of him is not attained. Accordingly, anyone who believes that God is something that he is not, for example, a body, or something like that, does not adore God but something else, because he does not know him, but something else. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Gospel of Saint John*, Ch. 4, lecture 2, no. 603)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Theological faith in the Triune God is distinct from belief in Allah

For this reason, the distinction between theological faith and belief in the other religions, must be firmly held. [...] This distinction is not always borne in mind in current theological reflection. Thus, **theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often identified with belief in other religions**, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself. **This is one of the reasons why the differences between Christianity and the other religions tend to be reduced at times to the point of disappearance.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 7, August 6, 2000)

II – TO DENY JESUS IS TO DENY THE FATHER

- a) To deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, is to deny the Father

SACRED SCRIPTURES

No one goes to the Father except for through the Son

Jesus said to him, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. **No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my Father.** From now on you do know him and have seen him.' [...] **Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.** (Jn 14:6-7.9)

No one who denies the Son has the Father

Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Whoever denies the Father and the Son, **this is the antichrist. No one who denies the Son has the Father**, but whoever confesses the Son has the Father as well. (1Jn 2:22-23)

Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him

He [the Father] has given all judgment to his Son, so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. **Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.** (Jn 5:22-23)

Who hates the Son hates also the Father

Whoever hates me also hates my Father. (Jn 15:23)

No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him

At that time Jesus said in reply, 'I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. **All things have been handed over to me by my Father.** No one knows the Son except the Father, and **no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him**.' (Mt 11: 25-27)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Christ is the fulfillment of Revelation

'In many and various ways God spoke of old

to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son' (Heb 1:1-2). **No one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.** In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. Saint John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1-2 [...] **Christian faith cannot accept 'revelations' that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfilment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such 'revelations'.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 65.67)

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

In giving us His Son, God spoke to us all together, once and for all – to seek other revelations is an offence to God

For, in giving us, as He did, His Son, which is His Word – and He has no other – He spake to us all together, once and for all, in this single Word, and He has no occasion to speak further. [...] That which God spake of old in the prophets to our fathers, in sundry ways and divers manners, He has now, at last, in these days, spoken to us once and for all in the Son. Herein the Apostle declares that God has become, as it were, dumb, and has no more to say, since that which He spake aforetime, in part to the prophets, He has now spoken altogether in Him, giving us the All, which is His Son. **Wherefore he that would now enquire of God, or seek any vision or revelation, would not only be acting foolishly, but would be committing an offence against God, by setting his eyes altogether upon Christ, and seeking no new thing or aught beside.** (Saint John of the Cross. *Ascent of Carmel*, Book II, Ch. 22, no. 4-5)

SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

The Father has indignation on behalf of his only-begotten Son – let them worship the Son, since otherwise the Father accepts not their service

For the Father has indignation when the Only-begotten Son is set at nought. For it

is grievous to a king that merely his soldier should be dishonoured; and when one of his nobler officers or friends is dishonoured, then his anger is greatly increased: but **if any should do despite to the king's only-begotten son himself, who shall appease the father's indignation on behalf of his only-begotten Son? If, therefore, any one wishes to show piety towards God, let him worship the Son, since otherwise the Father accepts not his service.** (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechetical Lecture X*, One Lord Jesus Christ, no. 1-2)

b) It is, therefore, to deny the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

It is not only necessary to believe in one God, the Creator, but also that God is the Father and that Christ is the true Son of God

It is not only necessary for Christians to believe in one God who is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things; but also **they must believe that God is the Father and that Christ is the true Son of God.** This, as Saint Peter says, is not mere fable, but is certain and proved by the word of God on the Mount of Transfiguration. "For we have not by following artificial fables made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eyewitnesses of His greatness. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, this voice coming down to Him from the excellent glory: **'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.'** And this voice, we heard brought from heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2Pet 1:16). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum The Apostoles' Creed*, a.2)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

They are in the True God, who are in his Son Jesus Christ

We also know that the Son of God has come and has given us discernment to know the one who is true. **And we are in the one who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.** (1Jn 5: 20)

BENEDICT XVI

To believe in God and to believe in Jesus are not two separate acts but one single act of faith

A twofold commandment of faith: to believe in God and to believe in Jesus. In fact, the Lord said to his disciples: 'Believe in God, believe also in me' (Jn 14:1). **They are not two separate acts but one single act of faith, full adherence to salvation wrought by God the Father through his Only-begotten Son.** The New Testament puts an end to the Father's invisibility. God has shown his face, as Jesus' answer to the Apostle Philip confirms: 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn 14:9). (Benedict XVI. *Regina Caeli*, May 22, 2001)

Believing in God means accepting Jesus of Nazareth

Believing in God means giving up our own prejudices and **accepting the actual face in which he revealed himself: Jesus of Nazareth the man.** And this process also leads to recognizing him and to serving him in others. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, February 3, 2013)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his 'beloved Son'

For a Christian, **believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his 'beloved Son'**, in whom the Father is 'well pleased'; God tells us to listen to him. **The Lord himself said to his disciples: 'Believe in God, believe also in me'** (Jn 14:1). We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: 'No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known' (Jn 1:18). Because he 'has seen the Father', Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him (Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 151)

JOHN PAUL II

No one can enter into communion with God except through Christ

Christ is the one Savior of all, **the only one able to reveal God and lead to God.** [...] **No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ,** by the working of the Holy Spirit. **Christ's one, universal mediation,** far from being an obstacle on the journey toward God, **is the way established by God himself,** a fact of which Christ is fully aware. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 5, December 7, 1990)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The faith the holy patriarchs and prophets received preaches that the Trinity is but one God

In effect, **the faith that the holy patriarchs and prophets received** by divine inspiration before the Incarnation of the Son of God, the faith, that the holy Apostles heard also of the same Incarnate Lord, and instructed by the magisterium of the Holy Spirit, they preached not only by words, but also they left fixed in their writings for the salutary instruction of their followers, **faith that preaches that the Trinity is but one God, that is to say, Father Son and Holy Spirit.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Faith*, dedicated to Peter, Ch. 1, no. 4.)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Only those who belong to Christ are Abraham's descendants and his heirs

Now the promises were made to **Abraham and to his descendant.** It does not say, 'And to descendants', as referring to many, but as referring to one, 'And to your descendant', **who is Christ.** [...] **And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendant, heirs according to the promise.** (Gal 3:16, 29)

SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE

Mohammed denies that Christ is truly the Son of God

He [Mohammed] says that the Christ is the Word of God and His Spirit, but a creature and a servant, and that He was begotten, without seed, of Mary the sister of Moses and Aaron. For, he says, the Word and God and the Spirit entered into Mary and she brought forth Jesus, who was a prophet and servant of God. (Saint John Damascene. *Concerning Heresies*, 101)

Mohammed says that it was sinful men who wrote that Jesus said: 'I am the Son of God and God'

And he says this, that when the Christ had ascended into heaven God asked Him: "O Jesus, didst thou say: 'I am the Son of God and God?'" And Jesus, he says, answered: 'Be merciful to me, Lord. Thou knowest that I did not say this and that I did not scorn to be thy servant. But sinful men have written that I made this statement, and they have lied about me and have fallen into error.' (Saint John Damascene. *Concerning Heresies*, 101)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Muslims ridicule us for holding that Christ is the Son of the living God since they are carnal

First of all we must observe that Muslims are silly in ridiculing us for holding that Christ is the Son of the living God, as if God had a wife. Since they are carnal, they can think only of what is flesh and blood. For any wise man can observe that the mode of generation is not the same for everything, but generation applies to each thing according to the special manner of its nature. [...] So generation should be understood of God as it applies to an intellectual nature. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Compendium on reasons for the Faith against Muslim objections*, Ch. 3)

SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE

The muslims end up with an idea of God that is mutilated

Moreover, they call us heretics, or Associators, because, they say, we introduce an associate with God by declaring Christ to the Son of God and God. We say to them in

rejoinder: [...] 'As long as you say that Christ is the Word of God and Spirit, why do you accuse us of being heretics? For the word, and the spirit, is inseparable from that in which it naturally has existence. Therefore, if the Word of God is in God, then it is obvious that He is God. If, however, He is outside of God, then, according to you, God is without word and without spirit. Consequently, by avoiding the introduction of an associate with God you have mutilated Him. It would be far better for you to say that He has an associate than to mutilate Him, as if you were dealing with a stone or a piece of wood or some other inanimate object. Thus, you speak untruly when you call us heretics; we retort by calling you Mutilators of God.' (Saint John Damascene. *Concerning Heresies*, 101)

III – THERE ARE ENORMOUS DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TRUE GOD AND ALLAH: GOD IS NEITHER IRRATIONAL NOR IMMORAL

- a) God cannot act against his supremely good nature: He cannot, therefore desire evil nor do that which contradicts reason

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God is the highest good

For the universal good stands higher than any particular good, just as 'the good of the people is better than the good of an individual', since the goodness and perfection of the whole stand higher than the goodness and perfection of the part. But the divine goodness is compared to all others as the universal good to a particular good, being, as we have shown, the good of every good. God is, therefore, the highest good. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book I, ch. 41, no. 2)

For God does things because He wills so to do, according to His nature

For God does things because He wills so to do; yet the power to do them does not come from His will, but from His nature. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I*, q. 25, a. 5, ad 1)

Voluntarism is an error – The end of the divine will is its goodness

For to the will the cause of its willing is the end. But the end of the divine will is its goodness. Hence, it is the cause of God's willing, just as it is also His act of will. [...] Through the foregoing is set aside the error of certain persons who said that all things proceed from God according to His simple will, which means that we are not to give an explanation of anything except that God wills it. This view is likewise opposed to Sacred Scripture, which proclaims that God made all things according to the order of His wisdom, as is said in the Psalm (103:24): 'You made all things in wisdom'. And in Sirach (1:10) it is said that God 'poured' His wisdom 'out upon all His works'. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book I, Ch. 87, no. 2.5-6)

Therefore God cannot will evil

For the virtue of a being is that by which he operates well. Now every operation of God is an operation of virtue, since His virtue is His essence, as was shown above. Therefore, God cannot will evil. Again, the will never aims at evil without some error existing in the reason, at least with respect to a particular object of choice. For, since the object of the will is the apprehended good, the will cannot aim at evil unless in some way it is proposed to it as a good; and this cannot take place without error. But in the divine knowledge there cannot be error, as was shown above. God's will cannot, therefore, tend towards evil. Moreover, God is the highest good, as has been shown. But the highest good cannot bear any mingling with evil, as neither can the highest hot thing bear any mingling with the cold. The divine will, therefore, cannot be turned to evil. Furthermore, since the good has the nature of an end, evil cannot enter the will except by turning away from the end. But the divine will cannot be turned from the end, since it can will nothing except by willing itself. Therefore, it cannot will evil. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book I, Ch. 95, no. 2-5)

God cannot will something that is opposed to the nature of being as such – He cannot will anything implying a contradiction

Again, as was shown above, in willing His own

being, which is His own goodness, God wills all other things in so far as they bear His likeness. But in so far as a thing is opposed to the nature of being as such, there cannot be preserved in it the likeness of the first being, namely, the divine being, which is the source of being. Hence, God cannot will something that is opposed to the nature of being as such. But just as it is opposed to the nature of man as man to be irrational, so it is opposed to the nature of being as such that something be at once being and nonbeing. God, therefore, cannot will. But this is included in everything that is of itself impossible, which has an opposition with itself as implying a contradiction. The will of God, therefore, cannot be of that which is of itself impossible. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book I, Ch. 84, no. 3)

BENEDICT XVI

Acting unreasonably contradicts God's nature

Is the conviction that acting unreasonably contradicts God's nature merely a Greek idea, or is it always and intrinsically true? I believe that here we can see the profound harmony between what is Greek in the best sense of the word and the biblical understanding of faith in God. Modifying the first verse of the Book of Genesis, the first verse of the whole Bible, John began the prologue of his Gospel with the words: 'In the beginning was the λόγος'. This is the very word used by the emperor: God acts, **σὺν λόγῳ**, with logos. Logos means both reason and word – a reason which is creative and capable of self-communication, precisely as reason. John thus spoke the final word on the biblical concept of God, and in this word all the often toilsome and tortuous threads of biblical faith find their culmination and synthesis. In the beginning was the logos, and the logos is God, says the Evangelist. The encounter between the Biblical message and Greek thought did not happen by chance. [...] A profound encounter of faith and reason is taking place here, an encounter between genuine enlightenment and religion. From the very heart of Christian faith and, at the same time, the heart of Greek thought now joined to faith, Manuel II was able to say: Not to act 'with logos' is contrary to God's nature. (Benedict XVI. *Address at the University of Regensburg*, September 12, 2006)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Truth cannot be contradicted by God – His omnipotence does not mean that he can make good evil or make true what is false

Accordingly, to say, if God is almighty, let Him make what has been done to be undone, is in fact to say, **if God is almighty, let Him make a thing to be in the same sense both true and false. [...] This truth cannot be contradicted by God, in whom abides the supreme and unchangeable truth**, and whose illumination is the source of all the truth to be found in any mind or understanding. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Reply to Faustus the Manichæan*, Book 26, no. 5)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

It is incompatible with God to cause anyone to sin

Besides, all wisdom and goodness in man are derived from the wisdom and goodness of God, as a certain likeness of Him. **But it is incompatible with human wisdom and goodness to cause anyone to sin; much more, then, is it incompatible with these divine qualities. [...]** Hence, it is said in Sirach (Sir 15:12): ‘Say not: He caused me to err. For He has no need of wicked men’. And later: **‘He commanded no man to act wickedly, and He has given no man license to sin’** (Sir 15:21). And in James (Jas 1:13) it is said: ‘Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God: for **God is not a tempter of evils’**. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book III, Ch. 162, no. 4.6)

God preserves the order of justice and of nature

God’s **Providence does not destroy the nature and order of things**, but preserves them. So **God’s wisdom was most evident in his preserving the order of justice and of nature**. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Compendium on reasons for the Faith against Muslim objections*, Ch. 7)

JOHN PAUL II

It is the Trinity who guarantees the intel-

ligibility and reasonableness of the natural order of things

It is the one and the same God who establishes and guarantees the intelligibility and reasonableness of the natural order of things [...] and who reveals himself as the **Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**. This unity of truth, natural and revealed, is embodied in a living and personal way in Christ, as the Apostle reminds us: ‘Truth is in Jesus’ (cf. Eph 4:21; Col 1:15-20). He is the eternal Word in whom all things were created, and he is the incarnate Word who in his entire person reveals the Father (cf. Jn 1:14, 18). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Fides et ratio*, no. 34, September 14, 1998)

b) **Allah, on the contrary, is considered so ‘transcendent’ that his will is not linked to anything, not even reason. Thus, he can command evil to be done, act against reason, and even contradict himself, since he is not bound by his word. In this way, Islam confesses extreme voluntarism, which also includes fatalism**

BENEDICT XVI

Allah’s will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality

I was reminded of all this recently, when I read the edition by Professor Theodore Khoury (Münster) of part of the dialogue carried on – perhaps in 1391 in the winter barracks near Ankara – by the erudite Byzantine emperor Manuel II Paleologus and an educated Persian on the subject of Christianity and Islam, and the truth of both. [...] The decisive statement in this argument against violent conversion is this: not to act in accordance with reason is contrary to God’s nature. The editor, Theodore Khoury, observes: For the emperor, as a Byzantine shaped by Greek philosophy, this statement is self-evident. **But for Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent. His will is not bound up with any of our categories, even that of rationality**. (Benedict XVI. *Address at the University of Regensburg*, September 12, 2006)

This extreme voluntarism leads to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness

There arose a voluntarism which [...] led to the claim that we can only know God's *voluntas ordinata*. Beyond this is the realm of God's freedom, in virtue of which he could have done the opposite of everything he has actually done. This gives rise to positions which clearly approach those of Ibn Hazm and might even lead to the image of a capricious God, who is not even bound to truth and goodness. God's transcendence and otherness are so exalted that our reason, our sense of the true and good, are no longer an authentic mirror of God, whose deepest possibilities remain eternally unattainable and hidden behind his actual decisions. As opposed to this, the faith of the Church has always insisted that between God and us, between his eternal Creator Spirit and our created reason there exists a real analogy, in which – as the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 stated – unlikeness remains infinitely greater than likeness, yet not to the point of abolishing analogy and its language. God does not become more divine when we push him away from us in a sheer, impenetrable voluntarism. (Benedict XVI. *Address at the University of Regensburg*, September 12, 2006)

Allah can contradict himself, as he does with regard to 'holy war'

In the seventh conversation (*διάλεξις* – controversy) edited by Professor Khoury, the emperor touches on the theme of the holy war. **The emperor must have known that surah 2, 256 reads: 'There is no compulsion in religion'.** According to some of the experts, **this is probably one of the suras of the early period, when Mohammed was still powerless and under threat. But naturally the emperor also knew the instructions, developed later and recorded in the Qur'an, concerning holy war.** Without descending to details, such as the difference in treatment accorded to those who have the 'Book' and the 'infidels', he addresses his interlocutor with a startling brusqueness, a brusqueness that we find unacceptable, on the central question about the relationship between religion and violence in general, saying: 'Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, **such as his**

command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.' (Benedict XVI. *Address at the University of Regensburg*, September 12, 2006)

Allah is not bound even by his own word. He can even order sin. Were it his will, he could even command us to practice idolatry...

Here Khoury quotes a work of the noted French Islamist R. Arnaldez, who points out that Ibn Hazm went so far as to state that God [Allah] is not bound even by his own word, and that nothing would oblige him to reveal the truth to us. **Were it God's will, we would even have to practise idolatry.** (Benedict XVI. *Address at the University of Regensburg*, September 12, 2006)

SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE

...or even command that adultery be committed

Mohammed once had a friend named Zeid. This man had a beautiful wife with whom Mohammed fell in love. Once, when they were sitting together, Mohammed said: 'Oh, by the way, God has commanded me to take your wife.' The other answered: 'You are an apostle. Do as God has told you and take my wife.' Rather – to tell the story over from the beginning – he said to him: 'God has given me the command that you put away your wife.' And he put her away. Then several days later: 'Now,' he said, 'God has commanded me to take her.' **Then, after he had taken her and committed adultery with her, he made this law: 'Let him who will put away his wife. And if, after having put her away, he should return to her, let another marry her. For it is not lawful to take her unless she have been married by another.** Furthermore, if a brother puts away his wife, let his own brother marry her, should he so wish.' (Saint John Damascene. *Concerning Heresies*, 101)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Because of the uncontainable will of Allah, what is left to man? Fatalism

Concerning merit, which depends on free will, you assert that the Muslims and other nations

hold that God's fore-knowledge or decree imposes necessity on human actions; thus they say that man cannot die or even sin unless God decrees this, and that every person has his destiny written on his forehead. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Compendium on reasons for the Faith against Muslim objections*, Ch. 1)

BENEDICT XVI

In face of the ways that God's image can be destroyed, it is important to state clearly the God in whom we believe

The second section of the Creed tells us more. **This creative Reason is Goodness, it is Love. It has a face.** God does not leave us groping in the dark. **He has shown himself to us as a man.** In his greatness he has let himself become small. **'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father'**, Jesus says (Jn 14:9). God has taken on a human face. He has loved us even to the point of letting himself be nailed to the Cross for our sake, in order to bring the sufferings of mankind to the very heart of God. **Today, when we have learned to recognize the pathologies and the life-threatening diseases associated with religion and reason, and the ways that God's image can be destroyed by hatred and fanaticism, it is important to state clearly the God in whom we believe, and to proclaim confidently that this God has a human face.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, Islinger Feld, Regensburg, September 12, 2006)

- c) **The true God 'cannot deny himself', because he is faithful; his will is immutable**

BENEDICT XVI

The true God is He who acts in harmony with reason

The truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as logos and, as logos, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf. Certainly, love, as Saint Paul says, 'transcends' knowledge and is thereby capable of perceiving more than thought alone (cf. Eph 3:19); nonetheless it continues to be love of the God who is Logos. Consequently, Christian worship is, again to quote Paul – 'λογικη λατρεία', worship in harmony with the

eternal Word and with our reason (cf. Rom 12:1). (Benedict XVI. *Address at the University of Regensburg*, September 12, 2006)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God is not subject to caprice or impulse; His will is entirely unchangeable

The will of God is entirely unchangeable. [...] whereas the will would be changed, if one should begin to will what before he had not willed; or cease to will what he had willed before. **This cannot happen, unless we presuppose change either in the knowledge or in the disposition of the substance of the willer.** For since the will regards good, a man may in two ways begin to will a thing. In one way when that thing begins to be good for him, and this does not take place without a change in him. Thus when the cold weather begins, it becomes good to sit by the fire; though it was not so before. In another way when he knows for the first time that a thing is good for him, though he did not know it before; hence we take counsel in order to know what is good for us. Now it has already been shown that **both the substance of God and His knowledge are entirely unchangeable** (9, 1; 14, 15). **Therefore His will must be entirely unchangeable.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 19, a. 7)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

God cannot deny himself

This saying is trustworthy: If we have died with him we shall also live with him; if we persevere we shall also reign with him. But if we deny him he will deny us. If we are unfaithful he **remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself.** (2Tim 2: 11-13)

God is faithful

God is not man that he should speak falsely, nor human, that he should change his mind. **Is he one to speak and not act, to decree and not fulfill?** (Num 23:19)

- d) **Another difference which proceeds from the previous: the concept of the true God about morality. Muslim matrimony**

and the heaven Allah promises are contrary to the teachings of the Church

SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE

Mohammed prescribed polygamy and divorce

As has been related, this Mohammed wrote many ridiculous books, to each one of which he set a title. For example, there is the book 'On Woman', in which he plainly makes legal provision for taking four wives and, if it be possible, a thousand concubines -as many as one can maintain, besides the four wives. He also made it legal to put away whichever wife one might wish, and, should one so wish, to take to oneself another in the same way. (Saint John Damascene. *Concerning Heresies*, 101)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The true God established indissoluble and monogamy matrimony

The Pharisees approached and asked, 'Is it lawful for a husband to divorce his wife?' They were testing him. He said to them in reply, 'What did Moses command you?' They replied, 'Moses permitted him to write a bill of divorce and dismiss her.' But Jesus told them, 'Because of the hardness of your hearts he wrote you this commandment. **But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother (and be joined to his wife), and the two shall become one flesh.'** So they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore **what God has joined together, no human being must separate.** In the house the disciples again questioned him about this. He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery'. (Mk 10: 2-12)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Human felicity is not in bodily pleasures, which the followers of Mohammed seek as their reward

Furthermore, the highest perfection of man

cannot lie in a union with things inferior to himself, but, rather, in a union with some reality of a higher character, for the end is better than that which is for the sake of the end. Now, the aforementioned pleasures consist in this fact: that man is, through his senses, united with some things that are his inferiors, that is, with certain sensible objects. So, felicity is not to be located in pleasures of this sort. [...] Furthermore, the ultimate end of everything is God, as is clear from what has been indicated earlier. So, we should consider the ultimate end of man to be that whereby he most closely approaches God. But, through the aforesaid pleasures, man is kept away from a close approach to God, for this approach is effected through contemplation, and the aforementioned pleasures are the chief impediment to contemplation, since they plunge man very deep into sensible things, consequently distracting him from intelligible objects. Therefore, **human felicity must not be located in bodily pleasures.** [...] Refuted, too, are the fables of the Jews and the Saracens, who identified the rewards for just men with these pleasures, for felicity is the reward for virtue. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book III, Ch. 27, no. 6.10.13)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

When they rise from the dead, humans neither marry nor are given in marriage

Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and put this question to him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, 'If someone's brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother.' Now there were seven brothers. The first married a woman and died, leaving no descendants. So the second married her and died, leaving no descendants, and the third likewise. And the seven left no descendants. Last of all the woman also died. At the resurrection (when they arise) whose wife will she be? For all seven had been married to her." Jesus said to them, 'Are you not misled because you do not know the scriptures or the power of God? **When they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but they are like the angels in heaven.**' (Mk 12:18-25)

For God did not call us to impurity, but to holiness

This is the will of God, your holiness: that you refrain from immorality, that each of you know how to acquire a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in lustful passion as do the Gentiles who do not know God; not to take advantage of or exploit a brother in this matter, for the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you before and solemnly affirmed. **For God did not call us to impurity but to holiness.** Therefore, whoever disregards this, disregards not a human being but God, who (also) gives his holy Spirit to you. (1Thess 4:3-8)

The impure will not inherit the kingdom of God

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: immorality, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, rivalry, jealousy, outbursts of fury, acts of selfishness, dissensions, factions, occasions of envy, drinking bouts, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21)

TO HELP TO UNDERSTAND THE TOPIC:

IV – BRIEF DOCTRINAL APPENDIX ON THE QUESTION OF EVIL AND GOD VS. ALLAH

- a) If the will of Allah is linked to nothing, not to the truth, nor to goodness, he can desire evil *per se*, since the criteria of good and evil is his supreme will. The true God, on the other hand, permits evil, but does not desire it. Therefore *per accidens* He can permit something evil, but *per se* derive a greater good from it

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

God is in no way the cause of moral evil but He permits it

God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil. (Cf. Saint Augustine, *De*

libero arbitrio I, 1, 2; Saint Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II, 79, 1) **He permits it**, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 311)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Almighty God only permits any evil among His works so as to bring good out of it

For the **Almighty God**, who, as even the heathen acknowledge, has supreme power over all things, being Himself supremely good, would never permit the existence of anything evil among His works, if He were not so omnipotent and good that He can bring good even out of evil. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *The Handbook on Faith*, hope and love, Ch. 11)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The good that God derives from an evil he permits is always greater than the privation of good by the evil permitted

It is impossible that any evil, as such, should be sought for by the appetite, either natural, or animal, or by the intellectual appetite which is the will. Nevertheless evil may be sought accidentally, so far as it accompanies a good [...] Now the evil that accompanies one good, is the privation of another good. Never therefore would evil be sought after, not even accidentally, unless the good that accompanies the evil were more desired than the good of which the evil is the privation. Now God wills no good more than He wills His own goodness; yet He wills one good more than another. Hence He in no way wills the evil of sin, which is the privation of right order towards the divine good. The evil of natural defect, or of punishment, He does will, by willing the good to which such evils are attached. Thus in willing justice He wills punishment; and in willing the preservation of the natural order, He wills some things to be naturally corrupted. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 19, a. 9)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

From the greatest moral evil ever committed, God brought the greatest of goods

In time we can discover that God in his almighty providence can bring a good from the consequences of an evil, even a moral evil, caused by his creatures: 'It was not you', said Joseph to his brothers, 'who sent me here, but God. . . You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive' (Gen 45:8; 50:20;

From all that which was explained above, it is evident that certain acts of God in the Old Testament, such as war and the extermination or chastisement of entire cities, which at first glance may cause perplexity, should be understood within the context of a greater good.

For example, the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah had in sight the preservation of humanity from an evil that has no cure: there were not even ten just men in the city... The Lord's attitude with Nineveh, which did penance after the preaching of Jonah, was different. God always prefers mercy to justice, and only avails himself of the latter when the former does not take effect. In summary, God acts like a surgeon who amputates a gangrenous arm to save the whole body. That is to say: in perfect accordance with that which the sweet and merciful Jesus says: 'If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away [...] If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away' (Mt 5:29-30).

Hence, there is no contradiction between the Old and New Testament since God, the author of both, is reasonable and cannot contradict himself. From whence the need of an infallible authority that interprets the Scripture as a whole.

In the case of Islam, with their god who is so 'transcendental' that he is linked neither to goodness nor truth, nor reason, it is not necessary to seek coherence while interpreting the Koran. That is why Islam does not possess any unique interpretive authority, but multiple interpreters. And throughout history there has never lacked fanatics who defended the worst crimes, basing themselves on a single passage of the Koran...

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

If the health of the whole body demands the excision of a member, it is both praiseworthy and advantageous to have it cut away

We observe that if the health of the whole body demands the excision of a member, through its being decayed or infectious to the other members, it will be both praiseworthy and advantageous to have it cut away. Now every individual person is compared to the whole community, as part to whole. Therefore if a man be dangerous and infectious to

cf. Tob 2:12 (Vulgate). From the greatest moral evil ever committed – the rejection and murder of God's only Son, caused by the sins of all men – God, by his grace that 'abounded all the more', (Rom 5:20) brought the greatest of goods: the glorification of Christ and our redemption. But for all that, evil never becomes a good. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 312)

b) Regarding a possible objection: the use of violence in the Old Testament

the community, on account of some sin, it is praiseworthy and advantageous that he be killed in order to safeguard the common good, since 'a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump' (1Cor 5:6). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 64, a. 2)

Inasmuch as He wills the good of justice or of the order of the universe, God is said to hate the things whose punishment He wills

However, God is said by similitude to hate some things, and this in a twofold way. In the first way, because God, in loving things

and by willing the existence of their good, wills the non-existence of the contrary evil. Hence, He is said to have a hatred of evils, for we are said to hate what we will not to exist. In the words of Zechariah (8:17): 'And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his friend and love not a false oath. For all these are the things that I hate, says the Lord.' These, however, are not effects in the manner of subsisting things, to which properly love and hate refer. The second way arises from the fact that God wills some greater good that cannot be without the loss of some lesser good. And thus He is said to hate, although this is rather to love. For thus, inasmuch as He wills the good of justice or of the order of the universe, which cannot exist without the punishment or corruption of some things, God is said to hate the things whose punishment or corruption He wills. In the words of Malachi (Mal 1:3): 'I have hated Esau'; and the Psalms (Ps 5:7): 'You hate all workers of iniquity: You destroy all who speak a lie. The bloody and the deceitful man the Lord will abhor.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book I, Ch. 96)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The punishment of the wicked is among God's good works

The punishment of the wicked, then, which is from God, is certainly an evil to the wicked, but it is among God's good Works, because it is just that the wicked be punished, and everything that is just is good indeed. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Retractions*, Book, 1, Ch. 26 – English)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Nations exterminated for ingrained malice – even these were often spared and given space for repentance

For truly, the ancient inhabitants of your holy land, whom you hated for deeds most odious – works of witchcraft and impious sacrifices, a cannibal feast of human flesh and of blood. These merciless murderers of children, and parents who took with their own hands defenseless lives, You willed to destroy by the hands of our fathers, that the land that is dearest of all to you might receive a

worthy colony of God's children. But even these, as they were men, you spared, and sent wasps as forerunners of your army that they might exterminate them by degrees. Not that you were without power to have the wicked vanquished in battle by the just, or wiped out at once by terrible beasts or by one decisive word; **But condemning them bit by bit, you gave them space for repentance.** You were not unaware that their race was wicked and their malice ingrained, And that their dispositions would never change; for they were a race accursed from the beginning. Neither out of fear for anyone did you grant amnesty for their sins. (Wis 12:3-11)

BENEDICT XVI

The Lord was prepared to forgive, but the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were locked into a totalizing and paralyzing evil

The first text on which we shall reflect is in chapter 18 of the Book of Genesis. It is recounted that the evil of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah had reached the height of depravity so as to require an intervention of God, an act of justice, that would prevent the evil from destroying those cities. [...] Abraham confronts God with the need to avoid a perfunctory form of justice: if the city is guilty it is right to condemn its crime and to inflict punishment, but – the great Patriarch affirms – it would be unjust to punish all the inhabitants indiscriminately. If there are innocent people in the city, they must not be treated as the guilty. God, who is a just judge, cannot act in this way, Abraham says rightly to God. [...] Abraham – as we remember – gradually decreases the number of innocent people necessary for salvation: if 50 would not be enough, 45 might suffice, and so on down to 10. [...] However, not even 10 just people were to be found in Sodom and Gomorrah so the cities were destroyed; a destruction paradoxically deemed necessary by the prayer of Abraham's intercession itself. Because that very prayer revealed the saving will of God: **the Lord was prepared to forgive, he wanted to forgive but the cities were locked into a totalizing and paralyzing evil, without even a few innocents from whom to start in order to turn evil into good.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, May 18, 2011)

**V – SOME PASSAGES OF THE KORAN,
CLEARLY PROVING EVERYTHING THAT HAS
BEEN PRESENTED**

**a) On the Trinity and the Divine
Filiation of Jesus Christ**

KORAN

It is a blasphemy and merits grievous penalty to speak of a Trinity

They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them. (Koran, Surah 5, no. 73)

Say not 'Trinity': God is far exalted above having a son

O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion: Nor say of Allah aught but the truth. Christ Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an apostle of Allah, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His apostles. Say not 'Trinity' : desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is one Allah. Glory be to Him: (far exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs. (Koran, Surah 4, no. 171)

It is most monstrous to say that God had a Son

It is not befitting to (the majesty of) Allah that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! when He determines a matter, He only says to it, 'Be', and it is. [...] They say: ((Allah)) Most Gracious has begotten a son!' Indeed ye have put forth a thing most monstrous! At it the skies are ready to burst, the earth to split asunder, and the mountains to fall down in utter ruin, That they should invoke a son for ((Allah)) Most Gracious. For it is not consonant with the majesty of ((Allah)) Most Gracious that He should beget a son. (Koran, Surah 19, no. 35.88-89)

Those who profess the divinity of Jesus are condemned to hell

They do blaspheme who say: '(Allah) is Christ the son of Mary'. But said Christ: 'O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord'. Whoever joins other gods with Allah, – Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help. (Koran, Surah 5, no. 72)

Jesus did not preach his own divinity, but rather that of Allah, his Lord

And behold! Allah will say: 'O Jesus the son of Mary! Didst thou say unto men, worship me and my mother as gods in derogation of Allah?' He will say: 'Glory to Thee! Never could I say what I had no right (to say). Had I said such a thing, thou wouldst indeed have known it. Thou knowest what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Thine. For Thou knowest in full all that is hidden. Never said I to them aught except what Thou didst command me to say, to wit, 'worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord'; and I was a witness over them whilst I dwelt amongst them; when Thou didst take me up Thou wast the Watcher over them, and Thou art a witness to all things. (Koran, Surah 5, no. 116-117)

Before Allah, Jesus is as Adam...

The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: 'Be'. And he was. The Truth (comes) from Allah alone; so be not of those who doubt. (Koran, Surah 3, no. 59-60)

...with no distinction between Jesus and the prophets

Say: 'We believe in Allah, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to Allah do we bow our will (in Islam)'. (Koran, Surah 3, no. 84)

...and no more than an apostle as those

that passed away before him

Christ the son of Mary was **no more than an apostle**; many were the apostles that passed away before him. (Koran, Surah 5, no. 75)

b) Other passages of the Koran. As shown earlier, each phrase below manifests the imperious will of Allah

Allah cannot be questioned for His acts

If there were, in the heavens and the earth, other gods besides Allah, there would have been confusion in both! but glory to **Allah**, the Lord of the Throne: **(High is He) above what they attribute to Him! He cannot be questioned for His acts**, but they will be questioned (for theirs). (Koran, Surah 21, no.22-23)

Allah has power over all things

None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar: **Knowest thou not that Allah Hath power over all things?** (Koran, Surah 2, no. 106)

For those whom Allah has thrown out of the Way, never shall they find salvation

Why should ye be divided into two parties about the Hypocrites? **Allah hath upset them for their (evil) deeds**. Would ye guide those whom Allah hath thrown out of the Way? **For those whom Allah hath thrown out of the Way, never shalt thou find the Way**. (Koran, Surah 4, no. 88)

Kill the unbelievers wherever you overtake them

And kill them wherever you overtake them, and expel them from where they had expelled you. Oppression is more serious than murder. (Koran, Surah 2, no. 191)

Fight them until justice and faith in Allah prevails

And fight them on until there is no more Tumult or oppression, and there prevail justice and faith in Allah. (Koran, Surah 2, no. 193)

Those who reject Allah shall be thrown into fire

Those who reject our Signs, We shall soon cast into the **Fire**: as often as their skins are roasted through, We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the penalty: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise. (Koran, Surah 4, no. 56)

Punishment of execution, or crucifixion, or amputating hands and feet, or exile

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: **execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land**: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter. (Koran, Surah 5, no. 33)

Strike their necks with a sword, and cut off their fingertips

Your Lord inspired the angels: 'I am with you, so support those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. So strike above the necks, and strike off every fingertip of theirs'. (Koran, Surah 8, no. 12)

Those who fight in the cause of Allah, for them is the forgiveness of sins and a generous provision

Those who believe, and adopt exile, and fight for the Faith, in the cause of Allah as well as those who give (them) asylum and aid, these are (all) in very truth the **Believers**: for them is the forgiveness of sins and a provision most generous. (Koran, Surah 8, no. 74)

Fight and slay. Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful

But when the forbidden months are past, then **fight and slay the Pagans wherever ye find them, an seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem** (of war); but if they repent [and accept Islam], and establish regular prayers and practise regular charity, then open the way for them: for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (Koran, Surah 9, no. 5)

Fight the unbelievers and let them find firmness in you

O ye who believe! **Fight the unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you:** and know that Allah is with those who fear Him. (Koran, Surah 9, no. 123)

Allah will admit to Paradise those who fight the unbelievers

When ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks; At length, when ye have thoroughly subdued them, bind a bond firmly (on them): thereafter (is the time for) either generosity or ransom [...] Soon will he [**Allah**] **guide them** and improve their condition, **And admit them to the Garden** which He has announced for them. (Koran, Surah 47, no. 4.5-6)

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We risk imagining that God was a magician, complete with an all-powerful magic wand

'I believe in God the Father Almighty...' This is how the Creed starts, this is how we pray it every day, and this is what we Christians believe, basing our conviction on Revelation.

The marvelous work of creation goes beyond our capacity of comprehension; consequently, we attribute it without any difficulty to a superior intelligence, to 'Someone' entirely superior to us, who shows great magnificence in the act of creation. Briefly described in Genesis, we contemplate creation only amidst the shadows of mystery. However, in recognizing that the universe was made by God, we cannot doubt that it came about according to his wise dispositions, whether in an instantaneous manner or otherwise. We may admit that the work of the six days was extended for thousands of years, or claim that it lasted one minute. What we cannot do is establish limits to the attribute of God's omnipotence, which – as the word itself insinuates – can do all things...

FRANCIS

You are addressing the highly complex subject of the evolution of the concept of nature. I will not go into the scientific complexity, which you well understand, of this important and crucial question. I only want to underline that God and Christ are walking with us and are also present in nature, as the Apostle Paul stated in his discourse at the Areopagus: 'In him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). **When we read the account of Creation in Genesis we risk imagining that God was a magician, complete with an all powerful magic wand.** But that was not so. He created beings and he let them develop according to the internal laws with which He endowed each one, that they might develop, and reach their fullness. He gave autonomy to the beings of the universe at the same time in which He assured them of his continual presence, giving life to every reality. **And thus Creation has been progressing for centuries and centuries, millennia and millennia, until becoming as we know it today, precisely because God is not a demiurge or a magician, but the Creator who gives life to all beings.** The beginning of the world was not a work of chaos that owes its origin to another, but derives directly from a supreme Principle who creates out of love. The Big Bang theory, which is proposed today as the origin of the world, does not contradict the intervention of a divine creator but depends on it. Evolution in nature does not conflict with the notion of Creation, because evolution presupposes the creation of beings who evolve. (*Address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, October 27, 2014*)

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COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE II (ECUMENICAL V)

If anyone says that the power of God is limited let him be anathema

If anyone says or holds that the power of God is limited, and that He has accomplished as much as He has comprehended, let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 410. Pope Vigilius, *Canons against Origen, from the Book against Origen of the Emperor Justinian, 543*)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God is called omnipotent because He can do absolutely all things

It remains therefore, that God is called omnipotent because He can do all things that are possible absolutely; which is the second way of saying a thing is possible. [...] The divine existence, however, upon which the nature of power in God is founded, is infinite, and is not limited to any genus of being; but

possesses within itself the perfection of all being. Whence, **whatsoever has or can have the nature of being is numbered among the absolutely possible things, in respect of which God is called omnipotent.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 25, a. 3)

To create can be the action of God alone

It sufficiently appears at the first glance, according to what precedes (Article 1), that to create can be the action of God alone. [...] And so some have supposed that although creation is the proper act of the universal cause, still some inferior cause acting by the power of the first cause, can create. And thus Avicenna asserted that the first separate substance created by God created another after itself, and the substance of the world and its soul; and that the substance of the world creates the matter of inferior bodies. And in the same manner the Master says (Sent. IV, D, 5) that God can communicate to a creature the power of creating, so that the latter can create ministerially, not by its own power. But such a thing cannot be, because the secondary instrumental cause does not participate the action of the superior cause, except inasmuch as by something proper to itself it acts dispositively to the effect of the principal agent. If therefore it effects nothing, according to what is proper to itself, it is used to no purpose; nor would there be any need of certain instruments for certain actions. Thus we see that a saw, in cutting wood, which it does by the property of its own form, produces the form of a bench, which is the proper effect of the principal agent. Now the proper effect of God creating is what is presupposed to all other effects, and that is absolute being. Hence **nothing else can act dispositively and instrumentally to this effect, since creation is not from anything presupposed, which can be disposed by the action of the instrumental agent. So therefore it is impossible for any creature to create, either by its own power or instrumentally – that is, ministerially.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 45, a. 5)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

The act of creation came about by God's goodness and omnipotent power

[The act of creation in itself, and in opposition

to modern errors, and the effect of creation]. **This sole true God by His goodness and 'omnipotent power,'** not to increase His own beatitude, and not to add to, **but to manifest His perfection by the blessings which He bestows on creatures,** with most free volition, 'immediately from the beginning of time fashioned each creature out of nothing, spiritual and corporeal, namely angelic and mundane; and then the human creation, common as it were, composed of both spirit and body' [Lateran Council IV, see n. 428; can. 2 and 5]. (Denzinger-Hünermann 3002. Vatican Council I, *Session III, Dogmatic constitution concerning the Catholic Faith*, April 25, 1870)

God protects and governs all things which He created

But God protects and governs by His providence all things which He created, 'reaching from end to end mightily and ordering all things sweetly' (cf. Wis 8:1). For 'all things are naked and open to His eyes' (Heb 4: 13), even those which by the free action of creatures are in the future. (Denzinger-Hünermann 3003. Vatican Council I, *Session III, Dogmatic constitution concerning the Catholic Faith*, April 25, 1870)

BENEDICT XVI

We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution

We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. **Each of us is the result of a thought of God.** Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. (Benedict XVI. *Homily of the Mass of the imposition of the pallium and conferral of the Fisherman's Ring at the beginning of the petrine ministry of the Bishop of Rome*, April 24, 2005)

The notion of creation must transcend our naturalistic ways of thinking and speaking about the evolution of the world

Thomas Aquinas taught that **the notion of creation must transcend** the horizontal origin of the unfolding of events, which is history, and consequently **all our purely naturalistic ways of thinking and speaking about the evolution**

of the world. Thomas observed that creation is neither a movement nor a mutation. It is instead the foundational and continuing relationship that links the creature to the Creator, for **he is the cause of every being and all becoming** (cf. *Summa Theologica*, I, q.45, a. 3). (Benedict XVI. *Address to members of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences*, October 31, 2008)

Pius XII

The Church cannot permit the violation of those principles and laws which direct and govern man in his path to God

In like manner, approval cannot be given to the false principles of those who assert and claim freedom to depict and propagate anything at all, even though there has been established beyond dispute in these past years both the kind and the extent of the damage to both bodies and souls which has had its source in these principles. **There is no question here of the true liberty of which We have spoken above, but rather of an uncontrolled freedom, which disregards all precautions, of communicating with others anything at all, even though it be contrary to sound morals and can result in serious danger to souls. The Church encourages and supports everything which truly concerns a fuller enrichment of the mind – for She is the patron and fostermother of human knowledge and the noble arts; therefore She cannot permit the violation of those principles and laws which direct and govern man in his path to God, his final end.** Let no one, then, be surprised if, in this matter, where many reservations are necessary, the Church acts with due thought and discretion, according to that saying of the Apostle: ‘But prove all things: hold fast that which is good. From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves’ (1Thess 5:21-22). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Miranda Prorsus*, August 9, 1957)

JOHN PAUL II

God is Lord of the work of creation

This God, omnipotent and omniscient, has the Power to create, to call from non-being, from nothing, into being. ‘Is anything too hard for the Lord?’ – we read in Genesis 18:14. [...]

‘For with God, nothing will be impossible’ (Lk 1:37), said the Archangel Gabriel to Mary of Nazareth at the Annunciation. [...] This God, infinitely perfect and omniscient spirit, is absolutely free and sovereign also with respect to the very act of creation. **If he is the Lord of all that he created, he is, moreover, Lord of the very Will in the work of creation.** He creates because he wants to create. He creates because this corresponds to his infinite Wisdom. In creating he acts with the unfathomable plenitude of his liberty, by an impulse of eternal love. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2.4, September 18, 1985)

Nothing could have endured if God did not will it

The reflection regarding the truth of creation, with which God calls the world from nothing into existence, directs the gaze of our faith toward the contemplation of God-Creator, who reveals in creation his omnipotence, his wisdom and love. The omnipotence of the Creator is shown not only in his calling creatures from nothing into existence, but also in maintaining them in existence. ‘How would anything have endured if you had not willed it?’ asked the author of the book of Wisdom (Wis 11:25). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, March 5, 1986)

The world exists in virtue of divine omnipotence

‘I believe in God, creator of heaven and earth’, we will reflect on the mystery that contains all of created reality, in its proceeding from nothing, **admiring at the same time the omnipotence of God and the joyful surprise of a contingent world that exists in virtue of this omnipotence.** We may recognize that creation is the loving work of the Most Holy Trinity and revelation of his glory. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 5, January 8, 1986)

Creation manifests the exercise of the omnipotence of God, guided by His Wisdom and moved by Love

If creation manifests the omnipotence of the God-Creator, the exercise of the omnipotence is definitively explained through love. **God has created because he was able to, because**

he is omnipotent; but his omnipotence was guided by Wisdom and moved by Love. This is the work of creation. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2, October 2, 1985)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

God is not subject to created things, but created things to God

Neither the nature of any created thing, therefore, nor the weakness of the flesh, can prevail against the will of God. For God is not subject to created things, but created things to God; and all things yield obedience to His will. Wherefore also the Lord declares, 'The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God' (Lk 18:27), [...] yet the scepticism of men of this stamp shall not render the faithfulness of God of none effect. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*, Book V, ch. V)

SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

Nothing is removed from the power of God

Nothing, therefore, is removed from the power of God. Of him the Scripture says: 'For all things are your servants' (Ps 119:91). (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem. *Baptismal catechesis*, 8, 5)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

God who created everything also rules everything

Of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is universal, for God who created everything (cf. Gen 1:1; Jn 1:3) also rules everything and can do everything (Ps 115:3). God's power is loving, for he is our Father. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 268)

God is master of history: governing hearts and events in keeping with his will

The Holy Scriptures repeatedly confess the universal power of God. He is called the

'Mighty One of Jacob' (Gen 49:24; Is 1:24), the 'Lord of hosts', the 'strong and mighty' one (Ps 24:8-10). If God is almighty 'in heaven and on earth' (Ps 135:6), it is because he made them. Nothing is impossible with God (Jer 32:17; Lk 1:37), who disposes his works according to his will (cf. Jer 27:5). He is the Lord of the universe, whose order he established and which remains wholly subject to him and at his disposal. He is master of history, governing hearts and events in keeping with his will (cf. Esther 4:17b; Prov 21:1; Tob 13:2): 'It is always in your power to show great strength, and who can withstand the strength of your arm?' (Wis 11:2). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 269)

God created the world according to his wisdom

We believe that God created the world according to his wisdom (cf. Wis 9:9). It is not the product of any necessity whatever, nor of blind fate or chance. We believe that it proceeds from God's free will; he wanted to make his creatures share in his being, wisdom and goodness: 'For you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created' (Rev 4:11). Therefore the Psalmist exclaims: 'O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all'; and 'The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made'. (Ps 104:24; 145:9) (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 295)

God gives his creatures being and existence and brings them to their final end

With creation, God does not abandon his creatures to themselves. He not only gives them being and existence, but also, and at every moment, upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end. Recognizing this utter dependence with respect to the Creator is a source of wisdom and freedom, of joy and confidence. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 301)

Without a Creator the creature vanishes

The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God

the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: 'For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil 2:13; cf. 1Cor 12:6). Far from diminishing the creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. **Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for 'without a Creator the creature vanishes' (Gaudium et spes 36, 3). Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace (cf. Mt 19:26; Jn 15:5; Phil 14:13). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 308)**

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Meaning of 'Almighty': there neither exists nor can be conceived anything which God cannot do

From these various modes of expression it is clearly perceived what is comprehended under **this single word almighty**. By it we **understand that there neither exists nor can be conceived in thought or imagination anything which God cannot do**. For not only can He annihilate all created things, and in a moment summon from nothing into existence many other worlds, an exercise of power which, however great, comes in some degree within our comprehension; but He can do many things still greater, of which the human mind can form no conception. (Catechism of Trent, no. 1013)

Unless preserved by His Providence all things would instantly return into their nothingness

We are not, however, to understand that God is in such wise the Creator and Maker of all things that His works, when once created and finished, could thereafter continue to exist unsupported by His omnipotence. **For as all things derive existence from the Creator's supreme power, wisdom, and goodness, so unless preserved continually by His Providence, and by the same power which produced them, they would instantly return into their nothingness.** (Catechism of Trent, no. 1015)

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The Divinity will be in every soul and everything will be in all

When children reach a certain age and start asking the reason for everything, even posing the question of who is God, the answer is always that God is a perfect Being, Almighty, the One who governs all creation with wisdom and guides all so as to take them to Heaven, His eternal and marvelous house... These answers are accepted with perfect ease by the child, especially after having received the gift of infused faith at Baptism. This is so true that, even without entering into theological particulars, certain affirmations about the very same Faith sound strange to the ears of a Catholic.

Beyond what a child is capable of understanding in its simplicity, are the dogmas that concern the Divine Essence. To understand these in a way other than what the Church teaches is to hazard along in prickly paths; and to teach them in a confused way could well be a very great pastoral blunder.

FRANCIS

Finally, at that meeting there was another question: what will happen when our species is extinguish and there will not be any more on Earth a mind capable of thinking of God? The reply was: **'The Divinity will be in every soul and everything will be in all'**. To me it seemed a difficult passing from transcendence to immanence, but here we enter into philosophy and Spinoza and Kant come to mind: **'Deus sive Natura'** and **'The starred heavens over me, the moral law within me.'** **'Everything will be all in everyone'**: to me, as I just said, seems **classical immanence** to me, but if **all have everything within themselves**, then this could also be conceived as a **glorious transcendence**. (Interview with Eugenio Scalfari, La Repubblica, December 29, 2013)

[Scalfari] But hasn't the Church always been this way?

[Francis] It has almost never been this way. Very often, the Church as an institution was dominated by temporalism and many members and high-ranking Catholic leaders still hold these sentiments. But now allow me ask you a question: you, as a secular layman who doesn't believe in God, what do you believe in? You are a writer and a man of thought. Surely you believe in something; you must have some overarching value. Don't answer me with words like honesty, searching, or the vision of the common good; these are all important principles and values, but this is not what I am asking you. **I am asking you what you think about the essence of the world, and indeed of the universe.** Surely you ask yourself, as everyone does, who are we, where do we come from, where are we going. Even a child asks himself these questions. And you?

[Scalfari] I thank you for this question. The answer is: I believe in Being, i.e. in the fabric from which the forms, Beings, emerge.

[Francis] **And I believe in God. Not in a Catholic God; a Catholic God doesn't exist. God exists. And I believe in Jesus Christ, in his Incarnation. Jesus is my teacher and my shepherd, but God, the Father, Abba, is the light and the Creator. This is my Being. Does it seem to you that we are so far apart?**

[Scalfari] We are far apart in our thinking but similar as human beings, who are unconsciously animated by our instincts which are then transformed into impulses, feelings, desires, thought and reason. In this we are similar.

[Francis] But would you like to explain what you mean by what you call Being?

[Scalfari] Being is the fabric of energy. Energy is chaotic but indestructible and in eternal chaos. From that energy forms emerge when energy reaches the point of explosion. Forms have their laws, magnetic fields and chemical elements which randomly combine, evolve and finally are dissolve, but their energy is not destroyed. Man is probably the only animal endowed with reason, at least on our planet and in this solar system. I said that he is animated by instincts and desires but I would add that he also holds within himself a resonance, an echo, a vocation to chaos.

[Francis] All right. I didn't want you to give me a compendium of your philosophy and what you've told me suffices. For my part, I would observe that **God is the light that illumines the darkness even if he does not dispel it, and that a spark of that divine light is within each one of us.** In the letter I wrote to you I recall having said that our species, too, will end but that the light of God will never end. At that point, this light will flood all souls and all will be in all.

[Scalfari] Yes, I remember it well, you said, 'all the light will be in all souls' which – if I may say so, it gives me more the impression of imminence than of transcendence.

[Francis] Transcendence remains because that light, the all in all, transcends the universe and the species that will then inhabit it. But let's return to the present. We've taken a step forward in our dialogue. We have noted that in the society and the world in which we live selfishness has increased far more than love for others has and that people of good will must work, each according to his own strength and expertise, to make love for others increase until it equals and possibly surpasses love of self. (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari*, October 1, 2013).¹

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¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

Pius X

- ♦ Truly enormous error: theological immanence, which considers divine action as one with the action of nature – this destroys the supernatural order
- ♦ The theory of divine immanence leads directly to pantheism
- ♦ Condemned: to consider what is divine in sacred tradition in a pantheistic sense

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- ♦ The Creed is the first and fundamental point of reference: a sign of communion between believers
- ♦ Belief in the Catholic Church is inseparable from faith in God

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Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ♦ God is the Father, and Christ is the true Son of God
- ♦ We believe through faith now that which we shall see in the eternal life
- ♦ Grave error: that God is the formal being of all things. He is in all things not as a part of it, but as the Cause

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- ♦ Distinction between the light of the divinity, other lights, and the human creature itself
- ♦ All things come from God, but are not God
- ♦ Christians do not ignore God, the Creator who transcends all
- ♦ Made in God's image and likeness, but very distant from divinity

Pius IX

Condemned: God is the same as the nature of things

[Condemned:] No supreme, all wise, and all provident divine Godhead exists, distinct from this world of things, and God is the same as the nature of things and, therefore, liable to changes; and God comes into being in man and in the universe, and all things are God and they have the same substance of God; and God is one and the same as the world, and therefore, also, spirit is one and the same with matter, necessity with liberty, the true with the false, the good with the evil, and the just with the unjust. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2901. Pius IX, Syllabus of particular errors of our age, sec.1)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

Condemned: the substance of God and of all things is the same thing

[Against pantheism]: If anyone shall say that one and the same thing is the substance or essence of God and of all things: let him be anathema.

[Against special forms of pantheism]: If anyone shall say that finite things, both corporeal and spiritual, or at least the spiritual, have emanated from the divine substance, or, that the divine essence by a manifestation or evolution of itself becomes all things, or, finally, that God is universal or indefinite being, because by determining Himself, He created all things distinct in genera, in species, and in individuals: let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3023-3024. Vatican Council I, Session III, Dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius*, April 24, 1870)

Condemned: God is not distinct from the world

[The one, living, and true God and His distinction from all things] The holy, Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church believes and confesses that there is one, true, living God, Creator and Lord of heaven and earth, omnipotent, eternal, immense, incomprehensible, infinite in intellect and will, and in every perfection; who, although

He is one, singular, altogether simple and unchangeable spiritual substance, must be proclaimed distinct in reality and essence from the world; most blessed in Himself and of Himself, and ineffably most high above all things which are or can be conceived outside Himself [can. 1-4]. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3001. Vatican Council I. Session III, Dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius*, April 24, 1870)

PIUS X

Truly enormous error: theological immanence, which considers divine action as one with the action of nature – this destroys the supernatural order

And thus, Venerable Brethren, the road is open for us to study the Modernists in the theological arena – a difficult task, yet one that may be disposed of briefly. The end to be attained is the conciliation of faith with science, always, however, saving the primacy of science over faith. In this branch the Modernist theologian avails himself of exactly the same principles which we have seen employed by the Modernist philosopher, and applies them to the believer: the principles of immanence and symbolism. The process is an extremely simple one. The philosopher has declared: The principle of faith is immanent; the believer has added: This principle is God; and the theologian draws the conclusion: God is immanent in man. Thus we have theological immanence. So too, the philosopher regards as certain that the representations of the object of faith are merely symbolical; the believer has affirmed that the object of faith is God in Himself; and the theologian proceeds to affirm that: The representations of the divine reality are symbolical. And thus we have theological symbolism. Truly enormous errors both, the pernicious character of which will be seen clearly from an examination of their consequences. [...] Concerning immanence it is not easy to determine what Modernists mean by it, for their own opinions on the subject vary. Some understand it in the sense that God working in man is more intimately present in him than man is in even himself, and this conception, if properly understood, is free from reproach. Others hold that the divine action is one with the action of nature, as the action of the first cause is one

with the action of the secondary cause, and **this would destroy the supernatural order.** Others, finally, explain it in a way which savours of pantheism and this, in truth, is the sense which tallies best with the rest of their doctrines. (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis* no.19, September 8, 1907)

The theory of divine immanence leads directly to pantheism

And to Pantheism that other doctrine of the divine immanence leads directly. For does it, We ask, leave God distinct from man or not? If yes, in what does it differ from Catholic doctrine, and why reject external revelation? If no, we are at once in Pantheism. Now the doctrine of immanence in the Modernist acceptance holds and professes that every phenomenon of conscience proceeds from man as man. **The rigorous conclusion from this is the identity of man with God, which means Pantheism.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis* no.39, September 8, 1907)

Condemned: to consider what is divine in sacred tradition in a pantheistic sense

Fourthly, I sincerely hold that the doctrine of faith was handed down to us from the apostles through the orthodox Fathers in exactly the same meaning and always in the same purport. Therefore, I entirely reject the heretical misrepresentation that dogmas evolve and change from one meaning to another different from the one which the Church held previously. I also condemn every error according to which, in place of the divine deposit which has been given to the spouse of Christ to be carefully guarded by her, there is put a philosophical figment or product of a human conscience that has gradually been developed by human effort and will continue to develop indefinitely. [...] Finally, I declare that I am completely opposed to the error of the modernists who hold that there is nothing divine in sacred tradition; or what is far worse, say that there is, but in a pantheistic sense, with the result that there would remain nothing but this plain simple fact-one to be put on a par with the ordinary facts of history-the fact, namely, that a group of men by their own labor, skill, and talent have continued through subsequent ages a school

begun by Christ and his apostles. (Pius X. *Motu proprio Sacrorum antistitum. iurisiurandi formula*, September 1, 1910)

JOHN PAUL II

The Word of God rejects all forms of pantheism

In the end, the word of God poses the problem of the meaning of life and proffers its response in directing the human being to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, who is the perfect realization of human existence. A reading of the sacred text would reveal other aspects of this problem; but what emerges clearly is the rejection of all forms of relativism, materialism and pantheism. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Fides et ratio*, no. 80, September 14, 1998)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE

Deus sive natura: pantheism which is the despersonalisation of God

The new religiosity is an adherence to a God that often has no face nor personal characteristics. Questioned about God, both declared believers and declared non-believers affirm that they believe in the existence of a force or superior transcendent being, but who has no personal attributes, much less those of a Father. The fascination of oriental religions, transplanted into the West, resides in the despersonalisation of God. **In scientific circles, the old atheistic materialism is giving way to the return of pantheism, where the universe itself is divine: Deus sive natura sive res.** The Christian proposal is based, however, on the revelation of the God-in-three-persons, in the image of Whom each person is called to live in communion. **Faith in the tri-personal God is the basis of the whole Christian faith** and also of the constitution of an authentically human society. (Pontifical Council for Culture. Concluding document: Where is your God? Responding to the challenge of unbelief and religious indifference today, no. 4.1, March 13, 2004)

JOHN XXII

Pantheistic ideas of Eckhart condemned by

the Church: we are transformed entirely in God, and are changed into Him

[Condemned Error:] We are transformed entirely in God, and we are changed into Him; in a similar manner as in the sacrament the bread is changed into the body of Christ; so I am changed into Him because He Himself makes me to be one with Him, not like (to Him); through the living God it is true that there is no distinction there. (Denzinger-Hünermann 960. *Error of Eckhart condemned by John XXII in the Constitution In agro dominico*, March 27, 1329)

INNOCENT XI

Condemned: the doctrine of Molinos, as pantheist theology

[Condemned Error:] By doing nothing the soul annihilates itself and returns to its beginning and to its origin, which is the essence of God, in which it remains transformed and divinized, and God then remains in Himself, because then the two things are no more united, but are one alone, and in this manner God lives and reigns in us, and the soul annihilates itself in operative being. (Denzinger-Hünermann 2205. *Errors of Miguel Molinos in the Constitution Coelestis Pastor* by Innocence XI, November 20, 1687)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The intimate union with God should be understood rightly in Christ

Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15) to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church. Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission. This it intends to do following faithfully the teaching of previous councils. The present-day conditions of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church so that all men, joined more

closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium no. 1*, November 21, 1964)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Church proclaims the true mystery of God

The Church's universal mission is born from the command of Jesus Christ and is fulfilled in the course of the centuries in the proclamation of the mystery of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the mystery of the incarnation of the Son, as saving event for all humanity. The fundamental contents of the profession of the Christian faith are expressed thus: 'I believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. I believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made' (I Council of Constantinople, *symbolum constantinopolitanum*: DS 150). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 1, August 6, 2000)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Creed is the first and fundamental point of reference: a sign of communion between believers

Such syntheses are called 'professions of faith' since they summarize the faith that Christians profess. They are called 'creeds' on account of what is usually their first word in Latin: *credo* ('I believe'). They are also called 'symbols of faith'. The Greek word *symbolon* meant half of a broken object, for example, a seal presented as a token of recognition. The broken parts were placed together to verify the bearer's identity. The symbol of faith, then, is a sign of recognition and communion between believers. *Symbolon* also means a gathering, collection or summary. A symbol of faith is a summary of the principal truths of the faith and therefore serves as the first and fundamental point of reference for catechesis. (Catechism of the Catholic Church,

no. 187-188)

Belief in the Catholic Church is inseparable from faith in God

To believe that the Church is ‘holy’ and ‘catholic’, and that she is ‘one’ and ‘apostolic’ (as the Nicene Creed adds), is inseparable from belief in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the Apostles’ Creed we profess ‘one Holy Church’ (*Credo Ecclesiam*), and not to believe in the Church, so as not to confuse God with his works and to attribute clearly to God’s goodness all the gifts he has bestowed on his Church (cf. Roman Catechism I,10,22). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 750)

SUPPLEMENT TO BETTER GRASP THIS SUBJECT

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God is the Father, and Christ is the true Son of God

It is not only necessary for Christians to believe in one God who is the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things; but also they must believe that God is the Father and that Christ is the true Son of God. [...] in the [Nicene] Creed of the Fathers it is said: ‘God of God; Light of Light’, that is, we are to believe in God the Son from God the Father, and the Son who is Light from the Father who is Light. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *In symbolum apostolorum*, a. 2)

We believe through faith now that which we shall see in the eternal life

We must believe that Christ is the Only-begotten of God, and the true Son of God, who always was with the Father, and that there is one Person of the Son and another of the Father who have the same divine nature. All this we believe now through faith, but we shall know it with a perfect vision in the life eternal. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *In symbolum apostolorum*, a. 2)

Grave error: that God is the formal being of all things. He is in all things not as a part of it, but as

the Cause

God is not the formal being of all things. We are now able to refute the error of certain persons who said that God is nothing other than the formal being of each thing. [...] A fourth factor that could have led them to their error is the mode of expression we use when we say that God is in all things. By this we do not mean that God is in things as a part of a thing, but as the cause of a thing that is never lacking to its effect. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book. I, ch. 26, no.1.13)

PAUL VI

The doctrine of Saint Thomas Aquinas of participation has nothing of pantheism

As befits a Christian philosopher and theologian, Saint Thomas sees in every being a participation in the absolute Being Which creates, sustains and activates from above the whole of created reality, all life, every thought and every act of faith. On the basis of these principles Aquinas exalts human reason and thereby provides the student of theology with a powerful aid. At the same time he makes it possible to penetrate and gain a deep understanding of numerous truths which he himself quickly grasped with his sharp mind. The same may be said of Thomas’s positions on the transcendental properties and analogy of being; the structure of finite being as composed of essence and existence; the relation between created realities and the divine Being; the causal role of created beings which depends dynamically on the causality exercised by God; the full ontological reality of the activity of finite beings, a reality which affects all parts of philosophy and of doctrinal, moral and ascetical theology; the organic structure and finality of the whole created order. If we raise our eyes to the realm of divine truth itself, we must say the same of Thomas’s positions with regard to the notion of God as subsistent Being whose hidden interior life is made known to us through revelation; the defence of divine transcendence against every form of pantheism; the doctrines of creation and divine providence, in which St Thomas not only passed beyond the images and darkling shadows of anthropomorphic language but also, as we would expect from a man of his

balanced genius and spirit of faith, effected what we today might call a 'demythologisation' but which might more correctly be described as an **examination – rational in character but directed, supported and motivated by faith – of essential truths of Christian revelation.** (Paul VI. *Letter Lumen ecclesiae*, no. 16, November 20, 1974 – An English version)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Distinction between the light of the divinity, other lights, and the human creature itself

And being thence warned to return to myself, I entered into my inward self, **Thou leading me on; and I was able to do it, for You had become my helper.** And I entered, and **with the eye of my soul (such as it was) saw above the same eye of my soul, above my mind, the Unchangeable Light.** Not this common light, which all flesh may look upon, nor, as it were, a greater one of the same kind, as though the brightness of this should be much more resplendent, and with its greatness fill up all things. Not like this was that light, but different, yea, very different from all these. Nor was it above my mind as oil is above water, nor as heaven above earth; but above it was, because it made me, and I below it, because I was made by it. **He who knows the Truth knows that Light; and he that knows it knows eternity. Love knows it.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions. Book VII, ch.10, no. 16*)

All things come from God, but are not God

And I viewed the other things below You, and perceived that they neither altogether are, nor altogether are not. **They are, indeed, because they are from You; but are not, because they are not what You are.** For that truly is which remains immutably. It is good, then, 'for me to cleave unto God' (Ps 72:28), for if I remain not in Him, neither shall I in myself; but He, 'remaining in Himself, renews all things' (Wis 7:27). And 'You are the Lord my God, since You stand not in need of my goodness' (Ps 15:2). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions, Book VII, ch.11, no. 17*)

Christians do not ignore God, the Creator who transcends all

To that wherein they agree with us we prefer them to all others namely, concerning the **one God, the author of this universe, who is not only above everybody, being incorporeal, but also above all souls, being incorruptible – our principle, our light, our good.** And though the **Christian man,** being ignorant of their writings, does not use in disputation words which he has not learned – not calling that part of philosophy natural (which is the Latin term), or physical (which is the Greek one), which treats of the investigation of nature; or that part rational, or logical, which deals with the question how truth may be discovered; or that part moral, or ethical, which concerns morals, and shows how good is to be sought, and evil to be shunned – **he is not, therefore, ignorant that it is from the one true and supremely good God that we have that nature in which we are made in the image of God, and that doctrine by which we know Him and ourselves, and that grace through which, by cleaving to Him, we are blessed.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *City of God, Book VIII, ch.10*)

Made in God's image and likeness, but very distant from divinity

Is not God the maker of all beings? But man He made in his image and likeness (Gn 1:26-27). It is said that man has a certain similarity with God. But, what likeness? And in relation with which infinite being? Who has some kind of likeness, and in relation to whom? Man in relation to God: 'Who is man that you remember him?' (Ps 8:5). We say therefore to our God, though we be men made in His likeness: 'God, who is like thee?' (Ps 82:2, 34:10). And then adds: 'Remember that we are dust' (Ps 102:14); and therefore far from being like God. Man I made in God's likeness, but this same likeness is so distant that it is not possible to even make a comparison [with God]. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon XXIV, no.3*)

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There is no Catholic God

‘We all adore the same God’... This type of expression, of significant theological imprecision, is often to be heard when people from different religions engage in careless ecumenical chatter.

But, to be little more precise, how can the Triune God, Who revealed Himself to humanity in the incarnation of the Word, ordering men to be baptized in His name, be the same deity preached by others, for example, by Islam?

If there is no Catholic God, who do we Catholics adore?

FRANCIS

And I believe in God, not in a Catholic God, there is no Catholic God, there is God and I believe in Jesus Christ, his incarnation. Jesus is my teacher and my pastor, but God, the Father, Abba, is the light and the Creator. This is my Being. Do you think we are very far apart? (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari*, October 1, 2013)¹

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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GREGORY XVI

There is only one faith by which we may be saved

We consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: **indifferentism**. This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained. Surely, in so clear a matter, you will drive this deadly error far from the people committed to your care. With the admonition of the apostle that ‘there is one God, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph 4:5) may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever. They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that ‘those who are not with Christ are against Him’, (Lk 11:23) and that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. Therefore ‘without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate’. (*Symbol .s. Athanasius*) Let them hear Jerome who, while the Church was torn into three parts by schism, tells us that whenever someone tried to persuade him to join his group he always exclaimed: ‘He who is for the See of Peter is for me’ (St. Jerome, epis. 57). **A schismatic flatters himself falsely if he asserts that he, too, has been washed in the waters of regeneration. Indeed Augustine would reply to such a man: ‘The branch has the same form when it has been cut off from the vine; but of what profit for it is the form, if it does not live from the root?’** (St. Augustine, in *psalm. contra part. Donat*). (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari Vos*, no. 13, August 15, 1832)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Catholic Church is the only true religion revealed by God

First, the council professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness. We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it

abroad among all men. Thus He spoke to the Apostles: ‘Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined upon you’ (Mt 28: 19-20). On their part, all men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, and to embrace the truth they come to know, and to hold fast to it. (Vatican Council II. *Dignitatis humanae*, no. 1, December 7, 1965)

BENEDICT XVI

The plenitude of Revelation is found in Jesus Christ. There is no other Word of God

In all of this, **the Church gives voice to her awareness that with Jesus Christ she stands before the definitive word of God: he is ‘the first and the last’** (Rev 1:17). He has given creation and history their definitive meaning; and hence we are called to live in time and in God’s creation within this eschatological rhythm of the word; ‘thus the Christian dispensation, since it is the new and definitive covenant, will never pass away; and no new public revelation is to be expected before the glorious manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (cf. 1Tim 6:14; Tit 2:13) (*Dei Verbum*, 4). Indeed, as the Fathers noted during the Synod, the “uniqueness of Christianity is manifested in the event which is Jesus Christ, the culmination of revelation, the fulfilment of God’s promises and the mediator of the encounter between man and God. He who ‘has made God known’ (Jn 1:18) is the one, definitive word given to mankind” (Prop. 4). Saint John of the Cross expresses this truth magnificently: ‘**Since he has given us his Son, his only word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything at once in this sole word – and he has no more to say... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has spoken all at once by giving us this All who is his Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behaviour but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely on Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty’** (St. John of the Cross. *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, II, 22) (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 19, September 30, 2010)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Consequences of denying the plenitude of the Catholic Religion

The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de iure* (or in principle). As a consequence, it is held that certain truths have been superseded; for example, the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, the inspired nature of the books of Sacred Scripture, the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the inseparability – while recognizing the distinction – of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 4, August 6, 2000)

COMPENDIUM OF THE CATECHISM

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Those who know the Church but deny it, shall not be saved

What is the meaning of the affirmation 'Outside the Church there is no salvation'? This means that all salvation comes from Christ, the Head, through the Church which is his body. Hence **they cannot be saved who, knowing the Church as founded by Christ and necessary for salvation, would refuse to enter her or remain in her.** At the same time, thanks to Christ and to his Church, those who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ and his Church but sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, try to do his will as it is known through the dictates of conscience can attain eternal salvation. (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 171)

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**We, the descendents of Abraham according to our faith in you, the one
God, Jews, Christians and Muslims, humbly stand before you.**

May everything be to your glory and honor and for our salvation.

Praise and eternal glory to you, our God!

‘O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of You, the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before you, I give You thanks that You have counted me, worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Your martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before You as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as You, the ever-truthful God, have foreordained, have revealed beforehand to me, and now have fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise You for all things, I bless You, I glorify You, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, with whom, to You, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen’.

This moving prayer pronounced by Saint Polycarp before a stadium full of pagans, was his last act before the executioners lit the flames that would bring him to his final end. After concluding these words – a testimony of fidelity to Christ for the faithful of Smyrna – the fire miraculously consumed him as a pure host. The suave advance of the flames, that seemed to respect him, was witnessed by the surprised multitude. His sacrifice occupies a place of honor in martyrology.

This prayer, composed in the Second Century within a dramatic context, demonstrates the principle characteristics of how we should direct ourselves to God Almighty, presenting our petitions to the Father through his Son Jesus Christ in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The entire Church has prayed in this manner since the first centuries and will continue to do so until the last judgment.

There is no doubt that today innumerable Christians are martyred for publically professing their faith, for every baptized person has the duty to declare their adhesion to Jesus Christ before the multitudes when necessary. The situation of this Apostolic Father, St. Polycarp, is repeated *mutatis mutandis*, in the Church of the XXI century, particularly if the Bishop of Rome is invited to pray in public.

However, Pope Francis prefers to omit the name of Christ to unite himself more closely to the members of other religious professions, which he seems to believe, adore the same God. As a result, some questions arise: Do we really adore the same God? Can Jews, Muslims and Christians invoke him in equal terms and intentions, hoping to obtain the same results?

FRANCIS

Almighty and eternal God,
good and merciful Father;
Creator of heaven and earth, of all that is visible and invisible;
God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
King and Lord of the past, of the present and of the future;
sole judge of every man and woman,
who reward your faithful with eternal glory!
**We, the descendents of Abraham according to our faith in you, the one God,
Jews, Christians and Muslims,
humbly stand before you**

and with trust we pray to you
for this country, Bosnia and Herzegovina,
that men and women, followers of different religions, nations and cultures
may live here in peace and harmony.
We pray to you, O Father,
that it may be so in every country of the world!
Strengthen in each of us faith and hope,
mutual respect and sincere love
for all of our brothers and sisters.
Grant that we may dedicate ourselves
courageously to building a just society,
to being men and women of good will,
filled with mutual understanding and forgiveness,
patient artisans of dialogue and peace.
May each of our thoughts, words and actions
be in harmony with your holy will.
May everything be to your glory and honour and for our salvation.
Praise and eternal glory to you, our God!
Amen. (*Final prayer at the ecumenical and interreligious meeting in Sarajevo, June 6, 2015*)

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**I – JESUS CHRIST IS THE NECESSARY
MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND HUMANITY**

SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

The Father has indignation when his Only-begotten Son is despoiled of due honor

They who have been taught to believe ‘In One God the Father Almighty,’ ought also to believe in His Only-begotten Son. For he that denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father (1Jn 2:23). I am the Door (Jn 10:9), saith Jesus; no one cometh unto the Father but through Me (Jn 14:6). For if thou deny the Door, the knowledge concerning the Father is shut off from thee). No man knoweth the father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal Him (Mt 11:27). For if thou deny Him who reveals, thou remainest in ignorance. There is a sentence in the Gospels, saying, (He that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him (Jn 3:36). For the Father hath indignation when the Only-begotten Son is set at nought. For it is grievous to a king that merely his soldier should be dishonoured; and when one of his nobler officers or friends is dishonoured, then his anger is greatly increased: but if any should do despite to the king’s only-begotten son himself, who shall appease the father’s indignation on behalf of his only-begotten son? If, therefore, any one wishes to shew piety towards God, let him worship the Son, since otherwise the Father accepts not his service. The Father spake with a loud voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Mt 3:17). The Father was well pleased; unless thou also be well pleased in Him, thou hast not life. Be not thou carried away with the Jews when they craftily say, There is one God alone; but with the knowledge that God is One, know that there is also an Only-begotten Son of God. I am not the first to say this, but the Psalmist in the person of the Son saith, The Lord said unto Me, Thou art My Son (Ps 2:7). Heed not therefore what the Jews say, but what the Prophets say. Dost thou wonder that they who stoned and slew the Prophets, set at nought the Prophets’ words? (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechesis X*, no. 1-2)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Son of Man will be ashamed of those who are ashamed of Him

Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels. (Mk 8:38)

‘No one comes to the Father except through me’

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (Jn 14:6)

Whatever is asked in the name of Christ is conceded

And whatever you ask in my name, I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything of me in my name, I will do it. (Jn 14:13-14)

There is one mediator between God and the human race: Jesus Christ

For there is one God. There is also one mediator between God and the human race, Christ Jesus, himself human. (1Tim 2:5)

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

The essential reference point for the prayer life of the people of God is Christ

Hence, the person and works of Christ are the essential reference point for the faith and prayer life of the people of God. In him we find the Teacher of truth (cf. Mt 22: 16), the faithful Witness (Rev 1:5), the High Priest (cf. Heb 4: 14), the Pastor of our souls (cf. 1Pet 2: 25), and the one, perfect Mediator (cf. 1Tim 2: 5; Heb 8: 6; 9:15; 12:24). Through him, man comes to God (cf. Jn 14: 6), the Church’s praise and supplication rise up to God, and all of divine gifts are given to man. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Directory on popular piety and the liturgy*, no. 77, December 2001)

The excellence of Christian prayer lies in Christ

Prayer directed to God must be linked with **Christ**, the Lord of all, the one Mediator through whom alone we have access to God. He unites to himself the whole human community in such a way that there is an **intimate bond between the prayer of Christ and the prayer of all humanity**. In Christ and in Christ alone human worship of God receives its redemptive value and attains its goal. [...] **The excellence of Christian prayer lies in its sharing in the reverent love of the only-begotten Son** for the Father and in the prayer that the Son put into words in his earthly life and that still continues without ceasing in the name of the whole human race and for its salvation, throughout the universal Church and in all its members. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *The Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Office*, no. 6-7, November 1, 1970)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Christian prayer is characterized 'through Christ our Lord'

Christian prayer is characterized by the title 'Lord', whether in the invitation to prayer ('The Lord be with you'), its conclusion ('**through Christ our Lord**') or the exclamation full of trust and hope: Maranatha ('Our Lord, come!') or Maranatha ('Come, Lord!') – 'Amen Come Lord Jesus!' (1Cor 16:22; Rev 22:20). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 451)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

An essential part of the Church's work of evangelization consists in teaching people to pray to the Father through the Son

An essential part of the Church's work of evangelization is to **teach men and women to pray to the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit**. (Congregation for the Clergy. *The priest and the third Christian Millennium: Teacher of the Word, Minister of the sacraments and leader of the community*, no. 2, March 19, 1999)

JOHN PAUL II

Learning the Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer is the secret of a truly vital Christianity

His training in holiness calls for a **Christian life distinguished above all in the art of prayer**. [...] 'Lord, teach us to pray!' (Lk 11:1). **Prayer develops that conversation with Christ which makes us his intimate friends**: 'Abide in me and I in you' (Jn 15:4). This reciprocity is the very substance and soul of the Christian life, and the condition of all true pastoral life. **Wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, this reciprocity opens us, through Christ and in Christ, to contemplation of the Father's face**.

Learning this Trinitarian shape of Christian prayer and living it fully, above all in the liturgy, the summit and source of the Church's life, but also in personal experience, is the secret of a truly vital Christianity, which has no reason to fear the future, because it returns continually to the sources and finds in them new life. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 32, January 6, 2001)

Christ is the only one able to reveal God and lead to Him

Christ is the one Savior of all, the **only one able to reveal God and lead to God**. [...] No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ, by the working of the Holy Spirit. **Christ's one, universal mediation**, far from being an obstacle on the journey toward God, is the way established by God himself, a fact of which Christ is fully aware. **Although** participated forms of mediation of different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value only from Christ's own mediation, and they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 5, December 7, 1990)

An urgent need to explain more fully the truth that Christ is the one Mediator

Another plan for a continent-wide Synod will concern Asia, where **the issue of the encounter of Christianity with ancient local cultures and religions** is a pressing one. This is a great challenge for evangelization, since religious

systems such as Buddhism or Hinduism have a clearly soteriological character. **There is also an urgent need for a Synod** on the occasion of the Great Jubilee **in order to illustrate and explain more fully the truth that Christ is the one Mediator between God and man and the sole Redeemer of the world**, to be clearly distinguished from the founders of other great religions. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Tertio millennio adveniente*, no. 38, October 10, 1994)

PIUS XII

The prayer of the priest has efficacy because it is done in the name of Christ

The priest continues to do down the course of the ages, that which Christ Himself had done, who 'in the days of His earthly life, with a loud cry and tears, offered up prayers and supplications. . . and was heard because of His reverent submission' (Heb 13:7). **This prayer has, without doubt, a singular efficacy because it is done in the name of Christ, 'through our Lord Jesus Christ,'** who is our Mediator with the Father, presenting to Him incessantly, His own satisfaction, His merits, and the infinite price of His Blood. It is truly 'the voice of Christ,' who 'prays for us as our Priest, prays among us as our Head' (S. Aug., *Ennar. in Ps. 95*, n. 1). (Pius XII. *Apostolic exhortation Menti nostrae*, no. 39, September 23, 1950)

BENEDICT XVI

The Lord said to his disciples: 'Believe in God, believe also in Me'

The Gospel of this Sunday, the Fifth of Easter, proposes a twofold commandment of faith: **to believe in God and to believe in Jesus**. In fact, the Lord said to his disciples: **'Believe in God, believe also in me'** (Jn 14:1). **They are not two separate acts but one single act of faith, full adherence to salvation wrought by God the Father through his Only-begotten Son**. The New Testament puts an end to the Father's invisibility. God has shown his face, as Jesus' answer to the Apostle Philip confirms: 'He who has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn 14:9). With his Incarnation, death and Resurrection, **the Son of God** has freed us from the slavery of sin to give us the freedom of the children of

God and **he has shown us the face of God**, which is love: God can be seen, he is visible in Christ. [...] Therefore, **only by believing in Christ, by remaining united to him, may the disciples, among whom we too are, continue their permanent action in history**: 'Truly, truly, I say to you', says the Lord, 'he who believes in me will also do the works that I do' (Jn 14:12). (Benedict XVI. *Regina Coeli*, May 22, 2011)

SYNOD OF ROME

The salvation of Christians: believing in the Trinity

This, then, is the salvation of Christians, that, believing in the Trinity, that is, in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, (and) **baptized in it, we must believe without doubt that to it belongs the one and only true Godhead** and might, majesty and substance. (Denzinger-Hünemann 177. Synod of Rome, *Trinity and Incarnation of the Word*, 382 AD)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

One God and one mediator of God and men

There is but one Mediator as we know from the words of the apostle, 'for there is one God and one mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all'. (Tim 2:5-6). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 60, November 21, 1964)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

To unite men to God perfectly belongs to Christ

The office of a mediator is to join together and unite those between whom he mediates: for extremes are united in the mean [*medio*]. Now **to unite men to God perfectly belongs to Christ, through Whom men are reconciled to God**, according to 2 Corinthians 5:19: 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.' And, consequently, **Christ alone is the perfect Mediator of God and men**, inasmuch as, by His death, He reconciled the human race to God.

Hence the Apostle, after saying, ‘Mediator of God and man, the man Christ Jesus,’ added: ‘Who gave Himself a redemption for all.’ (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* III, q. 26, a. 1)

II – PROFESSING THE TRUE GOD IS PROFESSING THE TRIUNE GOD

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Let all Christians confess their faith in the triune God before the whole world

Before the whole world let all Christians confess their faith in the triune God, one and three in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord. United in their efforts, and with mutual respect, let them bear witness to our common hope which does not play us false. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 12, November 21, 1964)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

He who confesses by mouth will easily convince all

‘So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven’ (Mt 10:32-33). **He not only requires faith which is of the mind, but confession which is by the mouth**, that He may exalt us higher, and raise us to a more open utterance, and a larger measure of love. For this is **spoken not to the Apostles only, but to all**; He gives strength not to them only, but to their disciples. And **he that observes this precept will not only teach with free utterance, but will easily convince all**; for the observance of this command drew many to the Apostles. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Cited by Saint Thomas Aquinas. Catena aurea in Mt 10: 32-33*)

PAUL IV

Many dare to deny the foundations of the faith with their example

Since the depravity and iniquity of certain

men have reached such a point in our time that, of those who wander and deviate from the Catholic faith, very many indeed not only presume to profess different heresies but also to deny the foundations of the faith itself, and by their example lead many away to the destruction of their souls, we, in accord with our pastoral office and charity, desiring, in so far as we are able with God, to call such men away from so grave and destructive an error, and with paternal severity to warn the rest, lest they fall into such impiety, [desiring to] **warn all those and each individually who have up until now asserted, taught, or believed that the almighty God is not three in Persons and entirely simple and undivided in the unity of substance and one in the unique simple essence of divinity, or that our Lord is not true God and of the same substance in every way with the Father and the Holy Spirit; [...]** We demand and warn on behalf of the Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and by apostolic authority. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1880. Paul IV, *Constitution Cum quorundam hominum*, August 7, 1555)

SYNOD OF ROME

A heretic in every respect: whoever believes that the Father alone is called God, or in this manner believes God one

If anyone thinks well of the Father and the Son, but does not rightly esteem the Holy Spirit, he is a heretic, **because all heretics who think erroneously about the Son [of God I and the [Holy] Spirit are found in the perfidy of the Jews and the pagans. But if anyone divides, saying that God [Christ’s] Father, and God His Son, and God the Holy Spirit are gods, and does not thus say God on account of the one divinity and power which we believe and know (to be) the Father’s, and the Son’s, and the Holy Spirit’s, but taking away the Son or the Holy Spirit, thus believes that the Father alone is called God, or in this manner believes God one, he is a heretic in every respect, nay rather a Jew, because the name of gods was attached and given both to angels and to all the saints from God, but of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit because of their one and equal divinity, not the name of gods, but of God is declared and revealed to us, in order that we may believe, because we are baptized**

only in the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit and not in the names of archangels or angels, as heretics, or Jews, or even demented pagans. (Denzinger-Hünemann 175-176. Synod of Rome, *The Trinity and the Incarnation*, 382 AD)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

The one true God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, is the creator of all things visible and invisible

Whoever, therefore, have adverse and contrary opinions the Church disapproves and anathematizes and declares to be foreign to the Christian body which is the Church. Hence it condemns Sabellius who confuses the persons and completely takes away their real distinction. It condemns the Arians, the Eunomians, the Macedonians who say that only the Father is the true God, but put the Son and the Holy Spirit in the order of creatures. It condemns also any others whatsoever who place grades or inequality in the Trinity. Most strongly it believes, professes, and declares that the one true God, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, is the creator of all things visible and invisible, who, when He wished, out of His goodness created all creatures, spiritual as well as corporal; good indeed, since they were made by the highest good, but changeable, since they were made from nothing, and it asserts that nature is not evil, since all nature, in so far as it is nature, is good. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1332-1333. Council of Florence. *Bull Cantate Domino*, February 4, 1442)

I SYNOD OF BRAGA

Anathema: anyone who does not confess the One God as the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit

If anyone does not confess that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit (are) three persons of one substance, and virtue, and power) just as the Catholic and apostolic Church teaches, but says there is only one and a solitary person, so that He Himself is the Father who is the Son, and also He Himself is the Paraclete, the Spirit, just as

Sabellius and Priscillian have asserted, let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 451. *I Synod of Braga*, May 1, 561)

SYNOD OF LATERAN

If anyone does not confess three consubstantial subsistences, let him be condemned

If anyone does not confess properly and truly in accord with the holy Fathers that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit [are a] **Trinity in unity, and a unity in Trinity**, that is, **one God in three subsistences, consubstantial** and of equal glory, one and the same Godhead, nature, substance, virtue, power, kingdom, authority, will, operation of the three, uncreated, without beginning, incomprehensible, immutable, creator and protector of all things, **let him be condemned.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 501. Synod of Lateran, *canons condemning errors on the Trinity*, can.1, October 31, 649)

XI SYNOD OF TOLEDO

The one and true God: we say that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God each singly – yet there are not three Gods

For, if we are asked concerning the individual persons, we must confess that each is God. Therefore, we say that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God each singly; yet there are not three Gods, but there is one God. [...] Therefore, **this Holy Trinity, which is the one and true God.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 529-530. XI Synod of Toledo, *Creed of Faith*, November 7, 675)

II COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE (ECUMENICAL V)

Jesus Christ is true God and one of the Holy Trinity

If anyone does not confess that Jesus Christ, our Lord, who was crucified in the flesh is true God, and Lord of glory, and one of the Holy Trinity, let such a one be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 432. II Council of Constantinople, *can.10*, May 5, 553)

LEO XIII

They cannot be counted among the children of God, who do not take Christ Jesus as their Brother

And with the same yearning **Our soul goes out** to those whom **the foul breath of irreligion has not entirely corrupted**, and who at least seek to have the true God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, as their Father. Let such as these **take counsel** with themselves, and **realize that they can in no wise be counted among the children of God, unless they take Christ Jesus as their Brother, and at the same time the Church as their mother.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 16, June 29, 1896)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One He sent – Jesus Christ is the only one who knows the Father and can reveal Him

For a Christian, **believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One he sent, his ‘beloved Son’**, in whom the Father is ‘well pleased’; God tells us to listen to him (Mk 1:11; cf. 9:7). **The Lord himself said to his disciples: ‘Believe in God, believe also in me’** (Jn 14:1). We can believe in Jesus Christ because he is himself God, the Word made flesh: ‘No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known’ (Jn 1:18). Because he ‘has seen the Father’, Jesus Christ is the only one who knows him and can reveal him (Jn 6:46; cf. Mt 11:27). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 151)

III – NOT ALL RELIGIONS BELIEVE IN THE TRUE GOD

BENEDICT XVI

Believing in God entails joyful obedience to His revelation...

The opening words of the ‘Creed’ are: **‘I believe in God’**. It is a **fundamental affirmation, seemingly simple** in its essence, but it **opens on to the infinite world** of the relationship with the Lord and with his mystery. **Believing**

in God entails adherence to him, the acceptance of his word and joyful obedience to his revelation. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, January 23, 2013)

...and accepting the actual face in which He revealed himself: Jesus of Nazareth

Believing in God means giving up our own prejudices and accepting the actual face in which he revealed himself: Jesus of Nazareth the man. And this process also leads to recognizing him and to serving him in others. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, February 3, 2013)

PIUS XI

The Catholic Church is alone in keeping the true worship

‘The Catholic Church is alone in keeping the true worship. This is the fount of truth, this the house of Faith, this the temple of God: if any man enter not here, or if any man go forth from it, he is a stranger to the hope of life and salvation. **Let none delude himself with obstinate wrangling. For life and salvation** are here concerned, which will be lost and entirely destroyed, unless their interests are carefully and assiduously kept in mind.’ (Divin. Instit. IV, 30. 11-12) (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 11, January 6, 1928)

GREGORY XVI

Those who are not with Christ are against Him; they will perish forever

With the admonition of the apostle that ‘there is one God, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph 4:5) may those fear who **contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever.** They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that **‘those who are not with Christ are against Him’** (Lk 11:23), and that **they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. Therefore ‘without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate’** (*Symbol .s. Athanasius*). (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 13, August 15, 1832)

JOHN PAUL II

The Christian faith is a conscious and free response to God's self-revelation, which reached its fullness in Jesus Christ

According to the doctrine contained in the Constitution *Dei Verbum*, the Christian faith is a conscious and free response of man to God's self-revelation, which reached its fullness in Jesus Christ. By what Paul calls 'the obedience of faith' (cf. Rom 16:26, 1:5, 2Cor 10:5-6) the entire man abandons himself to God, accepting as truth what is contained in the word of divine revelation. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, June 19, 1985)

LEO XII

The true God does not approve sects, with their wrong teachings, nor does He confer eternal rewards on their members

It is impossible for the most true God, who is Truth Itself, the best, the wisest Provider, and the Rewarder of good men, to approve all sects who profess false teachings which are often inconsistent with one another and contradictory, and to confer eternal rewards on their members. [...] by divine faith we hold one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and that no other name under heaven is given to men except the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth in which we must be saved. This is why we profess that there is no salvation outside the Church. (Leo XII. *Encyclical Ubi primum*, no. 14, May 5, 1824)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Theological faith is very different from belief in the other religions

For this reason, the distinction between theological faith and belief in the other religions, must be firmly held. [...] This distinction is not always borne in mind in current theological reflection. Thus, theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often identified with belief in other religions, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who

reveals himself. This is one of the reasons why the differences between Christianity and the other religions tend to be reduced at times to the point of disappearance. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 7, August 6, 2000)

Relativistic theories deny the absolute truth and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church

The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de iure* (or in principle). As a consequence, it is held that certain truths have been superseded; for example, the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, [...] the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, [...] On the basis of such presuppositions, which may evince different nuances, certain theological proposals are developed – at times presented as assertions, and at times as hypotheses – in which Christian revelation and the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church lose their character of absolute truth and salvific universality, or at least shadows of doubt and uncertainty are cast upon them. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 4, August 6, 2000)

SAINT CYRIL OF JERUSALEM

The Jews do not admit Jesus Christ, thus being contrary to their own Prophets

For thus shall we raise our thoughts higher than the Jews, who admit indeed by their doctrines that there is One God, (for what if they often denied even this by their idolatries?); but that He is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, they admit not; being of a contrary mind to their own Prophets, who in the Divine Scriptures affirm, 'the Lord said unto me, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee' (Ps 2:7). And to this day they 'rage and gather themselves together against the Lord' (Ps 2:2), and against His Anointed, thinking that it is possible to be made friends of the Father apart from devotion towards the

Son, being ignorant that no man cometh unto the Father but by the Son (Jn 14:6), who saith, I am the Door, and I am the Way. He therefore that refuseth the Way which leadeth to the Father, and he that denieth the Door, how shall he be deemed worthy of entrance unto God? (Saint Cyril of Jerusalem. *Catechesis VII – The Father*, no. 2)

LEO I

The promises made to Abraham are fulfilled in Christ

'To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed. He says not and to seeds, as if in many, but as it in one, and to your seed **which is Christ** (Gal 3:16)' (Leo I. *To Flavian regarding Eutyches*, Letter 28, II, 451 AD)

GREGORY I

The Jews have ceased to be children of Abraham – we are truly due to faith in Christ

And if you be Christ's then are you the seed of Abraham (Gal 4:29). **If we therefore because of faith in Christ are deemed children of Abraham, the Jews** therefore because of their

perfidy **have ceased to be his seed.** (Gregory I, Homily XX, 4th Sunday of Advent in the Basilica of Saint John the Baptist: PL 76, 1164)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

No one who denies the Son has the Father

Who is the liar? Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Whoever denies the Father and the Son, this is the antichrist. **No one who denies the Son has the Father, but whoever confesses the Son has the Father as well.** (1Jn 2:22-23)

Only they have life who possess the Son

Whoever possesses the Son has life; whoever does not possess the Son of God does not have life. (1Jn 5:12)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

One must act according to the Spirit of Christ in order to be able to pray in his name

If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in his name. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2725)

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If some of you don't pray because you don't believe or it goes against your conscience, please send positive vibes my way

A light word, in certain circumstances is considered normal, for it is a natural way of making human relationships more pleasant. In this sense, this jesting must be done with equilibrium and respect. Consequently, it's easy to understand that certain situations do not permit this means of expression, especially by those who hold more elevated positions. For example, what would we think of a Head of State who cracks a joke at the funeral of a victim of terrorism?

As such, the dignity of the Vicar of Jesus Christ is so high, that his mission has always been surrounded by an elevated degree of solemnity, even on occasions that are apparently informal. That's why some readers wrote to us a little surprised with Francis' words (which will be analyzed in this post) that were pronounced in a seemingly restricted, informal milieu, but that ended up touching on quite an important topic, becoming well known due to the widespread interest that modern means of communication arouse about anything like this.

In any event, we end up having to ask ourselves what level of consciousness can be found in the deeper meaning of these words, considering that the great expansion that various forms of religiosity over the past few years has been a cause of real concern for zealous pastors. Who are we to judge? But, we would have hoped for at least a little more circumspection in the pronouncements of he who should be the guide for all Catholics. Above all we can only hope there is no grain of truth in such an unfortunate remark...

FRANCIS

I hope you have a good journalist day. It's a busy day, but congratulations. May God bless you and don't forget to pray for me. **If some of you don't pray because you don't believe or it goes against your conscience, please send positive vibes my way.** (*To journalists*, June 8, 2015)

Pope Francis asked for the crowd to pray for him, but not everyone in attendance was Catholic. **So he made a special request for those who do not believe. '...Think about me and send good vibes. Thank you.'** (*Bolivia*, July 10, 2015)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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I – THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT: A SECT THAT STRAYS FROM CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

JOHN PAUL II

A new culture marked by widespread and growing religious agnosticism, that is illusory and incapable of satisfying the human heart.

We are witnessing the emergence of a new culture, largely influenced by the mass media, whose content and character are often in conflict with the Gospel and the dignity of the human person. This culture is also marked by a widespread and growing religious agnosticism, connected to a more profound moral and legal relativism rooted in confusion regarding the truth about man as the basis of the inalienable rights of all human beings. At times the signs of a weakening of hope are evident in disturbing forms of what might be called a ‘culture of death’ (cf. Propositio 5a). [...] Often those in need of hope believe that they can find peace in fleeting and insubstantial things. **In this way, hope, restricted to this world and closed to transcendence, is identified**, for example, with the paradise promised by science or technology, with various forms of messianism, with a hedonistic natural felicity brought about by consumerism, or with the imaginary and artificial euphoria produced by drugs, **with certain forms of millenarianism, with the attraction of oriental philosophies, with the quest for forms of esoteric spirituality and with the different currents of the New Age movement** [Propositio 5a. Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Jesus Christ The Bearer of the Water of Life. A Christian Reflection on the New Age]. **All these, however, show themselves profoundly illusory and incapable of satisfying that yearning for happiness which the human heart continues to harbour.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in Europa*, no. 9-10, June 28, 2003)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Among the sects there is a current of thought known as ‘New Age’ that is silently leaving its mark on culture

In addition to the groups identified as religious

movements and sects, the responses also speak of the existence of a current of thought known by the name of ‘New Age’, which is rapidly spreading in the entire hemisphere and has the proportions of a worldwide phenomenon. This philosophy, departing from relativism, proposes overcoming the problematic of the person as a subject through an ecstatic return to a kind of cosmic dance, while offering, at the same time, a totally anti-rationalistic model of religion, a modern ‘mystique’, according to which God is not a person who is distinguished from the world, but rather a spiritual energy which permeates the whole [Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Conference to the Presidents of the Episcopal Commissions of Latin America – L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly English Edition, 6/11/1996]. In this perspective, a personal encounter with God is simply unthinkable. Even more incomprehensible is the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God. For this reason, the responses express a deep concern with the ‘New Age’ phenomenon, which is negatively affecting the religious identity of America, and more specifically the Christian and Catholic faith. This movement is a ‘contender’ whose features cannot be seen clearly, since it cannot be placed in a defined category of a sect or a group, but is rather a way of thinking which spreads as an intellectual and spiritual current, silently leaving its mark on culture and many of its expressions. (Synod of Bishops. *Encounter with the living Jesus Christ: the way to conversion*, community and solidarity in America, *Instrumentum laboris*, no. 47, September 1, 1997)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE AND

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The concept of matter as waves or energy is central to much of New Age thinking – God is no more than one immense vibration of energy

The move from a mechanistic model of classical physics to the ‘holistic’ one of modern atomic and sub-atomic physics, based on the concept of matter as waves or energy rather than particles, is central to much of New Age thinking. The universe is an ocean of energy, which is a single whole or a network of links. The energy animating the single organism which is the

universe is 'spirit'. There is no alterity between God and the world. The world itself is divine and it undergoes an evolutionary process which leads from inert matter to 'higher and perfect consciousness'. The world is uncreated, eternal and self-sufficient. The future of the world is based on an inner dynamism which is necessarily positive and leads to the reconciled (divine) unity of all that exists. God and the world, soul and body, intelligence and feeling, heaven and earth are one immense vibration of energy. (Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ the bearer of the water of life*, a Christian reflection on the 'New Age', no. 2.3,4.3, February 3, 2003)

The necessity of persons who are capable of critically explaining on New Age thought

Quite a few New Age groups welcome every opportunity to explain their philosophy and activities to others. Encounters with these groups should be approached with care, and should always involve persons who are capable of both explaining Catholic faith and spirituality, and of reflecting critically on New Age thought and practice. It is extremely important to check the credentials of people, groups and institutions claiming to offer guidance and information on New Age. (Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ the bearer of the water of life*, a Christian reflection on the 'New Age', no. 6.2, February 3, 2003)

Danger of the so-called New Age 'prayer groups': they lure gradually into a form of false worship

Some local New Age groups refer to their meetings as 'prayer groups'. Those people who are invited to such groups need to look for the marks of genuine Christian spirituality, and to be wary if there is any sort of initiation ceremony. Such groups take advantage of a person's lack of theological or spiritual formation to lure them gradually into what may in fact be a form of false worship. Christians must be taught about the true object and content of prayer – in the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, to the Father – in order to judge rightly the intention of a 'prayer group'. (Pontifical Council for Culture

and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ the bearer of the water of life*, a Christian reflection on the 'New Age', no. 6.2, February 3, 2003)

PONTIFICAL COMMITTEE

FOR INTERNATIONAL EUCHARISTIC CONGRESSES

The New Age constitutes a threat to Eucharistic piety

There exists another threat to Eucharistic piety. It is derived from the anti-sacramental character of fundamentalist protestant groups and sects, which, unfortunately, have opened a path among the peoples of America. While some of them adhere solely to the belief in Christ as Lord and Savior and a personal interpretation of Sacred Scripture, other sects are formed by more or less heterodox Christians or are spiritualisms that are completely New Age. Only a profound catechesis regarding the Eucharist may be a remedy for the erosion that these groups produce in the faith of our Catholic people. (Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses. *La vivencia de la fe en América*, no. 2, October 6, 2004)

JOHN PAUL II

The basis of the spread of sects: the tendency to reduce religions and various spiritual experiences to a common denominator

You know well that the basis of the spread of the sects is often a great lack of religious formation, consequently leading to uncertainty about the need to believe in Christ and to belong to the Church he has established. The tendency is to reduce religions and the various spiritual experiences to a least common denominator that makes them practically equivalent, with the result that everyone would be free to follow any of the various paths proposed to reach the goal of salvation. If, in addition, one adds the brazen proselytism which is the hallmark of certain particularly active and invasive groups of these sects, one understands right away how urgently necessary it is today to support the faith of Christians, and to give them an opportunity for ongoing religious formation to deepen

their personal relationship with Christ. Your endeavours must give priority to preventing this danger, consolidating in the faithful the practice of the Christian life and fostering the growth of a truly fraternal spirit in the heart of each of your ecclesial communities. (John Paul II. *Address to a group of Bishops of Brazil on their ad limina visit*, no. 2, January 23, 2003)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Syncretism causes believers to become disoriented and easily led astray by sects or para-religious movements

Indeed, in the piety of the people of America there are oftentimes many elements at odds with Christianity. These elements occasionally lead to a syncretism constructed on the basis of popular beliefs, or, in some cases, they cause believers to become disoriented and easily led astray by sects or para-religious movements. [...] The increasing religious indifference leads to the loss of the sense of God and of His holiness, which, in turn, is translated into a loss of a sense of the sacred, of mystery and of the capacity for wonder. These are human dispositions which predispose a person to dialogue and to an encounter with God. Such indifference almost inevitably leads to a false moral autonomy and a secularistic life-style which excludes God. (Synod of Bishops. *Encounter with the living Jesus Christ: the way to conversion, communion and solidarity in America*, no. 18-19, *Lineamenta*, August 1, 1996)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Religious relativism encourages a proliferation of 'new religious movements' or sects- they are alien to the Christian faith

In a climate of cultural and religious relativism, and sometime because of the inappropriate conduct of Christians, a proliferation of 'new religious movements' has occurred. These are sometimes called sects or cults but, because of the abundance of names and tendencies, are difficult to categorize in a comprehensive and precise framework. From available data, movements of Christian origin can be identified, while others derive from

oriental religions, and others again appear to be connected with esoteric traditions. Their doctrines and their practices are of concern because they are alien to the content of the Christian faith. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, Ch. IV, no. 201, April 17, 1998)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Sects undermine the religious unity of the Catholic people

Indeed, religious sects and pseudo-spiritual movements are undermining the religious and cultural unity of the Catholic people of America. Through the use of abundant economic and technical resources, they proselytize in a manner which often manipulates consciences. In Latin America these sects frequently attack the identity of a nation, an identity which is closely linked to the Catholic faith. In the area of religious formation, this constitutes another challenge for the Church in America. (Synod of Bishops. *Encounter with the living Jesus Christ: the way to conversion, communion and solidarity in America*, no. 61, *Lineamenta*, August 1, 1996)

Sects aggressively preach against the Catholic Church

In general, the religious movements and sects aggressively preach against the Catholic Church. Moreover, they direct their campaigns of proselytism towards the marginalized of society, immigrants, prisoners, the sick in hospitals and generally towards all who live on the periphery of the big cities, where the presence of the Catholic Church sometimes is not very strong. Some propagators of the sects interpret the Bible in a fundamentalist way, providing pat answers to people who find themselves in situations of great uncertainty. They organize groups for the study of the Bible, give speeches in town-squares and invite people to frequent the sect's places of cult. In general, the sects appeal to people's emotions and superficial sensitivities in order to develop their propaganda activities. In many groups coordinated by these movements, the physical cure of the sick is prayed for and alms are distributed to attract people. Lured by these tactics, many Catholics in recent years have abandoned the practice of their faith to enter

the religious movements and the sects. (Synod of Bishops. *Encounter with the living Jesus Christ: the way to conversion*, community and solidarity in America, *Instrumentum Laboris*, no. 46, September 1, 1997)

JOHN PAUL II

The moral and spiritual Christian patrimony runs risk due to the spread of sects

On the other hand, in other regions or nations many vital traditions of piety and popular forms of Christian religion are still conserved; but today this moral and spiritual patrimony runs the risk of being dispersed under the impact of a multiplicity of processes, including secularization and the spread of sects. Only a re-evangelization can assure the growth of a clear and deep faith, and serve to make these traditions a force for authentic freedom. Without doubt a mending of the Christian fabric of society is urgently needed in all parts of the world. But for this to come about what is needed is to first remake the Christian fabric of the ecclesial community itself present in these countries and nations. At this moment the lay faithful, in virtue of their participation in the prophetic mission of Christ, are fully part of this work of the Church. Their responsibility, in particular, is to testify how the Christian faith constitutes the only fully valid response-consciously perceived and stated by all in varying degrees-to the problems and hopes that life poses to every person and society. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Christifideles laici*, no. 34, December 30, 1988)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Suggestions regarding how to respond to the challenge posed by the New Age

There are many suggestions regarding how to respond to the challenge posed by the religious movements, sects and other currents such as 'New Age'. In the IV General Conference of the Latin American Bishops, a series of specific measures were proposed which, in a certain way, have already begun to be put into practice in various parts of the hemisphere, for example: improving formation through

catechesis; greater attention to liturgical celebrations, especially in the preparation of the homily; greater collaboration between priests and laity so as to bring about a more personalized evangelization (especially in the family and among young people); purification and promotion of popular piety, more emphasis on those aspects most identified with the Catholic Church (Eucharistic devotion, Marian piety, communion with the Roman Pontiff and with the local bishop), etc. In general, there is unanimous consensus as to the opportuneness of strengthening the Catholic community at all levels by renewing the structures of communion and mission, as well as maintaining a living faith in Jesus Christ through meditation and reflection on the Word of God, prayer (personal and communal), the practice of the sacraments (especially the Eucharist) and popular devotion. An effective instrument in overcoming these challenges is the collaboration of bishops among themselves (at the level of bishops' conferences and regional meetings of metropolitan archbishops with their respective suffragant bishops) so as to develop an organic pastoral plan on this subject, which can have concrete results in an effective joint-action. (Synod of Bishops. *Encounter with the living Jesus Christ: the way to conversion*, community and solidarity in America, *Instrumentum Laboris*, no. 48, September 1, 1997)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE AND

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Necessity to warn against the attempt to place New Age religiosity on the same level as Christian faith

In a cultural environment, marked by religious relativism, it is necessary to signal a warning against the attempt to place New Age religiosity on the same level as Christian faith, making the difference between faith and belief seem relative, thus creating greater confusion for the unwary. In this regard, it is useful to remember the exhortation of Saint Paul 'to instruct certain people not to teach false doctrine or to concern themselves with myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the plan of God that is to be received by faith' (1Tim 1:3-4). Some practices are incorrectly labeled as New Age simply as a

marketing strategy to make them sell better, but are not truly associated with its worldview. This only adds to the confusion. It is therefore necessary to accurately identify those elements which belong to the New Age movement, and which cannot be accepted by those who are faithful to Christ and his Church. (Pontifical Council for Culture and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. *Jesus Christ the bearer of the water of life*, a Christian reflection on the 'New Age', no. 4, February 3, 2003)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

When there is a plethora of masters, gurus, sects: we must recall constantly for people that salvation is only in the name of Jesus

As in the time of Saint Paul in the areopagus of Athens or in the Roman forum, there is also today an abundance of idols and divinities, a plethora of masters, gurus, sects, obscure movements and secular wisdom, all of which promise people a sure plan for happiness and a utopia. In light of this situation, it is essential to recall constantly for people that 'there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12), except the name of Jesus of Nazareth. The salvation which Christ's way offers is fundamental and universal, because it forgives and wipes away the sins of all those who receive it with a sincere heart (cf. Lk 1:77; 3:3; 4:18; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:17-18). (Synod of Bishops. *Encounter with the living Jesus Christ: the way to conversion, communion and solidarity in America*, no. II.10-11, *Lineamenta*, August 1, 1996)

II – THE DIGNITY OF THE POPE DOES NOT PERMIT INAPPROPRIATE JESTING

PAUL VI

The Vicar of Christ, with the mission of transmitting the Word of God, must give maximum attention to dignity and precision of language

The Successor of Peter is thus, by the will of Christ, entrusted with the preeminent ministry

of teaching the revealed truth. The New Testament often shows Peter 'filled with the Holy Spirit' speaking in the name of all (Acts 4:8; cf. 2:14; 3:12). It is precisely for this reason that Saint Leo the Great describes him as he who has merited the primacy of the apostolate' (cf. Saint Leo the Great, Sermo 69, 3; Sermo 70, 1-3; Sermo 94, 3; Sermo 95 2). This is also why the voice of the Church shows the Pope 'at the highest point- in apice, in specula- of the apostolate' (cf. First Ecumenical Council of Lyons, Constitution Ad apostolicae dignitates: Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta;; Ecumenical Council of Vienne, Constitution Ad providam Christi; Fifth Lateran Ecumenical Council, Constitution In apostolici culminis; Constitution Postquam ad universalis; Constitution Divina disponente clementia). The Second Vatican Council wished to reaffirm this when it declared that 'Christ's mandate to preach the Gospel to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15) primarily and immediately concerns the bishops with Peter and under Peter' (Ad Gentes, 38). The full, supreme and universal power (Second Vatican Council, Lumen Gentium, 22) which Christ gives to His Vicar for the pastoral government of His Church is this especially exercised by the Pope in the activity of preaching and causing to be preached the Good News of salvation. [...] Being animated by the conviction, ceaselessly deepened, of the greatness and riches of the Word of God, those who have the mission of transmitting it must give the maximum attention to the dignity, precision and adaptation of their language. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 67.73, December 8, 1975)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

It is not jests or fables but the law of God that is to be sought from the mouth of a priest

Amongst laymen frivolous language is only frivolity: but it is blasphemy when it comes from the mouth of a priest. [...] Thy lips have been consecrated to the Gospel of Christ. Therefore it is unlawful for thee now to use them for jesting, and a sacrilege to have them thus habitually employed. 'The lips of the priest,' says the Prophet, 'shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth' (Mal 2:7). Observe that it is not jests or fables but the law

of God that is to be sought from the mouth of a priest. With regard to scurrility, it is not enough to banish that from thy mouth: it must also be banished from thine ear. To allow thyself to laugh at such jokes would be a scandal; but it would be a greater scandal to repeat them for the amusement of others. (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Treatise on Considerations to Pope Eugene III*, Ch. XIII, 68-69)

JOHN PAUL II

Saint Gregory the Great and the awareness of the dignity of the papacy: will respond before men and before God

Servus servorum Dei: it is known that this title, chosen by him [Saint Gregory the Great] ever since he was a deacon – and used not a few of his letters – gradually became a traditional title and almost a definition of the person of the Bishop of Rome. It is also certain, that from sincere humility, he made it the motto of his ministry and that, precisely because of his universal function in the Church of Christ, he always considered and showed himself to

be the maximum and primary servant – the servant of the servants of God – servant of all, following the example of Christ himself, who had explicitly affirmed that he ‘came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mt 20:28). Most profound was, therefore, his consciousness of the dignity [of the Papacy], which he accepted with great trepidation after having unsuccessfully tried to remain hidden in an attempt to avoid it; but, at the same time, possessing a clear awareness of his duty to serve, convinced himself and attempting to instill in the others the conviction that all authority, above all within the Church, is essentially service. The awareness of his own pontifical office and, proportionally, of all pastoral ministry, is condensed in the word ‘responsibility’: he who exercises an ecclesiastical ministry should respond for what he does, not only to men, not only to the souls that were confided to him, but also and in the first place to God and to his Son, in whose name he acts each time he distributes the supernatural treasures of grace, announces the truths of the Gospel and undertakes activities of legislation and of government. (John Paul II. *Letter Plurimum significans*, June 29, 1990)

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Teaching and studying theology means living on a frontier.

**Good theologians, like good shepherds,
have the odor of the people and of the street**

The mission of a theologian is of prime importance for the growth of the Church, because his conclusions flow from the treasure of Revelation and from delving attentively into the wisdom found in the depths of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The whole Church rejoices when a true theological reflection brings clearly into light an obscure aspect of doctrine or opens a new path to deepen our knowledge of the richness of our faith.

So sublime is the theologian's task that, according to Saint Thomas Aquinas, he is raised above earth and is close to heaven by the elevation of his doctrine, being the first to receive the rays of divine wisdom.

This is the kind of theologian that for the last two thousand years has been giving fruit in the Church, favoring the evangelization, fomenting the fervor of the faithful, and providing the basis for the apologetics of the faith.

Nevertheless, certain recent notions on the way of being a theologian suggest a different vision, inspired by expressions of unclear significance, in which they would be more like social workers.

So...what type of theologian does the Church really need?

FRANCIS

Dear Brother,

The celebration of 100 years of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University is an important moment for the Church in Argentina. This anniversary coincides with that of 50 years from the closing of the Second Vatican Council, which was an updating, a re-reading of the Gospel from the perspective of contemporary culture. It produced an irreversible movement of renewal which comes from the Gospel. And now, we must go forward.

How, then, do we go forward? **Teaching and studying theology means living on a frontier, one in which the Gospel meets the needs of the people** to whom it should be proclaimed in an understandable and meaningful way. We must guard against a theology that is exhausted in academic dispute or one that looks at humanity from a glass castle. You learn so as to live: theology and holiness are inseparable.

Let the theology that you elaborate therefore be rooted and based on Revelation, on Tradition, but also correspond with the cultural and social processes, in particular difficult transitions. **At this time theology must address conflicts: not only those that we experience within the Church, but also those that concern the world as a whole and those which are lived on the streets of Latin America. Do not settle for a desktop theology. Your place for reflection is the frontier. Do not fall into the temptation to embellish, to add fragrance, to adjust them to some degree and domesticate them. Even good theologians, like good shepherds, have the odour of the people and**

of the street and, by their reflection, pour oil and wine onto the wounds of mankind.

Theology is an expression of a Church which is a ‘field hospital’, which lives her mission of salvation and healing in the world. Mercy is not just a pastoral attitude but it is the very substance of the Gospel of Jesus. I encourage you to study how the various disciplines – dogma, morality, spirituality, law, and so on – may reflect the centrality of mercy.

Without mercy our theology, our law, our pastoral care run the risk of collapsing into bureaucratic narrow-mindedness or ideology, which by their nature seeks to domesticate the mystery. Understanding theology is understanding God, who is Love.

Who then is the student of theology that the UCA is called to form? **Certainly not a ‘museum’ theologian** who gathers data and information on Revelation without, however, really knowing what to do with it. **Nor a passive onlooker on history.**

The theologian formed at the UCA should be a person capable of building humanity around him, passing on the divine Christian truth in a truly human dimension, **and not a talentless intellectual, an ethicist lacking in goodwill or a bureaucrat of the sacred.**

I ask Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom and Mother of Divine Grace, to accompany us in the celebration of this centenary. I ask you to greet the students, staff, professors and the Faculty leaders, who do not forget to pray for me. May Jesus bless you and may the Holy Virgin protect you.

Faternally,

From the Vatican, 3 March 2015

(Letter to Cardinal Mario Aurelio Poli, Archbishop of Buenos Aires and Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the founding of the faculty of theology)

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I – THE THEOLOGIAN’S MISSION

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Because of the height of the doctrine they teach, they should despise earthly things

Because of the height of this doctrine, there is required dignity in those who teach it, which is why they are symbolized by mountains when it is said, ‘from your upper rooms’, and this for three reasons. First, because of the height of mountains. For they are elevated above the earth and neighbours of the sky. **Thus the holy teachers by despising earthly things cleave to heavenly things alone.** Philippians 3:20: ‘But our citizenship is in heaven from which also we eagerly await a Saviour, Our Lord Jesus Christ.’ Hence of the teacher of teachers, Christ, it is said in Isaiah 2:2, ‘And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountain... and all nations shall flow unto it.’ (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Principium Ringans Montes*, 2)

The theologians are illumined by the first beams of divine wisdom

For the mountains are illumined by beams. Similarly **the sacred teachers** of minds first receive the splendour. Like mountains **the teachers are illumined by the first beams of divine wisdom.** Psalm 75:5: ‘You came shining with light, powerful, from the everlasting hills. The foolish of heart have been despoiled,’ that is, by the teachers who participate in eternity. Philippians 2:15: ‘You shine like stars in the world.’ (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Principium Ringans Montes*, 2)

They must stand against errors in defense of the faith

[...] **the doctors of the Church must in defense of the faith stand against errors.** The sons of Israel do not put their trust in lance or bow, but the mountains defend them. Ezekiel 13:5: ‘You have not gone up to face the enemy, nor have you set up a wall for the house of Israel to stand in battle in the day of the Lord.’ **Therefore all the teachers of Sacred Scripture should give high thanks to their eminence of life, that**

they might be worthy to preach efficaciously, because as Gregory says in *On Pastoral Care*, ‘The preaching of those whose life is despised will also be despised.’ Ecclesiastes 12:11: ‘The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails deeply fastened in, which by the counsels of masters are given from one shepherd.’ For the heart cannot be stimulated or stirred to fear of God unless it is fixed in highness of life. They should be enlightened, that they might fittingly teach by reading. Ephesians 3:8-9: ‘Yes, to me, the very least of all the saints, there was given this grace, to announce among the Gentiles the good tidings of the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men as to what is the dispensation of the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in God.’ **Armed, that they might refute errors in disputation.** Luke 21:15: ‘For I myself will give you utterance and wisdom, which all your adversaries will not be able to resist.’ Of these three offices, namely, to preach, to lecture and to dispute, it is said in Titus 1:9, ‘that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to confute opponents’. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Principium Ringans Montes*, 2)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The theologian’s role is to pursue in a particular way an understanding of the Word of God

Among the vocations awakened in this way by the Spirit in the Church is that of the **theologian. His role is to pursue in a particular way an ever deeper understanding of the Word of God** found in the inspired Scriptures and handed on by the living Tradition of the Church. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Donum veritatis*, no. 6, May 24, 1990)

The theologian should give an accounting for their hope to those who ask it

Theological science responds to the invitation of truth as it seeks to understand the faith. It thereby aids the People of God in fulfilling the Apostle’s command (cf. 1Pet 3:15) **to give an accounting for their hope to those who ask it.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Donum veritatis*, no. 6, May 24, 1990)

Theology constitutes an integral part of obedience to Christ's command to make disciples of all nations and teach them

Theology, which seeks the 'reasons of faith' and offers these reasons as a response to those seeking them, thus constitutes an integral part of obedience to the command of Christ [cf. to make 'disciples' of all nations and teach them, Mt 28:19 f] for men cannot become disciples if the truth found in the word of faith is not presented to them (cf. Rom 10:14 f). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Donum veritatis*, no. 7, May 24, 1990)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The life of the theologian cannot fail to be affected by the sustained effort to know the living God

The object of theology is the living God, and the life of the theologian cannot fail to be affected by the sustained effort to know the living God. The theologian cannot exclude his or her own life from the endeavour to understand all of reality with regard to God. Obedience to the truth purifies the soul (cf. It follows that the pursuit of theology should purify the mind and heart of the theologian [Cf. ITC, *The Interpretation of Dogma*, B, III, 4: 'the theological interpretation of dogmas is not an intellectual process only. At a deeper level still, it is a spiritual enterprise, brought about by the Spirit of Truth and possible only when preceded by a purification of the 'eyes of the heart', 1Pet 1:22), full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy' (Jas 3:17).] (International Theological Commission. *Theology today: Perspectives*, principles and criteria, no. 93, November 29, 2011)

JOHN PAUL II

The service of the doctrine about God constitutes an act of love towards man

The task of the theologian at the service of the doctrine about God constitutes, at the same time, according to the teachings of Saint Thomas Aquinas, an act of love towards man. (John Paul II. *Address to theologians in Altötting*, no. 1, November 18, 1980)

Tradition is the true bridge between Scripture and the present

The Catholic theologian cannot build a bridge between Scripture and the concerns of the present without taking into account the mediation of Tradition. This does not substitute the Word of God in the Bible; but rather gives witness to it, throughout the course of historical epochs, by means of new interpretations. [...] Make the members of the Church see that acting in this way, you do not abandon yourselves to relics of the past, but rather that our great inheritance, which extends from the Apostles unto our days, encloses a rich potential, capable of giving responses to the questions of the present. (John Paul II. *Address to theologians in Altötting*, no. 2, November 18, 1980)

Tradition makes the theologian more sensitive to the present

If we [theologians] are capable of discovering the value of Sacred Scripture and of perceiving the echo it has left in the living Tradition of the Church, we will then be able to better transmit the Gospel of God. We will become more critical and sensitive regarding our own present. (John Paul II. *Address to theologians in Altötting*, no. 2, November 18, 1980)

Virtues of the theologian: fidelity to the Magisterium and modesty in personal opinion

In studying and teaching the Catholic doctrine, fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church is always to be emphasized. In the carrying out of teaching duties, especially in the basic cycle, those things are, above all, to be imparted which belong to the received patrimony of the Church. Hypothetical or personal opinions which come from new research are to be modestly presented as such. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution Sapientia christiana*, art. 70, April 29, 1979)

PAUL VI

Theologians should avoid consenting to the desire of popularity in detriment to the Truth

Their [the theologians] greatest care shall be

that of being faithful to the truth of the faith and the doctrine of the Church; **they shall avoid therefore consenting to the desire of being easy received and of popularity, in detriment to the security of the doctrine taught by the Magisterium, which in the Church represents the person of Jesus Christ the Teacher.** (Paul VI. *Address to the participants in the International Congress of Theology of Vatican Council II*, October 1, 1966)

Interpreters of the Truth

They shall place their greatest honor in being faithful and wise interpreters of the teachings of the Magisterium, knowing that nothing is so beneficial to the Christian people and to the whole of mankind as the correct knowledge of the truths of salvation, and that these are found with those to whom Jesus said: 'Those who hear you, hear me.' (Paul VI. *Address to the participants in the International Congress of Theology of Vatican Council II*, October 1, 1966)

PIUS XII

Theologians must always return to Tradition

It is also true that theologians **must always return to the sources of divine revelation:** for it belongs to them to point out how the doctrine of the living Teaching Authority is to be found either explicitly or implicitly in the Scriptures and in Tradition (cf. Pius IX, *Inter gravissimas*, Oct. 28, 1870). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Humani generis*, no. 21, August 12, 1950)

II – THE ROLE OF THEOLOGY

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God is the object of this sacred science

I answer that, God is the object of this science. The relation between a science and its object is the same as that between a habit or faculty and its object. [...] **but in sacred science, all things are treated of under the aspect of God:** either because they are God Himself or because they refer to God as their beginning and end. **Hence it follows that God is in very truth the**

object of this science. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q.1, a.7)

In this science all things are dealt with, but only so far as they have reference to God

This is clear also from the principles of this science, namely, the articles of faith, for faith is about God. The object of the principles and of the whole science must be the same, since the whole science is contained virtually in its principles. Some, however, looking to what is treated of in this science, and not to the aspect under which it is treated, have asserted the object of this science to be something other than God - that is, either things and signs; or the works of salvation; or the whole Christ, as the head and members. **Of all these things, in truth, we treat in this science, but so far as they have reference to God.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q.1, a.7)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The object of theology: Truth

Since the object of theology is the Truth which is the living God and His plan for salvation revealed in Jesus Christ, the theologian is called to deepen his own life of faith and continuously unite his scientific research with prayer (cf. John Paul II, 'Discorso in occasione della consegna del premio internazionale Paulo VI a Hans Urs von Balthasar', June 23, 1984). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Donum veritatis*, no. 8, March 20, 1990)

BENEDICT XVI

Theology is essentially the interpretation of Scripture

In a word, 'where exegesis is not theology, Scripture cannot be the soul of theology, and conversely, **where theology is not essentially the interpretation of the Church's Scripture, such a theology no longer has a foundation'** (Benedict XVI, *Intervention at the Fourteenth General Congregation of the Synod*, 14 October 2008). (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 35, September 30, 2010)

JOHN PAUL II

All syncretism and every kind of false particularism are to be excluded

Revealed truth must be considered also in connection with contemporary, evolving, scientific accomplishments, so that it can be seen 'how faith and reason give harmonious witness to the unity of all truth'. Also, its exposition is to be such that, **without any change of the truth**, there is adaptation to the nature and character of every culture, taking special account of the philosophy and the wisdom of various peoples. However, **all syncretism and every kind of false particularism are to be excluded** (cf. Vatican Council II, Decree *Ad Gentes*, 22). (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution Sapientia christiana*, art. 68, no. 1, April 15, 1979)

Systems and methods incompatible with Christian faith must not be accepted

The positive values in the various cultures and philosophies are to be sought out, carefully examined, and taken up. However, **systems and methods incompatible with Christian faith must not be accepted**. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution Sapientia christiana*, art. 68, no. 2, April 15, 1979)

PIUS XII

Speculation which neglects a deeper search into the deposit of faith, proves sterile

Hence it is that theology through the study of its sacred sources remains ever fresh; **on the other hand, speculation which neglects a deeper search into the deposit of faith, proves sterile**, as we know from experience. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Humani generis*, no. 21, August 12, 1950)

It is supreme imprudence to neglect, or to reject or to devalue Tradition

Hence to neglect, or to reject, or to devalue so many and such great resources which have been conceived, expressed and perfected so often by the age-old work of men endowed with no common talent and holiness, working under the vigilant supervision of the holy

magisterium and with the light and leadership of the Holy Ghost in order to state the truths of the faith ever more accurately, to do this so that these things may be replaced by conjectural notions and by some formless and unstable tenets of a new philosophy, tenets which, like the flowers of the field, are in existence today and die tomorrow; **this is supreme imprudence and something that would make dogma itself a reed shaken by the wind**. The contempt for terms and notions habitually used by scholastic theologians leads of itself to the weakening of what they call speculative theology, a discipline which these men consider devoid of true certitude because it is based on theological reasoning. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Humani generis*, no. 17, August 12, 1950)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The proper place for theology is within the Church

The proper place for theology is within the Church, which is gathered together by the Word of God. The ecclesiality of theology is a constitutive aspect of the theological task, because theology is based on faith, and faith itself is both personal and ecclesial. The revelation of God is directed towards the convocation and renewal of the people of God, and it is through the Church that theologians receive the object of their enquiry. (International Theological Commission. *Theology today: Perspectives, principles and criteria*, no. 20, November 29, 2011)

Theology implies a striving for holiness

As it strives for true wisdom in its study of the Mystery of God, **theology acknowledges God's utter priority; it seeks not to possess but to be possessed by God**. It must therefore be attentive to what the Spirit is saying to the churches by means of 'the knowledge of the saints'. **Theology implies a striving for holiness and an ever-deeper awareness of the transcendence of the Mystery of God**. (International Theological Commission. *Theology today: Perspectives, principles and criteria*, no. 99, November 29, 2011)

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In Argentina, we worked together a lot with the pastors.

In Buenos Aires, I got together with a group of pastors who were friends, and we prayed together. And that helped those of us who were more serious to work together. So, you see, the word ‘sect’ gets diluted

On the way to Damascus, Saul thought of nothing but persecuting the followers of the Messiah. His hatred for the one called Christ was not limited to merely despising him, but also demanded action to eliminate what he considered to be the worst deviation emerging from within Judaism. With this in view, he left Jerusalem to carry out a vicious campaign... but shortly afterwards, he – far from what he could ever have imagined – was miraculously enflamed with love for the Crucified One, and began to preach in favor of Him whom he had formerly persecuted.

The years passed by, and the situation was inverted: Paul relentlessly had to defend the true doctrine from the numerous errors arising from within the midst of the Early Church, due to the malice of certain individuals and the caprice of others. That is how Paul merited the title Apostle of the Gentiles, not only because he preached the word of God to them, but also for having defended them from the errors that were already brazenly rising up in the very midst of the Christians. Against the sects of his time he explained the doctrine of the Mystical Body of Christ; only one flock, one pastor, and one Church, the Spouse of Jesus Christ.

FRANCIS

In Argentina, we worked together a lot with the pastors. In Buenos Aires, I got together with a group of pastors who were friends, and we prayed together and we organized three spiritual retreats for pastors and priests together. They lasted several days. And Catholic priests and a pastor came and preached. One time, Bishop Gretsche of Australia preached – he’s passed away now – and twice Fr. Cantalamessa preached on the Catholic side. And on the other side, prestigious pastors preached too. **And there we are – pastors, women pastors, priests – praying together, making our spiritual retreat.** We did it three times. **It was a great help for those of us who are more or less in the more serious line. And we had three encounters between Catholics and evangelicals in the Luna Park,** which has a capacity of a little over seven thousand people. All day long. In three different years.

And we also invited some pastors from abroad, and some priests from abroad. Cantalamessa came once. **And that helped those of us who were more serious to work together.** So, you see, the word ‘sect’ gets diluted. I’ve spent time on this out of justice, so as not to commit an injustice. We have evangelical brothers who work well. (*Interview with Valentina Alazraki on Televisa, March 13, 2015*)

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I – THE UNICITY AND UNITY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

(Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 161)

LEO XIII

Jesus Christ did not institute a Church to embrace several distinct communities

But when we consider what was actually done we find that Jesus Christ did not, in point of fact, institute a Church to embrace several communities similar in nature, but in themselves distinct, and lacking those bonds which render the Church unique and indivisible after that manner in which in the symbol of our faith we profess: ‘I believe in one Church.’ (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 4, June 29, 1896)

COMPENDIUM OF THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Why is the Church one?

The Church is one because she has as her source and exemplar the unity of the Trinity of Persons in one God. As her Founder and Head, Jesus Christ re-established the unity of all people in one body. As her soul, the Holy Spirit unites all the faithful in communion with Christ. The Church has but one faith, one sacramental life, one apostolic succession, one common hope, and one and the same charity.

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Christ said ‘My Church’ and not ‘my churches’

And so I say to you, you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Mt 16:18-19)

That they may be brought to perfection as one

And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. (Jn 17:22-23)

He put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the Church

And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way. (Eph 1:22-23)

LEO I

Head over all things

For that **virgin is the Church, the spouse of one husband Christ**, who suffers herself to be corrupted by no error, so **that through the whole world we have one entire and pure communion**. (Leo I. *Letter 80, To Anatolius, Bishop of Constantinople*)

The birth of Christ is also the birth of the Church

For **the birth of Christ is the source of life for Christian folk, and the birthday of the Head is the birthday of the body**. Although every individual that is called has his own order, and all the sons of the Church are separated from one another by intervals of time, yet as the entire body of the faithful being born in the font of baptism is crucified with Christ in His passion, raised again in His resurrection, and **placed at the Father's right hand** in His ascension, so with Him are they born in this nativity. **For any believer in whatever part of the world that is re-born in Christ**, quits the old paths of his original nature and passes into a new man by being re-born; and no longer is he reckoned of his earthly father's stock but among the seed of the Saviour, Who became the Son of man in order that we might have the power to be the sons of God. (Leo I. *Sermon 26, II, On the Feast of the Nativity*)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

Unity cannot be severed, nor can one body be separated by a division of its structure

God is one, and Christ is one, and His Church is one, and the faith is one, and the people is joined into a substantial unity of body by the cement of concord. **Unity cannot be severed; nor can one body be separated by a division of its structure, nor torn into pieces, with its entrails wrenched asunder by laceration**. (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *The Unity of the Church*, no. 23)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Only faith can recognize that the Church possesses unity, but their historical manifestations are signs that also speak clearly to human reason

Only faith can recognize that the Church possesses these properties [one, holy, catholic and apostolic] from her divine source. **But their historical manifestations are signs that also speak clearly to human reason**. As the First Vatican Council noted, the 'Church herself, with her marvelous propagation, eminent holiness, and inexhaustible fruitfulness in everything good, her catholic unity and invincible stability, is a great and perpetual motive of credibility and an irrefutable witness of her divine mission' (Vatican Council I: DS 3013). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 812)

The bonds of unity of the Church

What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity 'binds everything together in perfect harmony' (Col 3:14). But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion: – **profession of one faith received from the Apostles; common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments; apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders**, maintaining the fraternal concord of God's family. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 815)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

This is the one Church of Christ: the Catholic church

This is the one Church of Christ which in the Creed is professed as one, holy, catholic and apostolic, which our Saviour, after His Resurrection, commissioned Peter to shepherd (Jn 21:17), and him and the other apostles to extend and direct with authority (Cf. Mt 28:18), which He erected for all ages as 'the pillar and mainstay of the truth' (1Tim 3:15). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 8, November 21, 1964)

The Trinity is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church

The Church, then, is God's only flock; it is like a standard lifted high for the nations to see it: for it serves all mankind through the Gospel of peace as it makes its pilgrim way in hope toward the goal of the fatherland above. **This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church**, in Christ and through Christ, the Holy Spirit energizing its various functions. It is a mystery that finds its highest exemplar and source in the unity of the Persons of the Trinity: the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, one God. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 2, November 21, 1964)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ

In connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, **the unicity of the Church founded by him must be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: 'a single Catholic and apostolic Church'** (cf. Mt 16:18, 28:20). Furthermore, the promises of the Lord that he would not abandon his Church and that he would guide her by his Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13) mean, according to Catholic faith, that the unicity and the unity of the Church – like everything that belongs to the Church's integrity – will never be lacking. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 16, August 6, 2000)

Christ and the Church constitute a single 'whole Christ'

And thus, just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too Christ and the Church can neither be confused nor separated, and constitute a single 'whole Christ'. This same inseparability is also expressed in the New Testament by the analogy of the Church as the Bride of Christ (cf. 2Cor 11:2, Eph 5:25-29; Rev 21:2, 9) (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 16, August 6, 2000)

The faithful may not imagine that the Church of Christ is a collection of Churches

'The Christian faithful are therefore not permitted to imagine that the Church of Christ is nothing more than a collection – divided, yet in some way one – of Churches and ecclesial communities; nor are they free to hold that today the Church of Christ nowhere really exists, and must be considered only as a goal which all Churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach'. In fact, 'the elements of this already-given Church exist, joined together in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other communities'. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 17, August 6, 2000)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the Church

First of all we should call to mind the 'fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Catholic Church' (*Unitatis redintegratio* 3). **In this the Church is a beneficiary of the fact that 'it was to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God'** (*Unitatis redintegratio* 3). (International Theological Commission. *Select themes of Ecclesiology*, ch. IX, no. 2, October 7, 1985)

BONIFACE VIII

The Catholic Church is the one true Church, the 'seamless tunic' of the Lord

With Faith urging us we are forced to believe and to hold the one, holy, Catholic Church and that, apostolic, and we firmly believe and simply confess this (Church) outside which there is no salvation nor remission of sin, the Spouse in the Canticle proclaiming: 'One is my dove, my perfect one. One she is of her mother, the chosen of her that bore her' (Cant 6:8); which represents the one mystical body

whose head is Christ, of Christ indeed, as God. And in this, 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' (Eph 4:5). Certainly Noah had one ark at the time of the flood, prefiguring one Church which perfect on one cubit had one ruler and guide, namely Noah outside which we read all living things on the earth were destroyed. **Moreover this we venerate and this alone**, the Lord in the prophet saying: 'Deliver, O God, my soul from the sword; my only one from the hand of the dog' (Ps 21:21). For in behalf of the soul, that is, in behalf of himself, the head itself and the body he prayed at the same time, **which body he called the 'Only one' namely, the Church, because of the unity of the spouse, the faith, the sacraments, and the charity of the Church. This is that 'seamless tunic' of the Lord (Jn 19:23), which was not cut, but came forth by chance. Therefore, of the one and only Church (there is) one body, one head, not two heads as a monster, namely, Christ and Peter, the Vicar of Christ and the successor of Peter, the Lord Himself saying to Peter: 'Feed my sheep' (Jn 21:17). (Denzinger-Hünemann 870-871. Boniface VIII, *Bull Unam sanctam*, November 18, 1302)**

Pius IX

No other Church is Catholic except the one founded on Peter

The true Church of Jesus Christ was established by divine authority, and is known by a fourfold mark, which we assert in the Creed must be believed; and each one of these marks so clings to the others that it cannot be separated from them; hence it happens that that Church which truly is, and is called Catholic should at the same time shine with the prerogatives of unity, sanctity, and apostolic succession. Therefore, **the Catholic Church alone is conspicuous and perfect in the unity of the whole world and of all nations**, particularly in that unity whose beginning, root, and unfailing origin are that supreme authority and 'higher principality' of blessed Peter, the prince of the Apostles, and of his successors in the Roman Chair. **No other Church is Catholic except the one which, founded on the one Peter, grows into one 'body compacted and fitly joined together' (Eph 4:16). (Denzinger-Hünemann 2888. Pius IX, *Letter of the Sacred Office to the bishops of England*, September 16, 1864)**

LEO XIII

No Christian can dare to deny that the true Church of Jesus Christ is one

It is so evident from the clear and frequent testimonies of Holy Writ that the true Church of Jesus Christ is one, that no Christian can dare to deny it. But in judging and determining the nature of this unity many have erred in various ways. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 4, June 29, 1896)

By the will of its Founder, it is necessary that this Church should be one in all lands and at all times so as to fulfill her mission

This becomes even more evident when the purpose of the Divine Founder is considered. For what did Christ, the Lord, ask? **What did He wish in regard to the Church founded, or about to be founded? This: to transmit to it the same mission and the same mandate which He had received from the Father, that they should be perpetuated. [...]** The Church, therefore, is bound to communicate without stint to all men, and to transmit through all ages, the salvation effected by Jesus Christ, and the blessings flowing there from. **Wherefore, by the will of its Founder, it is necessary that this Church should be one in all lands and at all times.** to justify the existence of more than one Church it would be necessary to go outside this world, and to create a new and unheard of race of men. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 4, June 29, 1896)

The one Church foretold by Isaiah

That the one Church should embrace all men everywhere and at all times was seen and foretold by Isaiah, when looking into the future he saw the appearance of a mountain conspicuous by its all surpassing altitude, which set forth the image of 'The House of the Lord' – that is, of the Church, 'And in the last days the mountain of the House of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains' (Is 2:2). But this mountain which towers over all other mountains is one; and the House of the Lord to which all nations shall come to seek the rule of living is also one. 'And all nations shall flow into it. And many people

shall go, and say: Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the House of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths' (Ibid., 2:2-3). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 4, June 29, 1896)

The members cannot possibly live unless united to the head and drawing from it their vital force

And to set forth more clearly the unity of the Church, he makes use of the illustration of a living body, the members of which cannot possibly live unless united to the head and drawing from it their vital force. Separated from the head they must of necessity die. 'The Church,' he says, 'cannot be divided into parts by the separation and cutting asunder of its members. **What is cut away from the mother cannot live or breathe apart**'. What similarity is there between a dead and a living body? (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 5, June 29, 1896)

JOHN XXIII

The faithful cannot be perfectly united with the Divine Redeemer except in the unity of faith

But mark this well: **unless the faithful remain bound together by the same ties of virtue, worship and sacrament, and all hold fast to the same belief, they cannot be perfectly united with the Divine Redeemer**, the universal Head, so as to form with Him one visible and living body. 'A whole faith,' says Saint Leo, 'a true faith, is a mighty bulwark. No one can add anything to it, no one can take anything away from it; **for unless it is one, it is no faith at all.**' **To preserve this unity of faith, all teachers of divine truths – all bishops, that is – must necessarily speak with one mind and one voice.** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Aeterna Dei sapientia*, no. 40-41, November 11, 1961)

The Catholic Church is the only in the world to be divine and human at the same time

The Catholic Church is a unique institution in the world; divine and human at the same time, with twenty centuries of existence,

however, always young, untiringly pursues, through human activity, supernatural ends that easily escape superficial observers. (John XXIII. *Address to the Foreign Press in Italy*, October 24, 1961)

JOHN PAUL II

Connected with the uniqueness of Christ's salvific mediation is the uniqueness of the Church he founded

Connected with the uniqueness of Christ's salvific mediation is the uniqueness of the Church he founded. The Lord Jesus, in fact, established his Church as a saving reality: as his Body, through which he himself accomplishes salvation in history. Just as there is only one Christ, so his Body is one alone: 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church' (cf. *Symbolum fidei*, DS 48). The Second Vatican Council says in this regard: 'Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, this holy Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim on earth, is necessary for salvation' (*Lumen gentium*, 14). (John Paul II. *Address to the members, consultors and staff of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, no. 4, January 28, 2000)

It is a mistake to regard the Church as a way of salvation along with those constituted by other religions

It is a mistake, then, to regard the Church as a way of salvation along with those constituted by other religions, which would be complementary to the Church, even if converging with her on the eschatological kingdom of God. Therefore we must reject a certain indifferentist mentality 'characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that one religion is as good as another' (cf. *Redemptoris missio*, no. 36). (John Paul II. *Address to the members, consultors and staff of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, no. 4, January 28, 2000)

BENEDICT XVI

If the Movements are really gifts of the Holy Spirit, they must be inserted into the one Church

Since the Church is one, if the Movements

are really gifts of the Holy Spirit, they must, naturally, be inserted into the Ecclesial Community and serve it so that, in patient dialogue with the Pastors, they can be elements in the construction of the Church of today and tomorrow. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the members of Communion and Liberation Movement on the 25th anniversary of its Pontifical Recognition*, March 24, 2007)

II – THE OBJECTIVE OF THE SECTS: TO DISTORT THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

CODE OF CANON LAW

Heresy, apostasy and schism

Heresy is the obstinate denial or obstinate doubt after the reception of baptism of some truth which is to be believed by divine and Catholic faith; apostasy is the total repudiation of the Christian faith; schism is the refusal of submission to the Supreme Pontiff or of communion with the members of the Church subject to him. (Code of Canon Law, can. 751)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

God tests his own people with the appearance of false prophets

If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer who promises you a sign or wonder, urging you to follow other gods, whom you have not known, and to serve them: even though the sign or wonder he has foretold you comes to pass, pay no attention to the words of that prophet or that dreamer; for the Lord, your God, is testing you to learn whether you really love him with all your heart and with all your soul. (Deut 13:2-4)

By fair and flattering speech, heretics deceive the hearts of the innocent

I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who create dissensions and obstacles, in opposition to the teaching that you learned; avoid them. For such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the innocent. For while your

obedience is known to all, so that I rejoice over you, I want you to be wise as to what is good, and simple as to what is evil. (Rom 16:17-19)

There is no other Gospel

I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by (the) grace (of Christ) for a different gospel (not that there is another). But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. (Gal 1:6-7)

If anyone preaches to you another gospel, let that one be accursed

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach (to you) a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed! (Gal 1:8-9)

Heretics handed over to Satan

Some, by rejecting conscience, have made a shipwreck of their faith, among them Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme. (1Tim 1:19-20)

Who heretics are and what comes forth from them

Whoever teaches something different and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the religious teaching is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid disposition for arguments and verbal disputes. From these come envy, rivalry, insults, evil suspicions, and mutual friction among people with corrupted minds, who are deprived of the truth, supposing religion to be a means of gain. Indeed, religion with contentment is a great gain. (1Tim 6:3-6)

Teaching that deviates from truth and spreads like gangrene

Be eager to present yourself as acceptable to God, a workman who causes no disgrace, imparting the word of truth without deviation. Avoid profane, idle talk, for such people will

become more and more godless, and their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have deviated from the truth by saying that (the) resurrection has already taken place and are upsetting the faith of some. (2Tim 2:15-18)

People of depraved mind, unqualified in the faith

Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so they also oppose the truth – people of depraved mind, unqualified in the faith. But they will not make further progress, for their foolishness will be plain to all, as it was with those two. (1Tim 3:8-9)

People will not tolerate sound doctrine and will be diverted to myths

For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. (2Tim 4:3-4)

Deceivers who teach error for sordid gain

For there are also many rebels, idle talkers and deceivers, especially the Jewish Christians. It is imperative to silence them, as they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what they should not. (Tit 1:10-11)

SAINT CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

They strive to cut asunder the one Church into many sects

In the nature of the One, then, is associated in a joint heritage the one Church, which they strive to cut asunder into many sects. Therefore in substance and idea, in origin, in pre-eminence, we say that the ancient and Catholic Church is alone, collecting as it does into the unity of the one faith – which results from the peculiar Testaments, or rather the one Testament in different times by the will of the one God, through one Lord – those already ordained, whom God predestinated, knowing before the foundation of the world that they would be righteous. But the pre-eminence of the Church, as the principle of union, is, in its oneness, in this

surpassing all things else, and having nothing like or equal to itself. (Saint Clement of Alexandria. *Stromata Book VII*, Ch. 17)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The Manichaeans preach a false Christ

But because the Manichæans preach another Christ, and not Him whom the apostles preached, but a false Christ of their own false contrivance, in imitation of whose falsehood they themselves speak lies, though they may perhaps be believed when they are not ashamed to profess to be the followers of a deceiver. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Reply to Faustus the Manichæan*, Book XII, no. 4)

SAINT VINCENT OF LERINS

Faced with false apostles, prophets and teachers, what are Catholics and the sons of Mother Church to do?

But it will be said, If the words, the sentiments, the promises of Scripture, are appealed to by the Devil and his disciples, of whom some are false apostles, some false prophets and false teachers, and all without exception heretics, what are Catholics and the sons of Mother Church to do? How are they to distinguish truth from falsehood in the sacred Scriptures? They must be very careful to pursue that course which, in the beginning of this Commonitory, we said that holy and learned men had commended to us, that is to say, they must interpret the sacred Canon according to the traditions of the Universal Church and in keeping with the rules of Catholic doctrine, in which Catholic and Universal Church, moreover, they must follow universality, antiquity, consent. (Saint Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitory*, Ch. 27, no. 70)

III – THE MALICE OF THE SECTS AND THE NECESSITY OF FLEEING FROM THEM

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

How heresies develop

This arises from the fact that numbers of them – indeed, we may say all – desire themselves

to be teachers, and to break off from the particular heresy in which they have been involved. Forming one set of doctrines out of a totally different system of opinions, and then again others from others, they insist upon teaching something new, declaring themselves the inventors of any sort of opinion which they may have been able to call into existence. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*, Book I, Ch. 28, 1)

It is an impracticable attempt to mention all those who, in one way or another, have fallen away from the truth

Those who are called Encratites (self-controlled) preached against marriage, thus setting aside the original creation of God, and indirectly blaming Him who made the male and female for the propagation of the human race. [...] A certain man named Tatian first introduced the blasphemy. He was a hearer of Justin's, and as long as he continued with him he expressed no such views; but after his martyrdom he separated from the Church, and, excited and puffed up by the thought of being a teacher, as if he were superior to others, he composed his own peculiar type of doctrine. [...] Others, again, following upon Basilides and Carpocrates, have introduced promiscuous intercourse and a plurality of wives, and are indifferent about eating meats sacrificed to idols, maintaining that God does not greatly regard such matters. But why continue? For it is an impracticable attempt to mention all those who, in one way or another, have fallen away from the truth. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*, Book I, Ch. 28, 1-2)

LEO XIII

Whosoever is separated from the Church is united to an adulteress

The Church of Christ, therefore, is one and the same forever; those who leave it depart from the will and command of Christ, the Lord – leaving the path of salvation they enter on that of perdition. **Whosoever is separated from the Church is united to an adulteress. He has cut himself off from the promises of the Church,** and he who leaves the Church of Christ cannot arrive at the rewards of Christ... He who observes not this unity observes not the law of God, holds

not the faith of the Father and the Son, clings not to life and salvation' (S. Cyprianus, *De Cath. Eccl. Unitate*, no. 6). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 5, June 29, 1896)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

We are to be congratulated when the evil are separated from the Church

We are to be congratulated when such as these are separated from the Church, lest they should lay waste the doves and sheep of Christ with their cruel and envenomed contagion. Bitterness cannot consist and be associated with sweetness, darkness with light, rain with clearness, battle with peace, barrenness with fertility, drought with springs, storm with tranquility. **Let none think that the good can depart from the Church. The wind does not carry away the wheat, nor does the hurricane uproot the tree that is based on a solid root.** The light straws are tossed about by the tempest, the feeble trees are overthrown by the onset of the whirlwind. The Apostle John execrates and severely assails these, when he says, 'They went forth from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, surely they would have continued with us' (1Jn 2:19). **Hence heresies not only have frequently been originated, but continue to be so; while the perverted mind has no peace – while a discordant faithlessness does not maintain unity.** (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *On the Unity of the Church*, no. 9-10)

SAINT VINCENT OF LERINS

Prefer the soundness of the whole to the corruption of a part

And if at any time a part opposes itself to the whole, novelty to antiquity, the dissent of one or a few who are in error to the consent of all or at all events of the great majority of Catholics, **then they must prefer the soundness of the whole to the corruption of a part;** in which same whole they must prefer the religion of antiquity to the profaneness of novelty; and in antiquity itself in like manner, to the temerity of one or of a very few they must prefer, first of all, the general decrees, if such there be, of a Universal Council, or if there be no such, then, what is next best, they must

follow the consentient belief of many and great masters. (Saint Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitory*, Ch. 27, no. 70)

PIUS IX

Schisms to be torn out by the roots; care not to be infected with heresy

Surely nothing should be preferable to a Catholic man than that schisms and dissensions among Christians be torn out by the roots and that all Christians be 'careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph 4:3). **But, that the faithful of Christ and the clergy should pray for Christian unity under the leadership of heretics, and, what is worse, according to an intention, polluted and infected as much as possible with heresy, can in no way be tolerated.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 2887. Pius IX, *Letter of the Sacred Office to the bishops of England*, September 16, 1864)

BENEDICT XVI

Sects are not stable

And we know that these sects are not very stable: at any given time, it may be all very well to proclaim prosperity, miraculous healings, etc., but after a while, it becomes clear that life is difficult, that a human God, a God who suffers with us is more convincing, more real, and offers greater help for life. It is also important that we have the structure of the Catholic Church. We do not proclaim a small group that after a certain time becomes isolated and lost, but we enter into this great universal network of catholicity, which is not only trans-temporal, but above all, it is present as a great network of friendship that unites us and also helps us to overcome individualism so as to arrive at this unity in diversity, which is the true promise. (Benedict XVI. *Interview during the flight to Africa*, March 17, 2009)

The sects have the upper hand because they appear with a few simple certainties and say: 'This suffices'

In this atmosphere of a rationalism closing in on itself and that regards the model of

the sciences as the only model of knowledge, **everything else is subjective.** Christian life too, of course, becomes a choice **that is subjective, hence, arbitrary and no longer the path of life.** It therefore naturally becomes difficult to believe, and if it is difficult to believe it is even more difficult to offer one's life to the Lord to be his servant. [...] On the other hand, the sects that present themselves with the certainty of a minimum of faith are growing, and the human being seeks certainty. Thus, the great Churches, especially the great traditional Protestant Churches, are truly finding themselves in a very deep crisis. **The sects have the upper hand because they appear with a few simple certainties and say: 'This suffices'.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to diocesan clergy of Aosta*, July 25, 2005)

JOHN PAUL II

Deviations of the syncretistic perspective

We have to remember, however, that there are no lack of deviations which gave origin to sects and Gnostic, or pseudo-religious movements, configuring a widespread cultural fashion which finds an echo in ample sectors of society and has influence even within catholic ambiances. For this reason, some of them, in a syncretistic perspective, amalgamate biblical and Christian aspects with others taken from oriental philosophies or religions, magic, and psychological techniques. This expansion of sects and of new religious groups that attract many of the faithful and sow confusion and uncertainty among Catholics is a cause for pastoral concern. (John Paul II. *Address to a group of Bishops of the Argentinean Episcopal Conference on their ad limina visit*, no. 5, February 7, 1995)

CORNELIUS

Confession of faith of Maximus, Urban, and other Africans before Pope Cornelius

'We know that Cornelius, bishop of the most holy Catholic Church, was chosen by God almighty and by Christ our Lord; we confess our error; we have suffered imposture; we have been deceived by treachery and captious loquacity; for although we seemed to have

held, as it were, a certain communication with a schismatical and heretical man, nevertheless our heart has always been in the Church; for we are not ignorant that there is one God and that there is one Lord Christ, whom we have confessed, that there is one Holy Spirit and that there ought to be one bishop in the Catholic Church.' (Denzinger-Hünermann 108. Cornelius. *Letter Quantam sollicitudinem to Saint Cyprian*, bishop of Carthage, 252)

of the Carthaginian Church have decided that whoever says that Adam, the first man, was made mortal, so that, whether he sinned or whether he did not sin, he would die in body, that is he would go out of the body not because of the merit of sin but by reason of the necessity of nature, let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünermann 222. *Synod of Carthage*, May 1, 418)

IV – PAPAL CONDEMNATIONS OF SECTS THROUGHOUT HISTORY

MARCELLINUS

The impiety and perversity of Arius

First of all, the impiety and perversity of Arius and his followers were examined, [...] and it was unanimously decided to condemn his impious doctrine and the blasphemous utterances by which he expressed himself regarding the Son of God: maintaining in fact that he came from nothing and that prior to his birth he did not exist; he also said that the Son of God, through his free will, had capacity for both good and evil and called him a creature and something made. The holy council anathematized all of this, not wishing even to listen to this impious and insane doctrine or such blasphemous language. (Denzinger-Hünermann 130. Marcellinus, *Synodal letter to the Egyptians*)

DAMASUS

Condemnation of Apollinarism

Know then that already long ago we condemned that profane man Timothy, the disciple of Apollinarius the heretic, along with his godless doctrine. In no way do we believe that his legacy will exercise any influence from now on. (Denzinger-Hünermann 149. Damasus I, *Letter to the Eastern Bishops*, 378)

XV SYNOD OF CARTHAGE

Condemnation of the Pelagian doctrine

All the bishops established in the sacred synod

LEO I

Against the errors of the Priscillianists

[The impiety of the Priscillianists] has sunk even into the darkness of paganism, with the result that, through the profane and secret practices of the magical arts and the hollow deceptions of astrologers, they base religious faith and moral laws upon the power of demons and the influence of the stars. But if it were permitted for this to be believed and taught, no reward would be owed to virtues or punishment to vices, and all rules not only of human laws but also of divine ordinances would be dissolved; for it would be impossible for there to be any judgment in regard either to good acts or to bad ones if a fated necessity compelled the movement of the mind in the two directions and if whatever is done by men comes, not from men, but from the stars... With good reason our fathers... took decisive action, so that (this) impious delusion might be driven from the whole Church. (Denzinger-Hünermann 283. Leo I, *Letter Quam laudabiliter to Bishop Turribius of Astorga*, July 21, 447)

SYNOD OF ARLES

Condemnation of theories regarding grace and predestination

Your public reproof is public salvation, and your opinion is medicine. From this I also draw the highest remedy, that by blaming past errors I excuse [them], and by healing confession I wash myself. Just so in consequence of the recent statutes of the Council about to be published, I condemn with you that view which states that the work of human obedience does not have to be united with divine grace; which says that after the fall of the first man the free choice of the will was totally destroyed;

which states that Christ our Lord and Savior did not incur death for the salvation of all; which states that the foreknowledge of God violently impels man to death, or that they who perish, perish by the will of God; which affirms that whoever sins after baptism which has been legitimately received dies in Adam; which states that some have been condemned to death, others have been predestined to life; which states that from Adam even to Christ none of the nations has been saved unto the coming of Christ through the first grace of God, that is, by the law of nature, and that they lost free will in the first parent; which states that the patriarchs and prophets or every one of the highest saints, even before the times of the redemption, entered into paradise. All these I condemn as impious and replete with sacrileges. (Denzinger-Hünemann 330-339. Synod of Arles, *from the letter of submission of the priest Lucidus*, 475)

HORMISDAS

Anathemas for all of the heretics

Desiring not to be separated from this hope and faith and following the ordinances of the Fathers, we anathematize all heresies, especially the heretic Nestorius, who at one time was bishop of the city of Constantinople, condemned in the Council of Ephesus by the blessed Celestine, Pope of the City of Rome, and by the venerable man Cyril, high priest of the City of Alexandria. Similarly anathematizing both Eutyches and Dioscorus of Alexandria condemned in the holy Synod of Chalcedon which we follow and embrace, which following the sacred Council of Nicea proclaimed the apostolic faith, we detest both Timothy the parricide, surnamed the Cat, and likewise his disciple and follower in all things, Peter of Alexandria. We condemn, too, and anathematize Acacius, formerly bishop of Constantinople, who was condemned by the Apostolic See, their confederate and follower, or those who remained in the society of their communion, because Acacius justly merited a sentence in condemnation like theirs in whose communion he mingled. No less do we condemn Peter of Antioch with his followers, and the followers of all mentioned above. (Denzinger-Hünemann 364. Hormisdas, *Libellus fidei*, August 11, 515)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

Diverse anathemas against Christological heresies

It, moreover, anathematizes, execrates, and condemns every heresy that suggests contrary things. And first it condemns Ebion, Cerinthus, Marcion, Paul of Samosata, Photinus, and all similar blasphemers, who, being unable to accept the personal union of humanity with the Word, denied that our Lord Jesus Christ was true God, proclaiming Him pure man, who was called divine man by reason of a greater participation in divine grace, which He had received by merit of a more holy life. It anathematizes also Manichaeus with his followers, who, thinking vainly that the Son of God had assumed not a true but an ephemeral body, entirely do away with the truth of the humanity in Christ. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1339-1340. Council of Florence, from the Bull *Cantate Domino*, February 4, 1442)

VIGILIUS

Condemnation of the Nestorian theory

If anyone does not confess that the Word, without detriment to the immutability of his divine nature, was made flesh and that from his very conception in the womb of the Virgin he united, according to hypostasis, the principles of human nature, but says that God the Word was with a preexisting man, so that, as a consequence, one cannot believe that the holy Virgin was in fact the Mother of God, but only that she is said to be such in name, let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 416. *Constitution Inter innúmeras sollicitudines*, May 14, 553)

LEO XIII

Against false political theories

Strive with all possible care to make men understand and show forth in their lives what the Catholic Church teaches on government and the duty of obedience. Let the people be frequently urged by your authority and teaching to fly from the forbidden sects, to abhor all conspiracy, to have nothing to do with sedition, and let them understand that

they who for God's sake obey their rulers render a reasonable service and a generous obedience. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Diuturnum illud*, no. 27, June 29, 1881)

Pius XI

Catholic people shall never permit themselves to be outdone by the propagators of false beliefs

Hoping that because of your exhortations and your interest in this work the Catholic people shall never permit themselves to be outdone in generosity by non-Catholics who are wont to assist so liberally the propagators of their false beliefs. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Rerum Ecclesiae*, no. 17, February 28, 1926)

May the principles of Christian truth be also modified to some degree and be tempered so as to meet Socialism half-way?

Yet let no one think that all the socialist groups or factions that are not communist have, without exception, recovered their senses to this extent either in fact or in name. For the most part they do not reject the class struggle or the abolition of ownership, but only in some degree modify them. Now if these false principles are modified and to some extent erased from the program, the question arises, or rather is raised without warrant by some, whether the principles of Christian truth cannot perhaps be also modified to some degree and be tempered so as to meet Socialism half-way and, as it were, by a middle course, come to agreement with it. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 116, May 15, 1931)

V – VATICAN COUNCIL II CONFIRMS: THE CATHOLIC CHURCH NEVER RENOUNCED ITS CONVICTION OF BEING THE ONLY TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Second Vatican Council did not change the previously held doctrine on the Church

The first question asks if the Second Vatican Council changed the previously held doctrine

on the Church.

The question concerns the significance of what Paul VI described in the above mentioned quotation as 'the new face' of the Church offered by Vatican II. The response, based on the teaching of John XXIII and Paul VI, is very clear: **the Second Vatican Council did not intend to change – and therefore has not changed – the previously held doctrine on the Church.** It merely deepened this doctrine and articulated it in a more organic way. This is, in fact, what Paul VI said in his discourse promulgating the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* when he affirmed that the document had not changed traditional doctrine on the Church, but rather 'that which was assumed, is now explicit; that which was uncertain, is now clarified; that which was meditated upon, discussed and sometimes argued over, is now put together in one clear formulation' (Paul VI, Discourse, September 21, 1964). There is also a continuity between the doctrine taught by the Council and that of subsequent interventions of the Magisterium which have taken up and deepened this same doctrine, which itself constitutes a development. In this sense, for instance, the Declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Dominus Iesus* merely reaffirmed the conciliar and post-conciliar teachings without adding or taking away anything. In the post-conciliar period, however, **and notwithstanding these clear affirmations, the doctrine of Vatican II has been, and continues to be, the object of erroneous interpretations at variance with traditional Catholic doctrine on the nature of the Church:** either seeing in it a 'Copernican revolution' or else emphasizing some aspects almost to the exclusion of others. In reality the profound intention of the Second Vatican Council was clearly to insert the discourse on the Church within and subordinate to the discourse on God, therefore proposing an ecclesiology which is truly theological. **The reception of the teaching of the Council has, however, often obscured this point, relativising it in favor of individual ecclesiological affirmations, and often emphasizing specific words or phrases which encourage a partial and unbalanced understanding of this same conciliar doctrine.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Commentary on the document Responses to some questions regarding certain aspects of the doctrine of the Church*, June 29, 2007)

Regarding the phrase ‘subsistit in’

The second question asks what is meant by the affirmation that the Church of Christ subsists in the Catholic Church. When G. Philips wrote that the phrase ‘*subsistit in*’ had caused ‘rivers of ink’ to be spilt, he would probably never have imagined that the discussion would continue for so long or with such intensity as to have provoked the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to publish this present document. This publication, based on the conciliar and postconciliar texts which it cites, reflects the concern of the Congregation to safeguard the unity and unicity of the Church, which would be compromised by the proposal that the Church founded by Christ could have more than one subsistence. If this were the case we would be forced, as the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* puts it, to imagine ‘the Church of Christ as the sum total of the Churches or the ecclesial Communities – which are simultaneously differentiated and yet united’, or ‘to think that the Church of Christ no longer exists today concretely and therefore can only be the object of research for the Churches and the communities.’ If this were the case, the Church of Christ would not any longer exist in history, or would exist only in some ideal form emerging either through some future convergence or through the reunification of the diverse sister Churches, to be hoped for and achieved through dialogue. The Notification of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith concerning a book of Leonardo Boff is even more explicit. In response to Boff’s assertion that the one Church of Christ ‘is able to subsist in other Christian Churches’, the Notification states that ‘the Council chose the word ‘subsistit’ specifically to clarify that the true Church has only one ‘subsistence’, while outside her visible boundaries there are only ‘*elementa Ecclesiae*’ which – being elements of the same Church – tend and lead to the Catholic Church.’ (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Commentary on the document Responses to some questions regarding certain aspects of the doctrine of the Church*, June 29, 2007)

The Church exists as a unique historical reality – the Catholic Church has not ceased to regard herself as the one true Church of Christ

The third question asks why the expression

‘subsistit in’ was used rather than the verb ‘est’. It is precisely this change of terminology in the description of the relationship between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church which has given rise to the most varied interpretations, above all in the field of ecumenism. In reality, the Council Fathers simply intended to recognise the presence of ecclesial elements proper to the Church of Christ in the non-Catholic Christian communities. It does not follow that the identification of the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church no longer holds, nor that outside the Catholic Church there is a complete absence of ecclesial elements, a ‘churchless void’. What it does mean is that if the expression ‘*subsistit in*’ is considered in its true context, namely in reference to the Church of Christ ‘constituted and organised in this world as a society... governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him’, then the change from *est* to *subsistit in* takes on no particular theological significance of discontinuity with previously held Catholic doctrine. In fact, precisely because the Church willed by Christ actually continues to exist (*subsistit in*) in the Catholic Church, this continuity of subsistence implies an essential identity between the Church of Christ and the Catholic Church. The Council wished to teach that we encounter the Church of Jesus Christ as a concrete historical subject in the Catholic Church. The idea, therefore, that subsistence can somehow be multiplied does not express what was intended by the choice of the term ‘*subsistit*’. In choosing the word ‘subsistit’ the Council intended to express the singularity and non ‘multipliability’ of the Church of Christ: the Church exists as a unique historical reality. Contrary to many unfounded interpretations, therefore, the change from ‘*est*’ to ‘*subsistit*’ does not signify that the Catholic Church has ceased to regard herself as the one true Church of Christ. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Commentary on the document Responses to some questions regarding certain aspects of the doctrine of the Church*, June 29, 2007)

Regarding the expression ‘sister Churches’

The expression sister Churches occurs often in ecumenical dialogue, above all, in the dialogue between Catholics and Orthodox,

and is the object of continuing study by both parties. **While there is certainly a legitimate use of this expression, an ambiguous use has become prevalent in contemporary writings on ecumenism. In conformity with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar Papal Magisterium, it is therefore appropriate to recall the correct and proper use of this expression.** It is helpful to begin with a brief historical outline. [...] In fact, in the proper sense, sister Churches are exclusively particular Churches (or groupings of particular Churches; for example, the Patriarchates or Metropolitan provinces) among themselves. It must always be clear, when the expression sister Churches is used in this proper sense, that the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Universal Church is not sister but mother of all the particular Churches.

One may also speak of sister Churches, in a proper sense, in reference to particular Catholic and non-catholic Churches; thus the particular Church of Rome can also be called the sister of all other particular Churches. However, as recalled above, one cannot properly say that the Catholic Church is the sister of a particular Church or group of Churches. **This is not merely a question of terminology, but above all of respecting a basic truth of the Catholic faith: that of the unicity of the Church of Jesus Christ. In fact, there is but a single Church, and therefore the plural term Churches can refer only to particular Churches.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Note on the expression 'sister churches'*, A letter to the Presidents of the Conferences of Bishops, no. 1.10-11, June 30, 2000)

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**When I have a clericalist in front of me I suddenly become anticlerical.
Clericalism shouldn't have any part in Christianity**

By instituting ordained ministers in his Church, Our Lord Jesus Christ inaugurated 'the most elevated dignity among all of the hierarchies of the earth', a new category of men called to act in persona Christi, in order to dispense the treasures of the redemption to sinful humanity, as authentic mediators between heaven and earth. These men chosen by Christ himself are participants of the authority with which He forms, sanctifies and rules his Mystical Body, and their dignity is even greater than the angels.

The Christian faithful have always had a profound admiration towards priests because of Who they represent. It is they who present to God the people's petitions and obtain for them the necessary assistance from Him. Anyone can see that a priest, like any other human being, also has his defects; but this religious respect cannot be lacking in any well-intentioned Christian.

The terms 'clericalism' and 'anticlericalism' used by Pope Francis to manifest his 'esteem' of the priestly rank are not new terms. They were often employed by the members of diverse movements that were, in their majority, declared enemies of religion. Here, we are using these terms in the most authentic way possible, without the blemishes that were later created by the old political conservatives or liberals; the latter always disposed to deride the priestly class and publically take a stance against it. It is even more important to understand the priesthood in conformity with the teachings of the Holy Mother Church. She cannot approve of theories which minimize the grandeur of the ordained ministry, one of the greatest glories of Catholicism and a true honor for humankind.

Regarding Pope Francis' intentions in declaring himself anticlerical and labeling Saint Paul in the same way – imagine the latter's surprise in hearing about this in heaven! It's difficult to correctly describe, and moreover, interpret his words as being amiably clerical. It is certainly a little optimistic to think that those who had heard them could perceive a benevolent meaning in them. And if he had such an intention, we would appreciate more clarity.

To assist our readers, we offer a study that might shed some light on the concerns that these declarations provoke among people of sincere faith: the most authorized Catholic doctrine which we may believe without fear or doubts, allowing us to reaffirm our clericalism, as faithful followers of Christ, the true High Priest.

FRANCIS

[Scalfari] It's true, I am not anticlerical, although I become so when I meet a clericalist.

He smiled and said to me:

[Francis] It also happens to me. **When I have a clericalist in front of me I suddenly become anticlerical. Clericalism shouldn't have any part in Christianity.** Saint Paul, who was the first to preach to the Gentiles, pagans and believers in other religions was the first to teach us this. (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari, October 1, 2013*)¹

¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari.

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), and published in the weekly English edition of *L'Osservatore Romano*, n. 41 on the 9th of October, 2013, thus lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine should be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

Print screen of the Interview on the Vatican Page on August 22, 2015.

Fr. Lombardi explained that the interview with Scalfari would be taken off the Vatican page: 'he information in the interview is reliable on a general level but not on the level of each individual point analysed: this is why it was decided the text should not be available for consultation on the Holy See website. Its removal is a final update on the nature of this text. Some mistakes were made regarding its value, which was questioned. The Secretariat of State took the decision' (Vatican Insider, November 15, 2013). **Nonetheless, the Denzinger-Bergoglio confirms that the interview still continues on the Vatican Site...**

Pius XII

- ♦ The divine Redeemer willed that the priestly life, begun with the supplication and sacrifice of His mortal body, should continue in His Mystical Body

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ The office of priests shares the authority by which Christ builds up, sanctifies and rules his Body

John Paul II

- ♦ The priest shares in the prophetic authority of Christ and the Church

Benedict XVI

- ♦ The priest does something which no human being can do of his own power
- ♦ God makes use of us poor men in order to be present to all men and women
- ♦ The priest never acts in the name of someone who is absent, but in the very Person of the Risen Christ

Pius XII

- ♦ The priest is like 'another Christ' – he is marked with an indelible character making him a like living image of our Savior

Pius X

- ♦ The cleric is one who has the Lord as his portion
-

III – What does a Catholic owe to the priest?

Pius XI

- ♦ From the cradle to the grave the priest is ever beside the faithful

Pius X

- ♦ The Lord God has placed in the priests hands all his treasures, his sacraments, his graces – even to open and close heaven to others
- ♦ Priests must deliver souls from the bondage of sin – envoys of Christ to win the minds of men

Benedict XVI

- ♦ The priest brings God himself to the world

Pius XII

- ♦ Priests are the apostles of light, grace and pardon

Pius XI

- ♦ Priests – unwearied heralds of the good tidings

John Paul II

- ♦ Minister who leads believers to an increasing knowledge of the mystery of God

Benedict XVI

- ♦ The priest is removed from worldly bonds and given over to God
- ♦ The priest: a bridge that connects human beings to God

Pius XII

- ♦ Priests represent Jesus Christ before their people and are representatives of their people before God

Pius XI

- ◆ Public and official intercessor of humanity before God

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

- ◆ Public ambassador of the whole Church
 - ◆ Dispensers of divine graces, vigilant guardians to whom the Lord has confided the keys of the kingdom of heaven
-

IV – The faithful should honor the priests due to their great dignity

Saint Catherine of Siena

- ◆ The reverence for priests should never diminish – due to the authority which Jesus gave them
- ◆ ‘They are My anointed ones, and I call them My Christs’

Catechism of Trent

- ◆ Empowered in God’s name to teach mankind the divine law and the rules of conduct

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ◆ The Christian faithful should have filial love for the priests

Saint John Chrysostom

- ◆ The priestly office is discharged on earth, but it ranks amongst heavenly ordinances
- ◆ Adorned with a most excellent principality

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

- ◆ The priesthood is the most sublime of all created dignities – he is inferior only to God

Pius XI

- ◆ These august powers are stable and perpetual
- ◆ A dignity so lofty that its splendor is cannot be dimmed even by unworthiness

Catechism of Saint Pius X

- ◆ Two-fold power: His real Body, and over His mystical body

Pius XI

- ◆ Power over the very Body of Jesus Christ

Pius XII

- ◆ The organs whereby this Mystical Body develops

John Paul II

- ◆ Priests are at the very heart of the Church’s existence and her mission in history

Benedict XVI

- ◆ Irreplaceable mission
-

V – The aim of anticlericalism is to destroy the Church

Pius XI

- ◆ The enemies of the Church direct their first and fiercest blow against the priesthood

Leo XIII

- ♦ The authentic declaration of Masonic writers is to lay Clericalism waste in its foundations

John XXIII

- ♦ Those who want to overthrow religion always try in their hatred to strike at priests first of all

I – BEING CLERICAL IS SIMPLY RECOGNIZING TWO CATEGORIES WITHIN THE CHURCH: THE PASTORS AND THE FLOCK

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

In the Church, some members are subordinate to others

The **Church** of Christ is not a community of equals, as if in which all the faithful have the same rights, but it is truly a **society of inequals**; and this is not only because among the faithful some are clerics and others are lay, but because, above all, **in the Church there is the divinely instituted power, by which it pertains to some to sanctify, teach and govern, while others are without it.** (Vatican Council I. *First draft of the Constitution De Ecclesia Christi*, Ch. X)

Condemnation of those who affirm that the Church is a society of equals

If anyone says that the **Church** was established as a **society of equals** [...] **Anathema sit.** (Vatican Council I. *First draft of the Constitution De Ecclesia Christi*, Can XI)

Pius X

A society comprising two categories: the Pastors and the flock

The Church is essentially an **unequal society**, that is, a **society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock**, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. **So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority** for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile

flock, to follow the Pastors. (Pius X. *Encyclical Vehementer nos*, no. 8, February 11, 1906)

JOHN PAUL II

The ministry of shepherding God's flock

He, 'the great shepherd of the sheep' (Heb. 13:20), entrusted to the apostles and their successors **the ministry of shepherding God's flock.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 1, March 25, 1992)

PIUS XII

The fact that the faithful participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice does not mean that they are also endowed with priestly power

It is, therefore, desirable, Venerable Brethren, **that all the faithful should be aware that to participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice is their chief duty and supreme dignity**, and that not in an inert and negligent fashion, giving way to distraction and day – dreaming, but with such earnestness and concentration that they may be united as closely as possible with the High Priest [...] **The fact, however, that the faithful participate in the Eucharistic sacrifice does not mean that they also are endowed with priestly power.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 80.82, November 20, 1947)

Priests alone have been marked with the indelible sign conforming them to Christ the Priest

The sacrament of holy orders sets the priest apart from the rest of the faithful who have not received this consecration. For they alone, in answer to an inward supernatural call, have entered the august ministry, where they are assigned to service in the sanctuary and become, as it were, the instruments God uses to communicate supernatural life from

on high to the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Add to this, as We have noted above, the fact that **they alone have been marked with the indelible sign ‘conforming’ them to Christ the Priest, and that their hands alone have been consecrated** ‘in order that whatever they bless may be blessed, whatever they consecrate may become sacred and holy, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 43, November 20, 1947)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Lord established ministers to offer sacrifice, forgive sins and perform their priestly office

The same Lord, however, has established **ministers** among his faithful to unite them together in one body in which, ‘not all the members have the same function’ (Rom 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful **are able by the sacred power of orders to offer sacrifice and to forgive sins, and they perform their priestly office** publicly for men in the name of Christ. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 2, December 7, 1965)

II – MEN THAT ACT IN PERSONA CHRISTI CAPITIS

PIUS X

The priestly ministry is exercised not in our own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ

These truths are all the more evident inasmuch as we **exercise the priestly ministry not in our own name, but in the name of Jesus Christ**. The Apostle said: **Let man so consider us as the ministers of Christ and the dispensers of the mysteries of God** (1Cor 4:1); for Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors (1Cor 5:20). This is the reason that Christ has numbered us not among his servants but as his friends. (Pius X. *Apostolic exhortation Haerent animo*, August 4, 1908)

PIUS XII

The priest lends his tongue, and gives his hand to Christ

Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal

consecration which he has received, is made like to the High Priest and **possesses the power of performing actions in virtue of Christ’s very person**. Wherefore in his priestly activity he in a certain manner ‘lends his tongue, and gives his hand’ to Christ (Saint John Chrysostom, *In Joann. Hom.*, 86:4.) (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 69, November 20, 1947)

PIUS XI

He is an instrument in the hands of the Divine Redeemer

The priest is the minister of Christ, an instrument, that is to say, in the hands of the Divine Redeemer. He continues the work of the redemption in all its world – embracing universality and divine efficacy, that work that wrought so marvelous a transformation in the world. Thus **the priest, as is said with good reason, is indeed ‘another Christ’; for, in some way, he is himself a continuation of Christ**. ‘As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you’. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no.12, December 20, 1935)

PIUS XII

The divine Redeemer willed that the priestly life, begun with the supplication and sacrifice of His mortal body, should continue in His Mystical Body

But what is more, the divine Redeemer has so willed it that the priestly life begun with the supplication and sacrifice of His mortal body should continue without intermission down the ages in His Mystical Body which is the Church. That is why He established a **visible priesthood** to offer everywhere the clean oblation which would enable men from East to West, freed from the shackles of sin, to offer God that unconstrained and voluntary homage which their conscience dictates. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 2, November 20, 1947)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The office of priests shares the authority by which Christ builds up, sanctifies and rules his Body

The office of priests, since it is connected with

the episcopal order, also, in its own degree, **shares the authority by which Christ builds up, sanctifies and rules his Body**. Wherefore the priesthood, while indeed it presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, is conferred by that special sacrament; **through it priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and are conformed to Christ the Priest** in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 2, December 7, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

The priest shares in the prophetic authority of Christ and the Church

The priest [...] proclaims the word in his capacity as ‘minister,’ as a **sharer in the prophetic authority of Christ and the Church**. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 26, March 25, 1992)

BENEDICT XVI

The priest does something which no human being can do of his own power

The priest is not a mere office – holder, like those which every society needs in order to carry out certain functions. Instead, **he does something which no human being can do of his own power: in Christ’s name he speaks the words which absolve us of our sins and in this way he changes, starting with God, our entire life. Over the offerings of bread and wine he speaks Christ’s words of thanksgiving, which are words of transubstantiation – words which make Christ himself present, the Risen One, his Body and Blood – words which thus transform the elements of the world, which open the world to God and unite it to him.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily for the Conclusion of the Year for Priests*, June 11, 2010)

God makes use of us poor men in order to be present to all men and women

The priesthood, then, is not simply ‘office’ but sacrament: **God makes use of us poor men in order to be, through us, present to all men and women, and to act on their behalf.** This

audacity of God who entrusts himself to human beings – who, conscious of our weaknesses, nonetheless considers men capable of acting and being present in his stead – **this audacity of God is the true grandeur concealed in the word ‘priesthood’.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily for the Conclusion of the Year for Priests*, June 11, 2010)

The priest never acts in the name of someone who is absent, but in the very Person of the Risen Christ

The priest represents Christ. What is implied by ‘representing’ someone? In ordinary language it usually means being delegated by someone to be present in his place, to speak and act in his stead because the person he represents is absent from the practical action. Let us ask ourselves: does the priest represent the Lord in this way? The answer is no, because **in the Church Christ is never absent, the Church is his living Body and he is the Head of the Church**, present and active within her. Christ is never absent, on the contrary he is present in a way that is untrammelled by space and time through the event of the Resurrection that we contemplate in a special way in this Easter Season. Therefore **the priest, who acts in persona Christi Capitis and representing the Lord, never acts in the name of someone who is absent but, rather, in the very Person of the Risen Christ**, who makes himself present with his truly effective action. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, April 14, 2010)

PIUS XII

The priest is like ‘another Christ’ – he is marked with an indelible character making him like a living image of our Saviour

The priesthood is a great gift of the Divine Redeemer, Who, in order to perpetuate the work of redemption of the human race which He completed on the Cross, **confided His powers to the Church** which He wished to be a participator in His unique and everlasting Priesthood. **The priest is like ‘another Christ’ because he is marked with an indelible character making him, as it were, a living image of our Saviour.** (Pius XII. *Apostolic exhortation Menti nostrae*, no. 7, September 23, 1950)

PIUS X

The cleric is one who has the Lord as his portion

Saint Jerome tells us that with these words ‘the cleric is reminded that one who is the portion of the Lord, or who has the Lord as his portion, must show himself to be such a one as possesses the Lord and is possessed by him’ (*Ep. LII, ad Nepotianum*, n. 5). (Pius X. *Apostolic exhortation Haerent animo*, no. 1, August 4, 1908)

III – WHAT DOES A CATHOLIC OWE TO THE PRIEST?

PIUS XI

From the cradle to the grave the priest is ever beside the faithful

And thus the ineffable greatness of the human priest stands forth in all its splendor; for he has power over the very Body of Jesus Christ, and makes It present upon our altars. In the name of Christ Himself he offers It a victim infinitely pleasing to the Divine Majesty. ‘Wondrous things are these,’ justly exclaims Saint John Chrysostom, ‘so wonderful, they surpass wonder.’ Besides this power over the real Body of Christ, the priest has received other powers, august and sublime, over His Mystical Body of Christ, a doctrine so dear to Saint Paul; [...] **from the cradle to the grave the priest is ever beside the faithful, a guide, a solace, a minister of salvation and dispenser of grace and blessing.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 17.19, December 20, 1935)

PIUS X

The Lord God has placed in the priest’s hands all his treasures, his sacraments, his graces – even to open and close heaven to others

Saint Charles Borromeo gave apt expression to this thought when, in his discourses to the clergy, he declared: ‘If we would only bear in mind, dearly beloved brethren, **the exalted character of the things that the Lord God has placed in our hands**, what unbounded

influence would not this have in impelling us to lead lives worthy of ecclesiastics! Has not the Lord placed everything in my hand, when he put there his only – begotten Son, coeternal and coequal with himself? **In my hand he has placed all his treasures, his sacraments, his graces; he has placed there souls, than whom nothing can be dearer to him; in his love he has preferred them to himself**, and redeemed them by his Blood; **he has placed heaven in my hand, and it is in my power to open and close it to others...** (Pius X. *Apostolic exhortation Haerent animo*, August 4, 1908)

Priests must deliver souls from the bondage of sin – envoys of Christ to win the minds of men

As his envoys, **we must win the minds of men for his doctrine and his law by first observing them ourselves; sharing as we do in his power to deliver souls from the bondage of sin**, we must strive by every means to avoid becoming entangled in these toils of sin. (Pius X. *Apostolic exhortation Haerent animo*, no. 6, August 4, 1908)

BENEDICT XVI

The priest brings God himself to the world

No one proclaims himself in the first person, but within and through his own humanity **every priest must be well aware that he is bringing to the world Another, God himself.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the members of the Congregation for the Clergy*, March 16, 2009)

PIUS XII

Priests are the apostles of light, grace and pardon

Priests are ‘**the stewards of the mysteries of God**’ (1Cor 4:1); therefore they must serve Jesus Christ with perfect charity and consecrate all their strength to the salvation of their brethren. **They are the apostles of light; therefore they must illuminate the world with the teachings of the Gospel** and be so strong in the Christian faith as to be able to communicate it to others, and follow the example and doctrine of the Divine Master

in order to lead everyone to Him. **They are the apostles of grace and pardon: therefore they must consecrate themselves entirely to the salvation of men** and draw them to the altar of God in order that they may nourish themselves with the bread of eternal life. (Pius XII. *Apostolic exhortation Menti nostrae*, no. 56, September 23, 1950)

PIUS XI

Priests – unwearied heralds of the good tidings

That it has not fallen still lower down the slope of error and vice is due to the guidance of the light of Christian truth that always shines in the world. Now the Church exercises her ‘ministry of the word’ through her priests of every grade of the Hierarchy, in which each has his wisely allotted place. These she sends everywhere as unwearied heralds of the good tidings which alone can save and advance true civilization and culture, or help them to rise again. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 24, December 20, 1935)

JOHN PAUL II

Minister who leads believers to an increasing knowledge of the mystery of God

The priest is first of all a minister of the word of God. He is consecrated and sent forth to proclaim the good news of the kingdom to all, **calling every person to the obedience of faith and leading believers to an ever increasing knowledge of and communion in the mystery of God**, as revealed and communicated to us in Christ. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 26, March 25, 1992)

BENEDICT XVI

The priest is removed from worldly bonds and given over to God

The giving over of a person to God, his ‘sanctification’, is identified with priestly ordination, and this also defines the essence of the priesthood: it is a transfer of ownership,

a being taken out of the world and given to God. [...] But for this very reason it is not a segregation. Rather, being given over to God means being charged to represent others. **The priest is removed from worldly bonds and given over to God, and precisely in this way, starting with God, he must be available for others, for everyone.** When Jesus says: ‘I consecrate myself’, he makes himself both priest and victim. (Benedict XVI. *Homily of the Chrism Mass*, April 9, 2009)

The priest: a bridge that connects human beings to God

The priest needs divine authorization, institution, and only by belonging to both spheres the divine and the human can he be a mediator, can he be a ‘bridge’. This is the priest’s mission: to combine, to link these two realities that appear to be so separate, that is, the world of God far from us, often unknown to the human being and our human world. **The priest’s mission is to be a mediator, a bridge that connects, and thereby to bring human beings to God, to his redemption, to his true light, to his true life.** (Benedict XVI. *Lectio Divina at the encounter with the parish priests of the diocese of Rome*, February 18, 2010)

PIUS XII

Priests represent Jesus Christ before their people, and are representatives of their people before God

Only to the apostles, and thenceforth to those on whom their successors have imposed hands, is granted the power of the priesthood, in virtue of which **they represent the person of Jesus Christ before their people, acting at the same time as representatives of their people before God.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 40, November 20, 1947)

PIUS XI

Public and official intercessor of humanity before God

The priest, is public and official intercessor of humanity before God; he has the duty and commission of offering to God in the name of

the Church, over and above sacrifice strictly so – called, the ‘sacrifice of praise,’ in public and official prayer [...] Who can tell how many chastisements priestly prayer wards off from sinful mankind, how many blessings it brings down and secures? (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 28, Decemeber 20, 1935)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

Public ambassador of the whole Church

A priest is a minister destined by God to be a public ambassador of the whole Church, to honor him, and to obtain his graces for all the faithful. The entire Church cannot give to God as much honor, nor obtain so many graces, as a single priest by celebrating a single Mass. (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Selva or Dignity and Duties of a priest*, Ch. I, no. 2 pg. 24-25)

Dispensers of divine graces, vigilant guardians to whom the Lord has confided the keys of the kingdom of heaven

‘Consider the priests,’ says Saint Ignatius Martyr, ‘as the dispensers of divine graces and the associates of God.’ ‘They are,’ says Saint Prosper, ‘the glory and the immovable columns of the Church; that are the doors of the eternal city; through them all reach Christ; they are the vigilant guardians to whom the Lord has confided the keys of the kingdom of heaven.’ (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Selva or Dignity and Duties of a priest*, Ch. I, no. 3, pg. 28)

IV – THE FAITHFUL SHOULD HONOR THE PRIESTS DUE TO THEIR GREAT DIGNITY

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

The reverence for priests should never diminish – due to the authority which Jesus gave them

Have told you all this, dearest daughter, that you may the better recognize the dignity to which I have called My ministers, wherefore this reverence should never diminish in the case of priests whose virtue grows weak [...] and you ought to love and reverence the authority which I have given them. [...] This, then, is your duty according to the

demands of charity, and thus I wish you to act with regard to such badly ordered priests, [...] who bring you great Treasures – that is to say, the Sacraments of the holy Church. (Saint Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, IX, no. 113, 120)

‘They are My anointed ones, and I call them My Christs’

I have told you all this, dearest daughter, that you may the better recognize the dignity to which I have called My ministers, so that your grief at their miseries may be more intense. [...] no greater dignity exists in this life. They are My anointed ones, and I call them My Christs, because I have given them the office of administering Me to you, and have placed them like fragrant flowers in the mystical body of the holy Church. The angel himself has no such dignity, for I have given it to those men whom I have chosen for My ministers, and whom I have appointed as earthly angels in this life. (Saint Catherine of Siena. *The Dialogue*, IX, no. 113)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Empowered in God’s name to teach mankind the divine law and the rules of conduct

Bishops and priests being, as they are, God’s interpreters and ambassadors, empowered in His name to teach mankind the divine law and the rules of conduct, and holding, as they do, His place on earth, it is evident that no nobler function than theirs can be imagined. Justly, therefore, are they called not only Angels, but even gods, because of the fact that they exercise in our midst the power and prerogatives of the immortal God. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2600)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Christian faithful should have filial love for the priests

In virtue of the sacrament of Orders, exercise the most outstanding and necessary office of father and teacher among and for the People of God [...] in virtue of the sacrament of Orders,

exercise the most outstanding and necessary office of father and teacher among and for the People of God, [...] **The Christian faithful, for their part, should realize their obligations to their priests, and with filial love they should follow them as their pastors and fathers.** In like manner, sharing their cares, they should help their priests by prayer and work insofar as possible so that their priests might more readily overcome difficulties and be able to fulfill their duties more fruitfully. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 9, December 7, 1965)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The priestly office is discharged on earth, but it ranks amongst heavenly ordinances

For the priestly office is indeed discharged on earth, but it ranks amongst heavenly ordinances; and very naturally so: for neither man, nor angel, nor archangel, nor any other created power, **but the Paraclete Himself, instituted this vocation, and persuaded men while still abiding in the flesh to represent the ministry of angels.** Wherefore the consecrated priest ought to be as pure as if he were standing in the heavens themselves in the midst of those powers. (Saint John Chrysostom. *On the Priesthood*, III, 4)

Adorned with a more excellent principality

Certainly the priest is much more worthy of honor and veneration than the king, since he is called to a more excellent principality. (Saint John Chrysostom, II Homily on Anne)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

The priesthood is the most sublime of all created dignities – he is inferior only to God

The priesthood is the most sublime of all created dignities [...] the priest of God is exalted above all earthly sovereignties, **and above all celestial heights he is inferior only to God.** (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Selva or Duties and Dignity of a priest*, Ch.I, 1, pg. 23)

PIUS XI

These august powers are stable and perpetual

These august powers are conferred upon the priest in a special Sacrament designed to this end: **they are not merely passing or temporary in the priest, but are stable and perpetual,** united as they are with the indelible character imprinted on his soul whereby he becomes ‘a priest forever’; whereby he becomes like unto Him in whose eternal priesthood he has been made a sharer. Even the most lamentable downfall, which, through human frailty, is possible to a priest, **can never blot out from his soul the priestly character.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 22, December 20, 1935)

A dignity so lofty that its splendor is cannot be dimmed even by unworthiness

Most sublime, then, Venerable Brethren, is the dignity of the priesthood. **Even the falling away of the few unworthy in the priesthood,** however deplorable and distressing it may be, cannot dim the splendor of so lofty a dignity. Much less can the unworthiness of a few cause the worth and merit of so many to be overlooked; and how many have been, and are, in the priesthood, preeminent in holiness, in learning, in works of zeal, nay, even in martyrdom. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 31, December 20, 1935)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Two – fold power: over Christ’s real Body, and over His mystical body

The dignity of the Christian Priesthood is great indeed, **because of the two – fold power which Jesus Christ has conferred upon it — that over His real body and that over His mystical body, or the Church;** and because of the divine mission committed to priests to lead men to eternal life. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, The Sacrament of Holy Orders, no. 6)

PIUS XI

Power over the very Body of Jesus Christ

And thus the ineffable greatness of the human priest stands forth in all its splendor; for he has power over the very Body of Jesus Christ, and makes It present upon our altars. In the name of Christ Himself he offers It a victim infinitely pleasing to the Divine Majesty. 'Wondrous things are these,' justly exclaims Saint John Chrysostom, 'so wonderful, they surpass wonder.' (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 16, December 20, 1935)

PIUS XII

The organs whereby this Mystical Body develops

Not only do they procure and communicate Christ's grace to the members of His Mystical Body, but they are also the organs whereby this Mystical Body develops because they must ever give the Church new sons, bring them up, educate them, and guide them. (Pius XII. *Apostolic exhortation Menti nostrae*, no. 56, September 23, 1950)

JOHN PAUL II

Priests are at the very heart of the Church's existence and her mission in history

Without priests the Church would not be able to live that fundamental obedience which is at the very heart of her existence and her mission in history, an obedience in response to the command of Christ: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.' (Mt. 28:19) and 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Lk 22:19; cf. 1Cor 11:24), i.e.: an obedience to the command to announce the Gospel and to renew daily the sacrifice of the giving of his body and the shedding of his blood for the life of the world. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 1, March 25, 1992)

BENEDICT XVI

Irreplaceable mission

Nothing will ever substitute the ministry of priests in the life of the Church. (Benedict XVI. *Greetings to the Portuguese speaking priests for the conclusion of the Year for Priests*, June 11, 2010)

V – THE AIM OF ANTICLERICALISM IS TO DESTROY THE CHURCH

PIUS XI

The enemies of the Church direct their first and fiercest blow against the priesthood

A last tribute to the priesthood is given by the enemies of the Church [...] they show that they fully appreciate the dignity and importance of the Catholic priesthood, by directing against it their first and fiercest blows; since they know well how close is the tie that binds the Church to her priests. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 30, December 20, 1935)

LEO XIII

The authentic declaration of Masonic writers is to lay clericalism waste in its foundations

To lay Clericalism waste in its foundations and in its very sources of life, namely, in the school and in the family: such is the authentic declaration of Masonic writers. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Dall'alto dell'apostolico seggio*, no. 4, October 15, 1890)

JOHN XXIII

Those who want to overthrow religion always try in their hatred to strike at priests first of all

This is not surprising; for those who hate the Church always show their hostility by trying to harm and deceive her sacred ministers; as the Cure of Ars himself admitted, those who want to overthrow religion always try in their hatred to strike at priests first of all. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Sacerdotii nostri primordia*, no. 112, August 1, 1959)

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God has saved a people. No one is saved alone, as an isolated individual

What would you think of a recipe book that conceals the main ingredients of its recipes? And, what is worse, explains the steps to prepare each dish in a confusing manner? Now, any earthly fare, as good as it may be, is insignificant before the supreme subject of our eternal destiny. While interpreting certain words by Pope Francis in his interview with Antonio Spadaro, some have wanted to reduce this essential problematic to the simple maxim: 'You will be judged by the company you keep.' In effect, if eternal salvation doesn't depend on the individual, but rather exclusively on our belonging to the People of God, our good or evil works would be indifferent.... But if this is true, why bother trying to practice virtue and to remain in the state of grace? Let's just live as we wish, and continue to call ourselves Catholics! Does our eternal destiny depend more on human communities and popular dynamics than on ourselves? To avoid confusion, it's always a good idea to remember the true Catholic doctrine about the conquest of eternal happiness.

FRANCIS

Belonging to a people has a strong theological value. In the history of salvation, God has saved a people. There is no full identity without belonging to a people. No one is saved alone, as an isolated individual, but God attracts us looking at the complex web of relationships that take place in the human community. God enters into this dynamic, this participation in the web of human relationships. (Interview with Antonio Spadaro, August 19, 2013)

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VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Though part of the body of the Church, he is not saved who does not persevere in charity

This Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. **Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation.** Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk 16:16, Jn 3:5), and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. **Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved.** They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and are united with her as part of her visible bodily structure and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. **He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity. He remains indeed in the bosom of the Church, but, as it were, only in a 'bodily' manner and not 'in his heart'** (cf. St. Augustine *Bapt. c. Donat.* V, 28, 39; *ib.*, III, 19, 26; V, 18, 24: col. 189; *In Io. Tr.* 61, 2). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 14, November 21, 1964)

Salvation depends on fidelity to baptism and the fulfilment of the commandments

Bishops, as successors of the apostles, receive from the Lord, to whom was given all power in heaven and on earth, the mission to teach all nations and to preach the Gospel to every creature, so that **all men may attain to salvation by faith, baptism and the fulfilment of the commandments** (cf. Mt 28:18, Mk 16:15-16, Acts 26:17 ff). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 24, November 21, 1964)

BENEDICT XVI

A hope that does not concern me personally is not a real hope; though an individualistic understanding of salvation is also incomplete

How could the idea have developed that Jesus' message is narrowly individualistic and aimed only at each person singly? How did we arrive at this interpretation of the 'salvation of the soul' as a flight from responsibility for the whole, and how did we come to conceive the Christian project as a selfish search for salvation which rejects the idea of serving others? [...] Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with him who is the source of life. If we are in relation with him who does not die, who is Life itself and Love itself, then we are in life. Then we 'live'. Yet now the question arises: are we not in this way falling back once again into an individualistic understanding of salvation, into hope for myself alone, which is not true hope since it forgets and overlooks others? Indeed we are not! Our relationship with God is established through communion with Jesus – we cannot achieve it alone or from our own resources alone. The relationship with Jesus, however, is a relationship with the one who gave himself as a ransom for all (cf. 1Tim 2:6). Being in communion with Jesus Christ draws us into his 'being for all'; it makes it our own way of being. He commits us to live for others, but only through communion with him does it become possible truly to be there for others, for the whole. [...] **And however much 'for all' may be part of the great hope – since I cannot be happy without others or in opposition to them – it remains true that a hope that does not concern me personally is not a real hope.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spe salvi*, no. 16. 27. 28. 30, November 30, 2007)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Each one will be rewarded in accordance with his works and faith

Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ (cf. 2Tim 1:9-10). The New Testament speaks of judgment

primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also repeatedly affirms that **each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith.** The parable of the poor man Lazarus (Lk 16:22) and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief (Lk 23:43), as well as other New Testament texts (2Cor 5:8, Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23) speak of a final destiny of the soul - a destiny which can be different for some and for others (Mt 16:26). **Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ:** either entrance into the blessedness of heaven - through a purification (Council of Lyons II (1274): DS 857-858; Council of Florence (1439): DS 1304-1306; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820.) or immediately (cf. Benedict XII. Benedictus Deus (1336): DS 1000-1001; John XXII. Ne super his (1334): DS 990) - or immediate and everlasting damnation (cf. Benedict XII. Benedictus Deus (1336): DS 1002). At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love. (Saint John of the Cross. Dichos, 64). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1021-1022)

To die in mortal sin means being forever separated from God – no one can be united with Him without freely choosing to love him

We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love

God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: 'He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him' (Jn 3:14-15). Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren (Mt 25:31-46). **To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him for ever by our own free choice.** This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called 'hell'. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1033)

JOHN PAUL II

The faith of the Church, founded upon divine Revelation: each one of us will be judged according to his works

The faith of the Church, founded upon divine Revelation teaches us that each one of us will be judged according to his works. Take note: it is our person that will be judged in accordance with our works. Thus one understands that in our works it is the person that is expressed and fulfills himself, and so to say, fashions himself. Each person is responsible not only for his own free actions, but also, through such actions, is responsible for himself. (John Paul II. *General audience*, July 20, 1983)

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**We must listen to the debates of our time
and perceive the ‘fragrance’ of the men of this age;
listen to the people until breathing in the will to which God calls us**

It's no novelty that the texts of Vatican Council II have often been manipulated with diverse intentions; consequently, it's necessary to read them within their context and in light of the Magisterium, which has been guiding humanity for almost 2000 years.

One of the documents that has perhaps undergone the most significant misinterpretations is the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. It is not unusual to find some of its statements taken out of context in order to justify the most varied positions. For example, this phrase: ‘The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ (GS 1)’. With these inspired words, the conciliar document presents the role of the Church as a compassionate Mother who educates her children in authentic love of God and neighbor. She employs every means within her reach to ease the sufferings of human beings with solicitude and wisdom.

Among the ‘the griefs and the anxieties’ which afflict the human heart, is the thirst for the truth, the desire to break away from the sea of uncertainties, to find rest for the spirit in firm convictions. In healing this need, the Church – besides being Mother – acts as a Teacher of the peoples since she has received ‘the news of salvation which is meant for every man (*ib.*)’. This is what makes the Church feel ‘truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds’ the conciliar fathers conclude. However, from this affirmation, read out of context, other conclusions may be drawn. The objective of this post is to consider this citation in light of the Magisterium.

FRANCIS

The convenire in unum around the Bishop of Rome is indeed an event of grace, in which episcopal collegiality is made manifest in a path of spiritual and pastoral discernment. **To find what the Lord asks of his Church today, we must lend an ear to the debates of our time and perceive the ‘fragrance’ of the men of this age**, so as to be permeated with their joys and hopes, with their griefs and anxieties (cf. *Gaudium et spes*, no.1). At that moment we will know how to propose the good news on the family with credibility. [...] **For the Synod Fathers we ask the Holy Spirit first of all for the gift of listening: to listen to God, that with him we may hear the cry of the people; to listen to the people until breathing in the will to which God calls us.** (*Address during the Meeting on the Family*, October 4, 2014)

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IV – The good recognize the voice of the Lord

Sacred Scripture

- ♦ Christ's sheep recognize His voice
- ♦ Everyone who belongs to truth listens to Christ's voice

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ God chose to reveal Himself; out of the abundance of His love he speaks to men as friends

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ♦ 'I am the good Shepherd': Christ would not add 'good', were there not bad shepherds

**I – THE CHURCH'S MISSION IS TO INDICATE
GOD'S WILL TO ALL**

SACRED SCRIPTURE

**Proclaim the word whether convenient
or inconvenient**

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly

power: **proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths.** But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry. (2Tim 4:1-5)

The people's representative before God: enlighten them, showing them how they are to live

Act as the people's representative before God, bringing to him whatever they have to say. **Enlighten them in regard to the decisions and regulations, showing them how they are to live and what they are to do.** (Ex 18:19-20)

BENEDICT XVI

Christ's voice rings out in the preaching of the Apostles and their successors

How can we listen to the voice of the Lord and recognize it? **In the preaching of the Apostles and of their successors in which Christ's voice rings out, calling us to communion with God and to the fullness of life.** As we read today in the Gospel of Saint John: 'My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand' (Jn 10: 27-28). **The Good Shepherd alone tends his flock with deep tenderness and protects it from evil, and in him alone can the faithful put absolute trust.** (Benedict XVI. *Regina Caeli*, World Day of Prayer for Vocations, April 25, 2010)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Bishops are endowed with the authority of Christ to preach and ward off errors

For bishops are preachers of the faith, who lead new disciples to Christ, and they are authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach to the people committed to them the faith they must believe and put into practice, and by the light of the Holy Spirit illustrate that faith. They bring forth from the treasury of Revelation new things and old (cf. Mt. 13:52), **making it bear fruit and vigilantly warding off any errors that threaten their flock** (cf. 2Tim 4:1-4). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 25, November 21, 1964)

CODE OF CANON LAW

The Church has the duty and innate right to preach the Gospel to all peoples and announce moral principles

The Church, to which Christ the Lord has entrusted the deposit of faith so that with the assistance of the Holy Spirit it might protect the revealed truth reverently, examine it more closely, and proclaim and expound it faithfully, **has the duty and innate right, independent of any human power whatsoever, to preach the gospel to all peoples, also using the means of social communication proper to it. It belongs to the Church always and everywhere to announce moral principles, even about the social order, and to render judgment concerning any human affairs insofar as the fundamental rights of the human person or the salvation of souls requires it.** (Code of Canon Law. *Can. 747 §1 and §2*)

LEO XIII

Christ appointed an unfailing teaching authority to preserve men in truth: His Church

The only-begotten Son of the Eternal Father, who came on earth to bring salvation and the light of divine wisdom to men, conferred a great and wonderful blessing on the world when, about to ascend again into heaven, He commanded the Apostles to go and teach all nations (Mt 28:19), and left the Church which He had founded to be the common and supreme teacher of the peoples. **For men whom the truth had set free were to be preserved by the truth; nor would the fruits of heavenly doctrines by which salvation comes to men have long remained had not the Lord Christ appointed an unfailing teaching authority to train the minds to faith.** And the Church built upon the promises of its own divine Author, whose charity it imitated, so faithfully followed out His commands that **its constant aim and chief wish was this: to teach religion and contend forever against errors.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Aeterni Patris*, August 4, 1879)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Magisterium's task is to preserve God's people from deviations, to guarantee them the possibility of professing the true faith without error

In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a 'supernatural sense of faith' the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, 'unfailingly adheres to this faith' (LG 12; cf. DV 10). The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 889-890)

JOHN PAUL II

Every baptized person has the right to receive instruction from the Church

To begin with, it is clear that the Church has always looked on catechesis as a sacred duty and an inalienable right. On the one hand, it is certainly a duty springing from a command given by the Lord and resting above all on those who in the new covenant receive the call to the ministry of being pastors. On the other hand, one can likewise speak of a right: from the theological point of view every baptized person, precisely the reason of being baptized, has the right to receive from the Church instruction and education enabling him or her to enter on a truly Christian life. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesi tradendae*, no. 14, October 16, 1979)

JOHN PAUL I

Bishops have the prime responsibility to evangelize the baptized

Among the rights of the faithful, one of the

greatest is the right to receive God's word in all its entirety and purity, with all its exigencies and power. A great challenge of our day is the full evangelization of all those who have been baptized. In this, the Bishops of the Church have a prime responsibility. (John Paul I. *Address to Bishops from the Philippines on their ad limina visit*, September 28, 1978)

JOHN PAUL II

The successors of the Apostles should never be afraid of proclaiming the full truth about Jesus Christ, in all its challenging demands

Yours is the responsibility of constantly identifying the features of a pastoral plan adapted to the needs and aspirations of God's people, a plan which will enable all to hear ever more clearly the Good News of Christ and bring the truths and values of the Gospel to bear ever more incisively on the family, on culture, on society itself. The successors of the Apostles should never be afraid of proclaiming the full truth about Jesus Christ, in all its challenging reality and demands, since the truth has an intrinsic power to draw the human heart to all that is good, noble and beautiful. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Korea on their ad limina visit*, no. 2, March 24, 2001)

Bishops have the serious responsibility to make things clear in an epoch of confusion

Today especially, among the many dissonant voices that spread confusion and doubt in the minds of the faithful, the Bishop has the serious responsibility to make things clear. The preaching of the Gospel is the greatest act of love for man, his freedom and his thirst for happiness. (John Paul II. *Address, Jubilee of Bishops*, no. 5, October 7, 2000)

Courage to defend sound doctrine, showing that the true solution for the complicated problems of humanity is in returning to the Gospel

Master of the faith, the bishop promotes whatever is good and positive in the flock

entrusted to him, sustains and guides those weak in faith (Rom 14:1), intervenes to unmask falsehoods and combat abuses.

It is important that the bishop be aware of the challenges that faith in Christ has to face today on account of the mentality based on human criteria, that at times relativises the Law and the Plan of God. Above all, **he must have the courage to announce and defend sound doctrine, even when it entails suffering.** In fact, the bishop, in communion with the apostolic college and with the Successor of Peter, **has the duty of protecting the faithful from any kind of temptation, showing in a wholehearted return to the Gospel of Christ the true solution for the complicated problems that burden humanity.** (John Paul II. *Homily during the conclusion of the 10th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, no. 4, October 27, 2001)

The ‘answer’ to questions about morality was entrusted by Jesus Christ in a particular way to Pastors – it is one of the chief areas for their pastoral vigilance

It is our common duty, and even before that our common grace, as Pastors and Bishops of the Church, to teach the faithful the things which lead them to God, just as the Lord Jesus did with the young man in the Gospel. Replying to the question: ‘What good must I do to have eternal life?’ Jesus referred the young man to God, the Lord of creation and of the Covenant. He reminded him of the moral commandments already revealed in the Old Testament and he indicated their spirit and deepest meaning by inviting the young man to follow him in poverty, humility and love: ‘Come, follow me!’ The truth of this teaching was sealed on the Cross in the Blood of Christ: in the Holy Spirit, it has become the new law of the Church and of every Christian. **This ‘answer’ to the question about morality has been entrusted by Jesus Christ in a particular way to us, the Pastors of the Church; we have been called to make it the object of our preaching, in the fulfilment of our *munus propheticum*.** At the same time, our responsibility as Pastors with regard to Christian moral teaching must also be exercised as part of the *munus sacerdotale*: **this happens when we dispense to the faithful the gifts of grace and sanctification as an effective means for obeying God’s holy law, and when with our**

constant and confident prayers we support believers in their efforts to be faithful to the demands of the faith and to live in accordance with the Gospel (cf. Col 1:9-12). Especially today, **Christian moral teaching must be one of the chief areas in which we exercise our pastoral vigilance, in carrying out our *munus regale*.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 114, August 6, 1993)

The Pope must keep watch so that the true voice of Christ be heard in all particular Churches

The mission of the Bishop of Rome within the College of all the Pastors consists precisely in ‘keeping watch’ (*episkopein*), like a sentinel, so that, through the efforts of the Pastors, the true voice of Christ the Shepherd may be heard in all the particular Churches. In this way, in each of the particular Churches entrusted to those Pastors, the *una, sancta, catholica et apostolica Ecclesia* is made present. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ut unum sint*, no. 94, May 25, 1995)

Shepherds must be Christ’s voice encouraging people in fidelity to the Lord’s law

In every age, men and women need to hear **Christ the Good Shepherd calling them to faith and conversion of life (cf. Mk 1:15).** As shepherds of souls, you must be **Christ’s voice today, encouraging your people to rediscover ‘the beauty of truth, the liberating force of God’s love, and the value of unconditional fidelity to all the demands of the Lord’s law, even in the most difficult situations’** (*Veritatis Splendor*, 107). (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of the Church in the States of Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas, U.S.A., on their *ad limina* visit*, no. 1, June 27, 1998)

A Bishop is the voice of Christ, the teacher of truth – no other task can exempt from the sacred mission of evangelizing

As Bishops you are the voice of Christ in your country. You are teachers of the truth. In a Church at the service of truth, **you are the first evangelizers and no other task can exempt you from this sacred mission.** You need, therefore, to be vigilant so that your

communities advance continually in the knowledge and practice of the Word of God, encouraging and guiding those who teach in the Church. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Uruguay on their ad limina visit*, no. 5, January 14, 1985)

The voice of Christ is heard in a lifelong Christian training

Today I wish to encourage you to direct your ministry and pastoral planning more and more to that lifelong **Christian formation which is the essential support of a solid Christian life**, a formation which **begins in Baptism, develops through grace** at every stage of life's journey, **and will end only when our eyes are fully opened in the beatific vision of heaven. It is this lifelong Christian training which enables us to hear the voice of Christ, our Teacher** (cf. Mt 23:10), and adhere with heart and mind to the cause of his kingdom. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei on their ad limina visit*, no. 2, November 10, 2001)

BENEDICT XVI

St. Paul did not preach an à la carte Christianity, nor shrink from the commitment to proclaiming the whole of God's will – that's our mission

This is important; **the Apostle did not preach an à la carte Christianity to suit his own inclinations, he did not preach a Gospel to suit his own favourite theological ideas; he did not shrink from the commitment to proclaiming the whole of God's will**, even an inconvenient will and even topics of which he was personally not so enamoured. It is **our mission to proclaim the whole of God's will, in its totality and ultimate simplicity. But it is important that we teach and preach – as Saint Paul says here – and really propose the will of God in its entirety. [...] Thus we must make known and understood – as far as we are able – the content of the Church's Creed, from the Creation until the Lord's return, until the new world. Doctrine, liturgy, morals, prayer – the four parts of the Catechism of the Catholic Church – indicate this totality of God's will.** (Benedict XVI. *Lectio Divina*, Meeting with the Parish Priests of the Diocese of Rome, March 10, 2011)

God himself speaks through His Word, Jesus, who continues his ministry passing through the Apostles

And lastly, proclamation: **the one who proclaims does not speak on his own behalf but is sent. He fits into a structure of mission that begins with Jesus, sent by the Father, passes through the Apostles** the term 'apostles' means 'those who are sent' **and continues in the ministry**, in the missions passed down by the Apostles. The new fabric of history takes shape **in this structure of missions in which we ultimately hear God himself speaking, his personal Word, the Son speaks with us, reaches us.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, December 10, 2008)

PIUS XII

The true follower of Christ is a spiritual bastion of those who are tempted to give in to evil

Conscious of the sinister audacity of evil overflowing in this life, the true follower of Christ experiences in himself a living stimulus for a greater vigilance over himself as well as over his brothers and sisters in danger. With the assurance he holds of the promise of God and the final triumph of Christ over his enemies and of his kingdom, **he interiorly feels strengthened against disillusion and failures, defeats and humiliations, being able to communicate this with equal confidence to all those he approaches in his apostolic ministry, transforming himself in this way, into a spiritual bastion**, while giving encouragement and example to those who are tempted to give in or be discouraged before the number and power of the adversaries. (Pius XII. *Address Grazie venerabili fratelli to the Sacred College of Cardinals and members of the Roman Curia*, December 24, 1940)

There is no greater or more urgent duty than to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to the men of our time misled by error

Can there be, Venerable Brethren, a greater or more urgent duty than to preach the

unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph 3:8) to the men of our time? Can there be anything nobler than to unfurl the 'Ensign of the King' before those who have followed and still follow a false standard, and to win back to the victorious banner of the Cross those who have abandoned it? **What heart is not inflamed, is not swept forward to help at the sight of so many brothers and sisters who, misled by error, passion, temptation and prejudice, have strayed away from faith in the true God and have lost contact with the joyful and life-giving message of Christ? Who among 'the Soldiers of Christ' – ecclesiastic or layman – does not feel himself incited and spurred on to a greater vigilance, to a more determined resistance, by the sight of the ever-increasing host of Christ's enemies; as he perceives the spokesmen of these tendencies deny or in practice neglect the vivifying truths and the values inherent in belief in God and in Christ; as he perceives them wantonly break the Tables of God's Commandments to substitute other tables and other standards stripped of the ethical content of the Revelation on Sinai, standards in which the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount and of the Cross has no place? (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi Pontificatus*, no. 6-7, October 20, 1939)**

JOHN PAUL II

Bishops should watch over the holiness of ministers and faithful

By his words and example, and in his vigilance and paternal intervention, the Bishop fulfils his duty to offer the world the reality of a Church which is holy and chaste, in her ministers and in her faithful. When he does so, he walks as a pastor at the head of his flock, as did Christ the Bridegroom, who gave his life for us and who left to all the example of a love which is transparent and virginal, and therefore fruitful and universal. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores gregis*, no. 21, October 16, 2003)

II – WEAKENED BY ORIGINAL SIN, MAN OFTEN FALLS INTO ERROR WITH RESPECT TO DIVINE TRUTHS

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Not all ideas which circulate among the People of God are compatible with the faith

Actually, the opinions of the faithful cannot be purely and simply identified with the *sensus fidei* (Cc. John Paul. II, *Familiaris consortio*, no. 5). The sense of the faith is a property of theological faith; and, as God's gift which enables one to adhere personally to the Truth, it cannot err. This personal faith is also the faith of the Church since God has given guardianship of the Word to the Church. Consequently, what the believer believes is what the Church believes. **The *sensus fidei* implies then by its nature a profound agreement of spirit and heart with the Church, *sentire cum Ecclesia*. Although theological faith as such then cannot err, the believer can still have erroneous opinions since all his thoughts do not spring from faith (cf. Council of Trent, sess. VI, cap. 9: *fides cui non potest subesse falsum*; cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas, *STh*, II-II, q.1, a.3, ad 3). Not all the ideas which circulate among the People of God are compatible with the faith. This is all the more so given that people can be swayed by a public opinion influenced by modern communications media. Not without reason did the Second Vatican Council emphasize the indissoluble bond between the *sensus fidei* and the guidance of God's People by the magisterium of the Pastors. These two realities cannot be separated (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 12). **Magisterial interventions serve to guarantee the Church's unity in the truth of the Lord. They aid her to 'abide in the truth' in face of the arbitrary character of changeable opinions and are an expression of obedience to the Word of God (cf. *Dei Verbum*, 10). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on the ecclesial vocation of the theologian Donum veritatis*, no. 35, May 24, 1990)****

Pius XII

Divine revelation is morally necessary so that moral truths may be known with freedom from all error

For though, absolutely speaking, human reason by its own natural force and light can arrive at a true and certain knowledge of the one personal God, Who by His providence watches over and governs the world, and also of the natural law, which the Creator has written in our hearts, still there are not a few obstacles to prevent reason from making efficient and fruitful use of its natural ability. The truths that have to do with God and the relations between God and men, completely surpass the sensible order and demand self-surrender and self-abnegation in order to be put into practice and to influence practical life. Now the human intellect, in gaining the knowledge of such truths is hampered both by the activity of the senses and the imagination, and by evil passions arising from original sin. Hence men easily persuade themselves in such matters that what they do not wish to believe is false or at least doubtful. It is for this reason that divine revelation must be considered morally necessary so that those religious and moral truths which are not of their nature beyond the reach of reason in the present condition of the human race, may be known by all men readily with a firm certainty and with freedom from all error (Con. Vat. I: *De Fide cath.*, cap. 2, *De revelatione*). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Humani generi*, no. 2-3, August 12, 1950)

Pius X

Disordered by the stain of the first sin man needs a guide to lead him back to the paths of justice: the knowledge of divine things

Disordered by the stain of the first sin, and almost forgetful of God, its Author, it improperly turns every affection to a love of vanity and deceit. This erring will, blinded by its own evil desires, has need therefore of a guide to lead it back to the paths of justice whence it has so unfortunately strayed. The intellect itself is this guide, which need not be sought elsewhere, but is provided by nature itself. It is a guide, though, that, if it lack its

companion light, the knowledge of divine things, will be only an instance of the blind leading the blind so that both will fall into the pit. [...]

But We do maintain that the will cannot be upright nor the conduct good when the mind is shrouded in the darkness of crass ignorance. A man who walks with open eyes may, indeed, turn aside from the right path, but a blind man is in much more imminent danger of wandering away. (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, nos. 3, April 15, 1905)

Pius XI

Christianity is a model and guide for a world which is sick to death and clamors for direction

A Christianity which keeps a grip on itself, refuses every compromise with the world, takes the commands of God and the Church seriously, preserves its love of God and of men in all its freshness, such a Christianity can be, and will be, a model and a guide to a world which is sick to death and clamors for directions, unless it be condemned to a catastrophe that would baffle the imagination. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge*, no. 19, March 14, 1937)

Amidst the aberrations of human thought, the Church indicates the way of truth – Woe if ever this beacon be hindered from shedding far and wide its beneficent light!

Amidst all the aberrations of human thought, infatuated by a false emancipation from every law and curb; and amidst the awful corruptions of human malice, the Church rises up like a bright lighthouse warning by the clearness of its beam every deviation to right or left from the way of truth, and pointing out to one and all the right course that they should follow. Woe if ever this beacon should be – We do not say extinguished, for that is impossible owing to the unfailing promises on which it is founded – but if it should be hindered from shedding far and wide its beneficent light! We see already with Our own eyes whither the world has been brought by its arrogant rejection of divine revelation, and its pursuit

of false philosophical and moral theories that bear the specious name of 'science.' That it has not fallen still lower down the slope of error and vice is due to the guidance of the light of Christian truth that always shines in the world. Now the Church exercises her 'ministry of the word' through her priests of every grade of the Hierarchy, in which each has his wisely allotted place. These she sends everywhere as unwearied heralds of the good tidings which alone can save and advance true civilization and culture, or help them to rise again. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad catholici sacerdotii*, no. 24, December 20, 1935)

LEO XIII

Christ commanded the Church to set in order whatever is deranged in human society

For He healed the wounds which the sin of our first father had inflicted on the human race; He brought all men, by nature children of wrath, into favor with God; He led to the light of truth men wearied out by longstanding error; He renewed to every virtue those who were weakened by lawlessness of every kind; and, giving them again an inheritance of never-ending bliss, He added a sure hope that their mortal and perishable bodies should one day be partakers of immortality and of the glory of heaven. In order that these unparalleled benefits might last as long as men should be found on earth, He entrusted to His Church the continuance of His work; and, looking to future times, He commanded her to set in order whatever might have become deranged in human society, and to restore whatever might have fallen into ruin. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, no. 2, February 10, 1880)

By evangelizing the nations, the Church restored humans to their original dignity

Now, who would make bold to deny that the Church, by spreading the Gospel throughout the nations, has brought the light of truth amongst people utterly savage and steeped in foul superstition, and has quickened them alike to recognize the Divine Author of nature and duly to respect themselves? Further, who will deny that the Church has done away with

the curse of slavery and restored men to the original dignity of their noble nature; and – by uplifting the standard of redemption in all quarters of the globe, by introducing, or shielding under her protection, the sciences and arts, by founding and taking into her keeping excellent charitable institutions which provide relief for ills of every kind – has throughout the world, in private or in public life, civilized the human race, freed it from degradation, and with all care trained it to a way of Living such as befits the dignity and the hopes of man? And if any one of sound mind compare the age in which We live, so hostile to religion and to the Church of Christ, with those happy times when the Church was revered as a mother by the nations, beyond all question he will see that our epoch is rushing wildly along the straight road to destruction; while in those times which most abounded in excellent institutions, peaceful life, wealth, and prosperity the people showed themselves most obedient to the Church's rule and laws. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilio*, no. 5, April 21, 1878)

PAUL VI

Evangelizing means bringing the Good News to all, and thus transforming humanity from within

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: 'Now I am making the whole of creation new' (Rev 21:5; cf. 2Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15). But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism (cf. Rom 6:4) and by lives lived according to the Gospel (cf. Eph 4:24-25; Col 3:9-10). The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert (cf. Rom 1:16; 1Cor 1:18, 2:4), solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. (Paul VI. *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 18, December 8, 1975)

III – THOSE WHO ARE OF THE WORLD LISTEN TO THE WORLD’S LANGUAGE

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us

They belong to the world; accordingly, their teaching belongs to the world, and the world listens to them. We belong to God, and anyone who knows God listens to us, while anyone who does not belong to God refuses to hear us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit. (1Jn 4:4-6)

The world and its enticement are passing away; whoever does the will of God remains forever

Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For **all that is in the world, sensual lust, enticement for the eyes, and a pretentious life, is not from the Father but is from the world.** Yet the world and its enticement are passing away. But whoever does the will of God remains forever. (1Jn 2:15-17)

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. (Rom 12:2)

The words of Christ will judge all on the last day

Whoever rejects me and does not accept my words has something to judge him: the word that I spoke, it will condemn him on the last day. (Jn 12:48)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

He who preaches the truth is always inopportune for the evil

We say that the preacher must always preach in an opportune manner, if he does

so according to the rule of the truth, but not if he bases himself on the false esteem of his listeners, who will judge the truth to be inopportune; for he who preaches the truth is always opportune for the good, and inopportune for the evil. ‘Whoever belongs to God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not listen, because you do not belong to God’ (Jn 8: 47). ‘How irksome she is to the unruly! The fool cannot abide her’ (Sir 6:21). If one had to wait for the opportunity to speak only to those who wished to hear, it would only be of benefit to the just; but it is necessary in a timely way to also preach to the evil so that they convert. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Second Epistle to Timothy*, ch. 4, lec.1)

BENEDICT XVI

The wisdom of God often appears to be foolishness in the eyes of the world

This is a point that every Christian must understand and apply to himself or herself: only those who first listen to the Word can become preachers of it. Indeed, **they must not teach their own wisdom but the wisdom of God, which often appears to be foolishness in the eyes of the world** (cf. 1Cor 1:23). (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants in the International Congress on the 40th Anniversary of the Dogmatic constitution Dei Verbum*, September 16, 2005)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

The apostles did not address others in accordance with their opinion but according to Revealed Truth

For the apostles, who were commissioned to find out the wanderers, and to be for sight to those who saw not, and medicine to the weak, **certainly did not address them in accordance with their opinion at the time, but according to revealed truth.** For no persons of any kind would act properly, if they should advise blind men, just about to fall over a precipice, to continue their most dangerous path, as if it were the right one, and as if they might go on in safety. Or what medical man, anxious to heal a sick person, would prescribe in accordance

with the patient's whims, and not according to the requisite medicine? But that the Lord came as the physician of the sick, He does Himself declare saying, 'They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance' (Lk 5:31-32, Mt 9:12-13). How then shall the sick be strengthened, or how shall sinners come to repentance? Is it by persevering in the very same courses? Or, on the contrary, is it by undergoing a great change and reversal of their former mode of living, by which they have brought upon themselves no slight amount of sickness, and many sins? (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*, Book. III, Ch. 5)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Priests must live among men, yet are forbidden to be conformed to this world

Their ministry itself, by a special title, forbids that they be conformed to this world (cf. Rom 12:2); yet at the same time it requires that they live in this world among men. They are to live as good shepherds that know their sheep, and they are to seek to lead those who are not of this sheepfold that they, too, may hear the voice of Christ, so that there might be one fold and one shepherd (cf. Jn 10:14-16). (Vatican Council II. *Decree Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 3, December 7, 1965)

LEO XIII

Preachers who use merely human words fall far short of the power which the speech of God possesses

Hence those preachers are foolish and improvident who, in speaking of religion and proclaiming the things of God, use no words but those of human science and human prudence, trusting to their own reasonings rather than to those of God. Their discourses may be brilliant and fine, but they must be feeble and they must be cold, for they are without the fire of the utterance of God (Jer 23:29), and they must fall far short of that mighty power which the speech of God possesses: 'for the Word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-

edged sword; and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit' (Heb 4:12). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Providentissimus Deus*, no. 4, November 18, 1893)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Strengthening the faithful with doctrine is more necessary than ever today, when false prophets and corrupters abound

But while the preaching of the divine Word should never be interrupted in the Church, surely in these, our days, it becomes necessary to labour with more than ordinary zeal and piety to nourish and strengthen the faithful with sound and wholesome doctrine, as with the food of life. For false prophets have gone forth into the world, to corrupt the minds of the faithful with various and strange doctrines, of whom the Lord has said: I did not send prophets, yet they ran; I spoke not to them, yet they prophesied. In this work, to such extremes has their impiety, practiced in all the arts of Satan, been carried, that it would seem almost impossible to confine it within any bounds; [...] For to say nothing of those illustrious States which heretofore professed, in piety and holiness, the true Catholic faith transmitted to them by their ancestors, but are now gone astray wandering from the paths of truth and openly declaring that their best claims to piety are founded on a total abandonment of the faith of their fathers there is no region, however remote, no place, however securely guarded, no corner of Christendom, into which this pestilence has not sought secretly to insinuate itself. (Catechism of Trent, Introduction)

LEO XIII

He who silences before clamors against truth is either devoid of character or doubts the truth – he insults God and profits the enemies of the faith

To recoil before an enemy, or to keep silence when from all sides such clamors are raised against truth, is the part of a man either devoid of character or who entertains doubt as to the truth of what he professes to believe. In both cases such mode of behaving

is base and is insulting to God, and both are incompatible with the salvation of mankind. This kind of conduct is profitable only to the enemies of the faith, for nothing emboldens the wicked so greatly as the lack of courage on the part of the good. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Sapientiae christianae*, no. 14, January 10, 1890)

IV – THE GOOD RECOGNIZE THE VOICE OF THE LORD

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Christ's sheep recognize His voice

I am the good shepherd, and I know mine and mine know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I will lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. These also I must lead, and they will hear my voice, and there will be one flock, one shepherd. (Jn 10:14-16)

Everyone who belongs to truth listens to Christ's voice

So Pilate said to him, 'Then you are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.' (Jn 18:37)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

God chose to reveal Himself; out of the abundance of His love he speaks to men as friends

In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (Eph 1:9) by

which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (Eph 2:18; 2Pet 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (Col 1:15, 1Tim 1:17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15) and lives among them (Bar 3:38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Dei verbum*, no. 2, November 18, 1965)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

'I am the good Shepherd': Christ would not add 'good,' were there not bad shepherds

The Lord Jesus is speaking to His sheep – to those already so, and to those yet to become such-who were then present; for in the place where they were, there were those who were already His sheep, as well as those who were afterwards to become so: and He likewise shows to those then present and those to come, both to them and to us, and to as many also after us as shall yet be His sheep, who it is that had been sent to them. All, therefore, hear the voice of their Shepherd saying, 'I am the good Shepherd.' He would not add 'good,' were there not bad shepherds. But the bad shepherds are those who are thieves and robbers, or certainly hirelings at the best. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Tractates on the Gospel of Saint John*, Tractate XLVI, no. 1)

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Real power is service – there is no other way in the Church.

For the Christian, progress means humbling oneself

Perusing the pages of human history, and comparing ages long past, peoples distant from one another, and the most different cultures, we notice one common denominator: the presence of egoism, power struggles, greed and all the other vices related to pride. It is not surprising, since our first parents, Adam and Eve, fell into the trap of the evil one, thinking that by their disobedience they would become 'like gods' (cf Gen 3:5).

On the other hand, when Jesus came to the world, he taught us about the evils of pride, and his whole life was a profound example of humility: he wished to become man, to be born in a stable, to die on the cross... And he showed his disciples the path to follow: 'Whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave. Just so, the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mt 20:26-28).

However, the humility of Jesus that we are all called to imitate is often confused with a false modesty which leads to forgetting the greatness of the Christian vocation, leading to a timid attitude of submission towards the enemies of the Church, or even a simulation of attenuating Catholic doctrine and morals so as not to 'hurt the feelings' of those who think differently. And as always, there are those who make the most of certain affirmations of the ecclesiastical authorities to project this distorted vision...

Perhaps something like this is what happened to Pope Francis in one of his morning homilies on this topic. Were his words well understood? Or had we better ask what were his intentions by saying them? The Magisterium, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church can help us to answer.

FRANCIS

Real power is service. As He did, He who came not to be served but to serve, and His service was the service of the Cross. He humbled Himself unto death, even death on a cross for us, to serve us, to save us. And **there is no other way in the Church to move forward. For the Christian, getting ahead, progress, means humbling oneself. If we do not learn this Christian rule, we will never, ever be able to understand Jesus' true message on power.** (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae, May 21, 2013*)

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I – THE HUMILITY OF JESUS IS PERFECTLY HARMONIOUS WITH MAJESTY AND GLORY

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Christ’s humility is the more wondrous as His majesty is the more sublime

Therefore, although the virtue of humility was not fitting to Christ in His divine nature, it was fitting to Him in His human nature, and His humility was Tendered the more praiseworthy by His divinity. **For the dignity of the person contributes to the praise humility deserves;** for example, when out of some necessity a great man has to suffer something lowly. **But there can be no dignity of man so great as this: that he be God. Hence, the humility of the God-man was praiseworthy in the extreme** when He bore those abject things which He was called on to suffer for the salvation of men. For men were by reason of pride lovers of worldly glory. Therefore, **to change the spirits of men over from love of worldly glory to love of divine glory He willed to bear death**—not just any sort of death, but a death abject in the extreme. For there are some who, although they do not fear death, abhor an abject death. And even to the contempt of such a death did our Lord inspire men by the example of His death. [...] Hence, although many examples of humility of other men are discoverable, **it was most expeditious to arouse men to humility by the example of the God-man.** He clearly could not make a mistake, **and His humility is the more wondrous as His majesty is the more sublime.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa against the Gentiles*, Book IV, Ch.55, no. 20-21)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Christ the Lord – nothing can be conceived more humble, and nothing more magnificent

Moreover the other Articles of the Creed which regard **Christ the Lord show His great humility and lowliness. Nothing can be conceived more humble, nothing more lowly, than that the Son of God assumed our weak human nature, and suffered and died for us. But**

nothing more magnificently, nothing more admirably, proclaims His sovereign glory and divine majesty than what is contained in the present and in the preceding Article, in which we declare that He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father. (Catechism of Trent, 1060)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Jesus declares himself King before Pilate

So Pilate said to him, **‘Then you are a king?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say I am a king.** For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.’ (Jn 18:37)

On the eve of the Passion, Jesus asks his Father to glorify him

When Jesus had said this, he **raised his eyes to heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come. Give glory to your son,** so that your son may glorify you, just as you gave him authority over all people, so that he may give eternal life to all you gave him. Now this is eternal life, that they should know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ. I glorified you on earth by accomplishing the work that you gave me to do. **Now glorify me, Father, with you, with the glory that I had with you before the world began’.** (Jn 17:1-5)

Humiliation was the path to glory

Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, **he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend,** of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:5-11)

BENEDICT XVI

Before the Crucified Christ every knee should bow

Saint Paul follows this through. Christ came down from Heaven to the Cross, the ultimate obedience. And at this moment what the Prophet said is brought about: **before the Crucified Christ every knee should bow**: the entire cosmos, in Heaven, on earth and under the earth (cf. Phil 2:10-11). **He is really the expression of the true grandeur of God. The humility of God** and his love unto the Cross show us that he is God. **Let us kneel before him in adoration.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the parish priests of Rome*, March 10, 2011)

Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father with every adversary at his feet

‘The Lord says to my lord **‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool’** (Ps 110, 1). [...] **With regard to the Messiah Jesus himself mentioned this verse in order to show that the Messiah, was greater than David, that he was David’s Lord** (cf. Mt 22:41-45; Mk 12:35-37; Lk 20:41-44). **And Peter returned to it in his discourse at Pentecost, proclaiming that this enthronement of the king was brought about in the resurrection of Christ and that Christ was henceforth seated at the right hand of the Father, sharing in God’s kingship over the world** (cf. Acts 2:29-35). **Indeed, Christ is the enthroned Lord, the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven, as Jesus described himself during the trial before the Synedrion** (cf. Mt 26:63-64; Mk 14:61-62; cf. also Lk 22:66-69). **He is the true King who, with the Resurrection, entered into glory at the right hand of the Father** (Rom 8:34; Eph 2:5; Col 3:1; Heb 8:1; 12:2), **was made superior to angels, and seated in heaven above every power with every adversary at his feet, until the time when the last enemy, death, to be defeated by him once and for all** (cf. 1Cor 15:24-26; Eph 1:20-23; Heb 1:3-4; 2:5-8; 10:12-13; 1Pet 3:22)’. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, November 16, 2011)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Jesus declares himself to be the Master and the light of the world

What then did Christ? Since they were continually dwelling upon Galilee and ‘The Prophet,’ to free all men from this erroneous suspicion, and **to show that He was not one of the prophets, but the Master of the world, He said, ‘I am the light of the world** (Jn 8:12).’ Not of Galilee, not of Palestine, nor of Judaea. What then say the Jews? (Jn 8:12) ‘Thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true.’ Alas! for their folly, [...] What was the record He bore? ‘I am the light of the world.’ **A great thing to say, great of a truth.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint John*, Homily LII)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Jesus clearly manifested his exalted condition as Son of God...

Peter could recognize the transcendent character of the Messiah’s divine sonship because **Jesus had clearly allowed it to be so understood.** To his accusers’ question before the Sanhedrin, ‘Are you the Son of God, then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say that I am’ (Lk 22:70; cf. Mt 26:64; Mk 14:61-62). Well before this, **Jesus referred to himself as ‘the Son’ who knows the Father, as distinct from the ‘servants’** God had earlier sent to his people; **he is superior even to the angels** (cf. Mt 11:27; 21:34-38; 24:36). **He distinguished his sonship from that of his disciples by never saying ‘our Father’, except to command them: ‘You, then, pray like this: ‘Our Father”, and he emphasized this distinction, saying ‘my Father and your Father’** (Mt 5:48; 6:8-9; 7:21; Lk 11:13; Jn 20:17). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 443)

JOHN PAUL II

...and willed that others recognize it

Jesus Christ often spoke of himself, using the title ‘the Son of Man’ (cf. Mt 16: 28; Mk 2:28). This title [...] corresponded to that ‘pedagogy of faith’, to which Jesus voluntarily had recourse. **In effect, he desired that his disciples and those who heard him would**

reach the discovery of their own accord that the ‘Son of Man’ was at the same time the true ‘Son of God’. We have a very significant demonstration of this in the profession of Saint Peter, made in a place close to Caesarea Philippi. [...] Jesus provoked the Apostles with questions, and when Peter attains the explicit recognition of his divine identity, [Jesus] confirms his testimony, calling him ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father’ (Mt 16:17). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2, August 26, 1987)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Christ affirms of himself the lesser; and Peter affirms of Christ the greater

This is the confession true and full. You should unite one thing to the other: What Christ says of himself, and what Peter says of Christ. What did Christ say of himself? ‘Who do people say that the Son of Man is?’ And what did Peter say of Christ? ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Unite both things and so Christ has come in the flesh. Christ affirms of himself the lesser, and Peter, of Christ, the greater. Humility speaks of the truth, and the truth, of humility; that is to say, humility [speaks] of the truth of God, and the truth, of the humility of the man. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 183*, no. 3-4)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Pharisees were indignant at the praise due to Jesus, but He did not reject it

When the chief priests and the scribes saw the wondrous things he was doing, and the children crying out in the temple area, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David,’ they were indignant and said to him, ‘Do you hear what they are saying?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Yes; and have you never read the text, ‘Out of the mouths of infants and nurslings you have brought forth praise’? (Mt 21:15-16)

‘If they keep silent, the stones will cry out!’

And now as he was approaching the slope of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of his disciples began to praise God aloud with joy for all the mighty deeds they had seen. They proclaimed: ‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord. Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.’ Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples.’ He said in reply, ‘I tell you, if they keep silent, the stones will cry out!’ (Lk 19:37-40)

II – WHAT IS TRUE CHRISTIAN HUMILITY?

BENEDICT XVI

We should learn the correct humility from Christ

Of course there exist caricatures of a misguided humility and a mistaken submissiveness, which we do not want to imitate. But there also exists a destructive pride and a presumption which tear every community apart and result in violence. Can we learn from Christ the correct humility which corresponds to the truth of our being, and the obedience which submits to truth, to the will of God? (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, Chrism Mass, April 9, 2009)

SAINT TERESA OF AVILA

To be humble is to walk in truth

I was wondering once why Our Lord so dearly loved this virtue of humility; and all of a sudden — without, I believe, my having previously thought of it — the following reason came into my mind: that it is because God is Sovereign Truth and to be humble is to walk in truth, for it is absolutely true to say that we have no good thing in ourselves, but only misery and nothingness; and anyone who fails to understand this is walking in falsehood. He who best understands it is most pleasing to Sovereign Truth because he is walking in truth. (Saint Teresa of Avila. *Interior Castle*, sixth mansion, Ch. 10)

JOHN PAUL II

Humility is the awareness of our own smallness in relation to God...

The fundamental attitude of man toward God is, therefore, humility, which is to say, the limpid and joyful self-awareness of our own smallness, of our own limits, of our own contingency, of the condition of creature in relation to the Eternal, to the Omniscient. (John Paul II. *Address to professors and students of the University of Perusa*, no. 2, October 26, 1986)

...it is submission to the power of truth, and condition of greatness

Humility is creative 'and love. Humility is rejection of appearances and superficiality; it is the expression of the depth of the human spirit; it is the condition of its greatness. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 1, March 4, 1979)

BENEDICT XVI

Humility does not mean false modesty

'I have served the Lord with all humility'. [...]

Humility does not mean false modesty — we are grateful for the gifts the Lord has given us — yet it indicates our awareness that anything we can do is a gift of God, it is given for the Kingdom of God. We work with this 'humility', with this desire not to be noticed. We do seek praise, we do not want to attract attention, it does not matter to us what may be said of us in the newspapers or elsewhere; what matters is what God says. **This is true humility, not to appear before men and women but to be in God's presence, to work humbly for God and thus really to serve humanity and men and women.** (Benedict XVI. *Meeting with the parish priests of the Diocese of Rome, Lectio Divina*, March 10, 2011)

PIUS X

The example of Saint Anselm: humility and magnanimity, strength and gentleness

And yet **Anselm** in his own eyes was but a despicable and unknown good for-nothing,

a man of no parts, sinful in his life. Nor did this great modesty and most sincere humility detract in the least from his high thinking, whatever may be said to the contrary by men of depraved life and judgment, of whom the Scripture says that 'the animal man understandeth not the things of the spirit of God' (1Cor 2:14). [...] **Thus in him there existed a wonderful harmony between qualities which the world falsely judges to be irreconcilable and contradictory: simplicity and greatness, humility and magnanimity, strength and gentleness,** knowledge and piety, so that both in the beginning and throughout the whole course of his religious life 'he was singularly esteemed by all as a model of sanctity and doctrine' (Breviar. Rom., die 21 Aprilis). (Pius X. *Encyclical Communionum rerum*, no. 7-8, April 21, 1909)

PIUS XI

Humility is perfectly compatible with self-confidence and not with self-degradation

Humility in the spirit of the Gospel and prayer for the assistance of grace are perfectly compatible with self-confidence and heroism. The Church of Christ, which throughout the ages and to the present day numbers more confessors and voluntary martyrs than any other moral collectivity, needs lessons from no one in heroism of feeling and action. **The odious pride of reformers only covers itself with ridicule when it rails at Christian humility as though it were but a cowardly pose of self-degradation.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge*, no. 27, March 14, 1937)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Outward signs and pretense: no more than false humility and grievous pride

Humility, in so far as it is a virtue, conveys the notion of a praiseworthy self-abasement to the lowest place. Now this is sometimes done merely as to outward signs and pretense: wherefore this is 'false humility,' of which Augustine says in a letter (Ep. 149) that it is 'grievous pride,' since to wit, it would seem to aim at excellence of glory. Sometimes,

however, this is done by an inward movement of the soul, and in this way, properly speaking, humility is reckoned a virtue, **because virtue does not consist externals, but chiefly in the inward choice of the mind**, as the Philosopher states (*Ethic.* ii, 5). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 161, a. 1, ad 2)

**III – THE COURAGE TO SERVE CHRIST
WITHOUT COMPROMISES IS THE GUARANTEE
OF HUMILITY AND OF AUTHENTIC SERVICE TO
OTHERS**

BENEDICT XVI

Humility is not the way of renunciation but that of courage

Dear young people, I seem to perceive in these words of God about humility an important message which is especially current for you who want to follow Christ and belong to his Church. This is the message: **do not follow the way of pride but rather that of humility. Go against the tide.** [...] Those who seem more distant from the mindset and values of the Gospel, are crying out to see someone who dares to live according to the fullness of humanity revealed by Jesus Christ.

Therefore, dear friends, **the way of humility is not the way of renunciation but that of courage. It is not the result of a defeat but the result of a victory** of love over selfishness and of grace over sin. In following Christ and imitating Mary, **we must have the courage of humility**; we must entrust ourselves humbly to the Lord, **because only in this way will we be able to become docile instruments in his hands and allow him to do great things in us.** [...] As you see, dear young people, **the humility the Lord has taught us and to which the Saints have borne witness**, each according to the originality of his or her own vocation, **is quite different from a renunciatory way of life.** [...] It is true, the challenges you must face are many and important. The first however, is always that of following Christ to the very end without reservations and compromises. (Benedict XVI. *Homily in the pastoral visit to Loreto*, on the occasion of the Agorà of Italian Youth, September 2, 2007)

JOHN PAUL II

Christians should declare the faith frankly and with courage

Proclamation is inspired by faith, which gives rise to enthusiasm and fervor in the missionary. As already mentioned, the Acts of the Apostles uses the word *parrhesia* to describe this attitude, a word which means to speak frankly and with courage. This term is found also in Saint Paul: 'We had courage in our God to declare to you the Gospel of God in the face of great opposition' (1Thess 2:2); 'Pray...also for me, **that utterance may be given me in opening my mouth boldly** to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel for which I am an ambassador in chains; **that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak**' (Eph 6:18-20). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 45, December 7, 1990)

The service of the truth is a priority task for bishops

Today, faced with self-sufficient humanism which frequently disdains God; faced with those who forget the condition as pilgrims of man on earth; **faced with doctrines and personal and social conducts which are incompatible with the morals of the Gospel**, it is necessary that **the faithful encounter in their Pastors, first of all, the light of faith and of teaching**, which they have the right to receive in abundance and in all its purity (*Lumen Gentium* no. 37). [...] **To be able to face the challenges of the present, it is necessary that the Church appear, at all levels, as the 'the pillar and foundation of truth'** (1Tim 3:15). **The service of the Truth, which is Christ**, is our priority task. This Truth is revealed. It is not born of a merely human experience. It is God Himself, who in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, makes himself known to man. [...] Our firmness will come from this solid foundation, since **the Church today, despite all the difficulties that encircle it, cannot speak in a way different from that which Christ spoke.** For this reason, the Church, especially the Pastors, should be united around the Absolute Truth, that is God, and proclaim it in all its integrity and purity. (John Paul II. *Address to the second group of bishops from Chile in the ad limina visit*, no. 2, November 8, 1984)

PIUS XI

The priest's first loving gift to his neighbors is to serve truth

This charity, intelligent and sympathetic towards those even who offend you, does by no means imply a renunciation of the right of proclaiming, vindicating and defending the truth and its implications. The priest's first loving gift to his neighbors is to serve truth and refute error in any of its forms. Failure on this score would be not only a betrayal of God and your vocation, but also an offense against the real welfare of your people and country. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge*, no. 36, March 14, 1937)

PIUS XII

The first duty of the Pope is giving witness to the Truth, and to confute those who err

As Vicar of Him who in a decisive hour pronounced before the highest earthly authority of that day, the great words: 'For this was I born, and for this came I into the world; that I should give testimony to the truth. Every one that is of the truth, hearest My voice' (Jn 18: 37), We feel We owe no greater debt to Our office and to Our time than to testify to the truth with Apostolic firmness: 'to give testimony to the truth.' This duty necessarily entails the exposition and confutation of errors and human faults; for these must be made known before it is possible to tend and to heal them. 'You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free' (Jn 8:32). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no. 19, October 20, 1939)

PIUS X

Debasing oneself before the enemies of the Church is a culpable pastoral omission

It is for you, therefore, venerable brethren, whom Divine Providence has constituted to be the pastors and leaders of the Christian people, to resist with all your strength this most fatal tendency of modern society to lull itself in a shameful indolence while war is being waged against religion, seeking a cowardly neutrality made up of weak schemes and compromises

to the injury of divine and human rights, to the oblivion of Christ's clear sentence: 'He that is not with me is against me' (Mt 12:30). Not indeed that it is not well at times to waive our rights as far as may lawfully be done and as the good of souls requires. And certainly this defect can never be charged to you who are spurred on by the charity of Christ. But this is only a reasonable condescension, which can be made without the slightest detriment to duty, and which does not at all affect the eternal principles of truth and justice. (Pius X. *Encyclical Communionium rerum*, no. 31, April 21, 1909)

BENEDICT XV

The example of Saint Jerome: humility in hearing the Church and intransigence with her enemies

With his strong insistence on adhering to the integrity of the faith, it is not to be wondered at that he attacked vehemently those who left the Church; he promptly regarded them as his own personal enemies. 'To put it briefly,' he says, 'I have never spared heretics, and have always striven to regard the Church's enemies as my own' (*Dial. contra Pelagianos*, Prol. 2). To Rufinus he writes: 'There is one point in which I cannot agree with you: you ask me to spare heretics – or, in other words – not to prove myself a Catholic' (*Contra Ruf.*, 3, 43). Yet at the same time Jerome deplored the lamentable state of heretics, and adjured them to return to their sorrowing Mother, the one source of salvation (*In Mich.*, 1:10-15), he prayed, too, with all earnestness for the conversion of those 'who had quitted the Church and put away the Holy Spirit's teaching to follow their own notions' (*In Is.*, 16:1-5). Was there ever a time, Venerable Brethren, when there was greater call than now for us all, lay and cleric alike, to imbibe the spirit of this 'Greatest of Doctors'? For there are many contumacious folk now who sneer at the authority and government of God, Who has revealed Himself, and of the Church which teaches. [...] Would that all Catholics would cling to Saint Jerome's golden rule and obediently listen to their Mother's words, so as modestly to keep within the bounds marked out by the Fathers and ratified by the Church. (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Spiritus Paraclitus*, no. 38-39, September 15, 1950)

IV – REASONS TO SHOW HOLY PRIDE IN BELONGING TO THE CHURCH

LEO XIII

God made the Church as a perfect society

God indeed even made the Church a society far more perfect than any other. For the end for which the Church exists is as much higher than the end of other societies as divine grace is above nature, as immortal blessings are above the transitory things on the earth. Therefore the Church is a society divine in its origin, supernatural in its end and in means proximately adapted to the attainment of that end; but it is a human community inasmuch as it is composed of men. For this reason we find it called in Holy Writ by names indicating a perfect society. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Statu cognitum*, no. 10, June 29, 1896)

BENEDICT XVI

The joy of belonging to the Church is not triumphalism but humility, being grateful for the gift of the Lord

The Church is not an organization that was formed gradually; the Church was born from the Cross. The Son acquired the Church on the Cross and not only the Church of that moment, but the Church of all the epochs. He acquired with his Blood this portion of the people, of the world, for God. And this, it seems to me, should make us think. Christ, God, created the Church, the new Eve, with his Blood. Thus he loves us and loved us and this is true at every moment. And this must also enable us to understand that the Church is a gift; being happy that we are called to the Church of God; feeling joy in belonging to the Church. Of course, there are also always negative and difficult aspects, but basically this must remain: it is a very beautiful gift that I can live out in the Church of God, in the Church that the Lord purchased with his Blood. Being called to know truly the face of God, to know his will, to know his Grace, to know this supreme

love, this Grace that guides us and takes us by the hand. Happiness in being Church, joy in being Church. I think we must relearn this. The fear of triumphalism has perhaps caused us to forget a little that it is beautiful to be in the Church and that this is not triumphalism but humility, being grateful for the gift of the Lord. (Benedict XVI. *Meeting with the parish priests of the Diocese of Rome*, March 10, 2011)

PIUS XII

Nothing more glorious, nobler of more honorable than to belong to the Catholic Church

Venerable Brethren, in Our exposition of this mystery which embraces the hidden union of us all with Christ, We have thus far, as Teacher of the Universal Church, illumined the mind with the light of truth, and Our pastoral office now requires that We provide an incentive for the heart to love this Mystical Body with that ardor of charity which is not confined to thoughts and words, but which issues in deeds. If those who lived under the Old Law could sing of their earthly city: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten; let my tongue cleave to my jaws if I do not remember thee, if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy' (Ps 136:5-6). How much greater then should be the joy and exultation that should fill our hearts who dwell in a City built on the holy mountain of living and chosen stones, 'Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone' (Eph 2:20; 1Pet 2:4-5). For nothing more glorious, nothing nobler, nothing surely more honorable can be imagined than to belong to the One, Holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, in which we become members of One Body as venerable as it is unique; are guided by one supreme Head; are filled with one divine Spirit; are nourished during our earthly exile by one doctrine and one heavenly Bread, until at last we enter into the one, unending blessedness of heaven. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 91, June 29, 1943)

PIUS X

In the midst of these public calamities it behooves us to cry aloud and make known to all the great truths of the faith

In the midst of these public calamities it behooves us to cry aloud and make known **the great truths of the faith not only to the people, to the humble, the afflicted, but to the powerful and the rich, to them that decide and govern the policy of nations**, to make known to all the great truths which history confirms by its great and disastrous lessons such as that ‘sin makes the nations miserable’ (Prov 14:34), ‘that a most severe judgment shall be for them that bear rule’ (Sap 4:7), with the admonition of Psalm 2: ‘And now, ye kings, understand; receive instruction, you that judge the earth. Serve the Lord with fear... embrace discipline lest at any time the Lord be angry, and you perish from the just way’. (Pius X. *Encyclical Communium rerum*, no. 24, April 21, 1909)

PIUS XI

The Church of Christ: divinely commissioned to lead mankind

There exists an institution able to safeguard the sanctity of the law of nations. This institution is **a part of every nation; at the same time it is above all nations. She enjoys, too, the highest authority, the fullness of the teaching power of the Apostles. Such an institution is the Church of Christ. She alone is adapted to do this great work, for she is not only divinely commissioned to lead mankind, but moreover, because of her very make-up and the constitution which she possesses, by reason of her age-old traditions and her great prestige**, which has not been lessened but has been greatly increased since the close of the War, cannot but succeed in such a venture where others assuredly will fail. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ubi arcano*, no. 46, December 23, 1922)

JOHN XXIII

The Catholic Church is Mother and Teacher of all nations

Mother and Teacher of all nations—such is the Catholic Church in the mind of her Founder, Jesus Christ; to hold the world in an embrace of love, that men, in every age, should find in her their own completeness in a higher order of living, and their ultimate salvation. She is ‘the pillar and ground of the truth’ (1Tim 3:15) To her was entrusted by her holy Founder the twofold task of giving life to her children and of teaching them and guiding them—both as individuals and as nations—with maternal care. Great is their dignity, a dignity which she has always guarded most zealously and held in the highest esteem. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 1, May 15, 1961)

PIUS IX

It is perverse to attempt to suppress the power of the Catholic Church over all nations and peoples, even to the end of the world

According to the duty of Our Apostolic Ministry, and following the illustrious example of Our Predecessors, We raised Our voice, and in many published Encyclical Letters and Allocutions delivered in Consistory, and other Apostolic Letters, **we condemned the chief errors of this most unhappy age**, and we excited your admirable episcopal vigilance, and we again and again admonished and exhorted all sons of the Catholic Church, to us most dear, that they should altogether abhor and flee from the contagion of so dire a pestilence. [...]

But, although we have not omitted often to proscribe and reprobate the chief errors of this kind, yet **the cause of the Catholic Church**, and the salvation of souls entrusted to us by God, **and the welfare of human society itself**, altogether demand that we again stir up your pastoral solicitude to **exterminate other evil opinions**, which spring forth from the said errors as from a fountain. **Which false and perverse opinions are on that ground the more to be detested, because**

they chiefly tend to this, that that salutary influence be impeded and (even) removed, which the Catholic Church, according to the institution and command of her Divine Author, should freely exercise even to the end of the world — not only over private individuals, but over nations, peoples, and their sovereign princes. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Quanta cura*, no. 2-3, December 8, 1846)

LEO XIII

The source of the evils of society lies chiefly in setting aside the authority of the Church

For, from the very beginning of Our pontificate, the sad sight has presented itself to Us of the evils by which the human race is oppressed on every side. [...]

Now, the source of these evils lies chiefly, We are convinced, in this, that the holy and venerable authority of the Church, which in God's name rules mankind, upholding and defending all lawful authority, has **been despised and set aside**. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilio*, no. 2-3, April 21, 1878)

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The Council of Jerusalem – Those who were on opposing sides and were sowing discord entered into dialogue and reached an agreement.

This formula is the work of the Holy Spirit:

He creates harmony among all people

Immutable and eternal in his divine nature, Jesus Christ himself affirmed that his mission here on earth had as its objective not the abolition of the law and the prophets, but rather, their fulfillment (cf. Mt 5:15-20). However, it is undeniable that this fulfillment was the greatest innovation ever experienced in history. The Redeemer's preaching signified a complete renewal of human life in every aspect; not only with regards to man's relationship with God, but also to his interaction with others. It's enough to consider, for example, the revelation of the Trinity – three Persons in One God – the invitation to participate in divine life through grace, or the 'paradigm shift' that the new commandment of love produced within the sphere of social relations. All the perennial aspects of human life were also put in a new perspective by Jesus Christ. In this way, he offered a much desired peace; not the peace the world gives, but rather 'his' peace (cf. Jn 14: 27); He promised happiness, but as the reward of the just and those who suffered for his name (cf. Mt 5:3-12).

The same occurs with the union that should prevail among his followers – a union that constitutes one of the distinguishing characteristics of his Church; 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' (Eph 4:5) – not the work of the human spirit but rather that of 'the Spirit of truth' (Jn 14:17). The widely proclaimed (and frequently misunderstood) expression '*ut unum sint*' does not include the 'son of perdition' nor those who 'are of the world', but rather is related to a sanctification 'in truth' (cf. Jn 17:12,16,19). That's why it's shocking to hear certain affirmations that seem to foment an indiscriminate union, the price of which would unavoidably be an accord between good and evil, truth and error, beauty and ugliness. Is this the unity desired by Christ and produced by the Holy Spirit? Once again, a clarification of certain concepts is in order...

FRANCIS

The Pope continued: 'Thus we arrive at the point in Chapter 15 of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15:22-31) where the waters of Antioch are moved, **because a group of Christians, deeply tied to the Jewish law, want to impose the Hebrew ways on new Christians before baptizing them: e.g., circumcision**'. But 'Paul says no'. This 'ignites a fight among them, the waters are moving'. One reads, in fact, that there were lively debates going on. 'They debated vigorously, because there was a great deal of movement', the Pope explained. 'How do they resolve the problem? They gather and each gives his own judgment, offers his own opinion; they discuss, but like brothers not enemies: they don't make any outside deals in order to win; they don't go to civil authorities to impose themselves; they don't kill in order to profit: they seek a path of prayer and dialogue'. And those who were actually on opposing sides dialogue and reach an agreement: this is the work of the Holy Spirit'. Chapter 15 of Acts, Francis said, tells how 'the process ends', in today's liturgy, 'with the First Ecumenical Council, the Council of Jerusalem'. They send 'a letter to those who do not know how to preach to the closed ones: 'The Apostles and the elders, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia of Gentile origin, greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have

upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind. In effect, **they sowed discord**', the Pope added, proceeding to read the text: 'we have decided to choose representatives and send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul' — who were considered heretics — 'who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word of mouth'. **In reading these words the Pontiff inserted that ultimately they came to an agreement and this even though Barnabas and Paul 'were deemed heretics'**. Francis then read, also from the Acts, '**this formula, which is one formula, one solemn expression: It is the decision of the Holy Spirit** and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage'. This, Francis said, 'is the way of the Holy Spirit, **this is the work of the Holy Spirit**'. *For it is he 'who moves the waters, who stirs up a little disorder, who seems to throw us into a storm, to torment — think of Pentecost — and then he brings harmony, unity: he has these two characteristics'*. And 'a Church where are never such problems', he added, 'makes me think that the Holy Spirit is not very present'. Certainly, 'in a Church where there is always discord and where there are factions that betray their brothers, one against another, there is also no Holy Spirit'. Indeed, '**The Spirit is what brings newness, moves situations forward, creates new spaces**, brings the wisdom that Jesus promised: 'He will teach you'. **The Spirit, therefore, 'moves but in the end creates harmony among all people'**. And in continuing the celebration, the Pope asked 'the Lord Jesus, who is always present among us, to send always the Holy Spirit among us, to each one of us; to send Him to the Church and enable the Church to be faithful to the movement of the Holy Spirit'. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae, As the Spirit moves, Friday, May 8, 2015*)

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I – DESIRE FOR UNION JUSTIFIES CONCESSION TO ERROR?

JOHN PAUL II

The Council of Jerusalem: testimony of how truth should be served without compromise

Already in the apostolic era, the Council of Jerusalem had to unify the different perspectives of Christians of a Jewish background and those proceeding from paganism. That event continues to be a luminous testimony of how the truth should be served without compromise. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 1, June 30, 1996)

Facile ‘agreement’ must be absolutely avoided: love for truth is the deepest dimension of any authentic quest for full communion between Christians

Love for the truth is the deepest dimension of any authentic quest for full communion between Christians. [...]

Full communion of course will have to come about through the acceptance of the whole truth into which the Holy Spirit guides Christ’s disciples. Hence all forms of reductionism or facile ‘agreement’ must be absolutely avoided. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ut unum sint*, no. 36, May 25, 1995)

A ‘being together’ which betrays the truth is in contradiction with God, who is Truth

Here it is not a question of altering the deposit of faith, changing the meaning of dogmas, eliminating essential words from them, accommodating truth to the preferences of a particular age, or suppressing certain articles of the Creed under the false pretext that they are no longer understood today. The unity willed by God can be attained only by the adherence of all to the content of revealed faith in its entirety. In matters of faith, compromise is in contradiction with God who is Truth. In the Body of Christ, ‘the way, and the truth, and the life’ (Jn 14:6), who could consider legitimate a reconciliation brought about at the expense

of the truth? [...]A ‘being together’ which betrayed the truth would thus be opposed both to the nature of God who offers his communion and to the need for truth found in the depths of every human heart. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ut unum sint*, no. 18, May 25, 1995)

PIUS X

A false notion of the Magisterium – a common mind whose office is to find and determine the formula that corresponds best with common conscience

But far more advanced and far more pernicious are their [the modernists] teachings on doctrinal and dogmatic authority. This is their conception of the magisterium of the Church: No religious society, they say, can be a real unit unless the religious conscience of its members be one, and one also the formula which they adopt. But this double unity requires a kind of common mind whose office is to find and determine the formula that corresponds best with the common conscience, and it must have moreover an authority sufficient to enable it to impose on the community the formula which has been decided upon. From the combination and, as it were fusion of these two elements, the common mind which draws up the formula and the authority which imposes it, arises, according to the Modernists, the notion of the ecclesiastical magisterium. (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 25, September 8, 1907)

PIUS XII

A serious danger concealed beneath the mask of virtue: to consider an obstacle to fraternal union what is founded on the laws and principles given by Christ

It is apparent, however, that some today, as in apostolic times, desirous of novelty, and fearing to be considered ignorant of recent scientific findings, [...] try to withdraw themselves from the sacred Teaching Authority and are accordingly in danger of gradually departing from revealed truth and of drawing others along with them into error. Another danger is perceived which is all the more serious because it is more concealed

beneath the mask of virtue. There are many who, deploring disagreement among men and intellectual confusion, **through an imprudent zeal for souls, are urged by a great and ardent desire to do away with the barrier that divides good and honest men; these advocate an 'eirenism' according to which, by setting aside the questions which divide men, they aim not only at joining forces to repel the attacks of atheism, but also at reconciling things opposed to one another in the field of dogma.** [...] But some **through enthusiasm for an imprudent 'eirenism' seem to consider as an obstacle to the restoration of fraternal union, things founded on the laws and principles given by Christ** and likewise on institutions founded by Him, or which are the defense and support of the integrity of the faith, and the removal of which would bring about the union of all, but only to their destruction. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Humani generis*, no. 9,10,11, August 12, 1950)

It is not licit to dissimulate the truth with the pretext of promoting unity

Even on the plea of promoting unity it is not allowed to dissemble one single dogma; for, as the Patriarch of Alexandria [St Cyril] warns us, 'although the desire of peace is a noble and excellent thing, yet we must not for its sake neglect the virtue of loyalty in Christ' (Ep. 61). [...] The only successful method will be that which bases harmony and agreement among Christ's faithful ones upon all the truths, and the whole of the truths, which God has revealed. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Orientalis ecclesiae*, no.16, April 9, 1944)

PIUS X

The primary duty of charity does not lie in the tolerance of false ideas

Catholic doctrine tells us that **the primary duty of charity does not lie in the toleration of false ideas**, however sincere they may be, **nor in the theoretical or practical indifference towards the errors and vices in which we see our brethren plunged [...]**

in which we see our brethren plunged If, as We desire with all Our heart, the highest possible peak of well being for society and its members is to be attained through fraternity or, as it is

also called, universal solidarity, **all minds must be united in the knowledge of Truth, all wills united in morality, and all hearts in the love of God and His Son Jesus Christ.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Notre charge apostolique*, August 23, 1910)

PAUL VI

The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down of truth

The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth. Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith. [...] **(Irenism and syncretism) is ultimately nothing more than skepticism about the power and content of the Word of God which we desire to preach.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 88, August 6, 1964)

Do not betray truth out of a desire to please men

Every evangelizer is expected to have a reverence for truth, especially since the truth that he studies and communicates is none other than revealed truth and hence, more than any other, a sharing in the first truth which is God Himself. **The preacher of the Gospel will therefore be a person who even at the price of personal renunciation and suffering always seeks the truth that he must transmit to others. He never betrays or hides truth out of a desire to please men**, in order to astonish or to shock, nor for the sake of originality or a desire to make an impression. He does not refuse truth. [...]

The God of truth expects us to be the vigilant defenders and devoted preachers of truth. (Paul VI. *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 78, December 8, 1975)

PIUS XI

The divinely revealed truth is not a subject for compromise

Shall We suffer, what would indeed be iniquitous, **the truth, and a truth divinely revealed, to be made a subject for compromise?** For here there is question of

defending revealed truth. [...] If our Redeemer plainly said that His Gospel was to continue not only during the times of the Apostles, but also till future ages, is it possible that the object of faith should in the process of time become so obscure and uncertain, that it would be necessary to-day to tolerate opinions which are even incompatible one with another? If this were true, we should have to confess that the coming of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles, and the perpetual indwelling of the same Spirit in the Church, and the very preaching of Jesus Christ, have several centuries ago, lost all their efficacy and use, to affirm which would be blasphemy. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 8, January 6, 1928)

II – TRUE UNITY IS ACHIEVED ONLY IN THE TRUTH

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Outside the truth no real union can ever be attained

Therefore the whole and entire Catholic doctrine is to be presented and explained: by no means is it permitted to pass over in silence or to veil in ambiguous terms the Catholic truth regarding the nature and way of justification, [...] because outside the truth no true union can ever be attained. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Ecclesia Catholica*, December 20, 1949)

JOHN PAUL II

The mission confided by Christ to his Church is unity in the identity of the faith

Unity in truth: this is the mission confided by Christ to his Church, for which it actively strives, invoking before all else from Him who is all powerful and was the first to pray to the Father, in the imminence of his Death and Resurrection, that all believers be 'one' (Jn 17: 21).

It thus becomes clear the **this mysterious and visible union may not be obtained without the identity of the faith**, the participation in sacramental life, the **consequent coherence in moral life**, and continuous and fervent personal

and communitarian prayer. (John Paul II. *Official and solemn presentation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 8, December 7, 1992)

Over and above unity in love, unity in truth is always urgent for us

To be watchful for purity of doctrine, the basis in building up the Christian community, is therefore, together with the proclamation of the Gospel, the primary and irreplaceable duty of the Pastor, of the Teacher of the faith. How often Saint Paul emphasized this, convinced as he was of the seriousness of the accomplishment of this duty (cf. 1Tim 1:3-7; 18-20; 4:11, 16; 2Tim 1:4-14). Over and above unity in love, unity in truth is always urgent for us. (John Paul II. *Address to the members of the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate*, Puebla, Republic of Mexico, no. 1, January 28, 1979)

LEO XIII

True union between Christians consists in a unity of Faith and of government

We mean a perfect and complete union, such as could not subsist in any way if nothing else was brought about but a certain kind of agreement in the Tenets of Belief and an intercourse of Fraternal love. The True Union between Christians is that which Jesus Christ, the Author of the Church, instituted and desired, and which consists in a Unity of Faith and Unity of Government. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Praeclara gratulationis publicae*, June 20, 1894)

BENEDICT XVI

The unity of the first community of believers was nourished by the teaching of the Apostles

According to Acts, the unity of believers was seen in the fact that 'they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:42). **The unity of believers was thus nourished by the teaching of the Apostles** (the proclamation of God's word), **to which they responded with unanimous faith**, by fraternal communion (**the service of charity**), by the

breaking of the bread (the Eucharist and the sacraments), and by prayer, both personal and communal. It was on these four pillars that communion and witness were based within the first community of believers. (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, no. 5, September 14, 2012)

The communion of the baptized is visibly manifested in the bonds of the profession of the faith in its entirety

It is the Holy Spirit, the principle of unity, which establishes the Church as a communion (cf. *Lumen gentium*, 13). He is the principle of the unity of the faithful in the teaching of the Apostles, in the breaking of the bread and in prayer (cf. *ibid*; Acts 2:42). [...] The communion of the baptized in the teaching of the Apostles and in the breaking of the eucharistic bread is visibly manifested in the bonds of the profession of the faith in its entirety, of the celebration of all of the sacraments instituted by Christ, and of the governance of the College of Bishops united with its head, the Roman Pontiff (cf. CIC, can. 205; *Lumen gentium*, 13; 14; 21; 22; *Unitatis redintegratio*, 2; 3; 4; 15; 20; *Christus Dominus*, 4; *Ad gentes*, 22.) (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic constitution Anglicanorum coetibus*, November 4, 2009)

The Church: the place of unity and communion in truth

Jesus says: ‘When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth’ (Jn 16:13). Here, in speaking of the Holy Spirit, Jesus explains to us what the Church is and how she should live in order to be herself, to be the place of unity and communion in Truth; [...] Dear friends, we must live in accordance with the Spirit of unity and truth and this is why we should pray that the Spirit illuminate and guide us so that we may overcome our fascination with following our own truths and receive the truth of Christ, passed on in the Church. (Benedict XVI. *Homily Solemnity of Pentecost*, May 27, 2012)

III – DO NOVELTIES ALWAYS PROCEED FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

At the root of the Council of Jerusalem: confusion sown by judaizers

Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved.’ Because there arose no little dissension and debate by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and presbyters about this question. (Acts 15:1-2)

SIMPLICIUS

Synods are convoked when novelties arise in distorted minds

A synod, which has not always been enjoined in other cases, unless something new arose in distorted minds or something ambiguous in a pronouncement so that, if there were any obscurity, the authority of sacerdotal deliberation might illumine those who were treating the ambiguous pronouncement in common, just as first the impiety of Arius and then that of Nestorius, lastly that of Dioscorus and also of Eutyches caused this to be done. (Denzinger-Hünemann 343. *Simplicius*, Epistle *Quantum presbyterorum* to Acacius, Bishop of Constantinople, January 9, 476)

SYNOD OF VALENCE III

Avoid novelties that foment contention and scandal – firmly hold only what is drawn from the maternal womb of the Church

Let us with all zeal avoid novel doctrines and presumptuous talkativeness, whence rather the smoke of contention and of scandal between brothers can be stirred up, than any increase of the fear of God arise. [...] we believe that we must firmly hold that only which we are happy to have drawn from the maternal womb of the Church. (Denzinger-

Hünemann 625. *Synod of Valence III 855, Predestination*, January 8, 855)

JOHN PAUL II

The desire to hear novelties deviates from truth

It is in the same light and power that **the Church's Magisterium continues to carry out its task of discernment, accepting and living out the admonition addressed by the Apostle Paul to Timothy: 'I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching. For the time will come when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander into myths. As for you, always be steady, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry' (2Tim 4:1-5; cf. Tit 1:10, 13-14).** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 30, August 6 1993)

PIUS X

The office divinely committed to the Pope: to guard with the greatest vigilance the deposit of the faith and to reject profane novelties

The office divinely committed to Us of feeding the Lord's flock has especially this duty assigned to it by Christ, namely, **to guard with the greatest vigilance the deposit of the faith** delivered to the saints, **rejecting the profane novelties** of words and oppositions of knowledge falsely so called. **There has never been a time when this watchfulness of the supreme pastor was not necessary to the Catholic body;** for, owing to the efforts of the enemy of the human race, **there have never been lacking 'men speaking perverse things'** (Acts 20:30), **'vain talkers and seducers'** (Tit 1:10), **'erring and driving into error'** (2Tim 3:13). (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 1, September 8, 1907)

Those who despise apostolic traditions and embrace vain doctrines condemned by the Church: blind, leaders of the blind, and moved by blind passion

Blind that they are, and leaders of the blind, inflated with a boastful science, they have reached that pitch of folly where they pervert the eternal concept of truth and the true nature of the religious sentiment; with that new system of theirs they are seen to be **under the sway of a blind and unchecked passion for novelty, thinking not at all of finding some solid foundation of truth, but despising the holy and apostolic traditions, they embrace other vain, futile, uncertain doctrines, condemned by the Church,** on which, in the height of their vanity, they think they can rest and maintain truth itself. [...]

But for Catholics the second Council of Nicea will always have the force of law, **where it condemns those who dare, after the impious fashion of heretics, to deride the ecclesiastical traditions, to invent novelties of some kind . . . or endeavour by malice or craft to overthrow any one of the legitimate traditions of the Catholic Church.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 11, 42, September 8, 1907)

BENEDICT XV

Keep yourself from the spirit of Modernism: eager searching after novelties in everything

Nor do we merely desire that Catholics should shrink from the errors of Modernism, but also from the tendencies or what is called the spirit of Modernism. Those who are infected by that spirit develop a keen dislike for all that savours of antiquity and become eager searchers after novelties in everything: in the way in which they carry out religious functions, in the ruling of Catholic institutions, and even in private exercises of piety. Therefore it is Our will that the law of our forefathers should still be held sacred: 'Let there be no innovation; keep to what has been handed down.' In matters of faith that must be inviolably adhered to as the law; it may however also serve as a guide even in matters subject to change, but even in such cases the rule would hold: 'Old things,

but in a new way.' (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Ad beatissimi apostolorum*, no. 25, November 1, 1914)

Pius XII

Novelty is only praiseworthy when it confirms the truth

Among priests, especially among the less formed in doctrine and with a less austere life, circulates, in an ever more grave and preoccupying manner, a certain spirit of novelty. **Novelty, in and of itself, is never a sure criteria of the truth; and can be praiseworthy only when it confirms the truth and leads to uprightness and virtue.** (Pius XII. *Apostolic exhortation Menti nostrae*, September 23, 1950)

IV – INTEGRITY OF FAITH AND MORALS DOES NOT ALLOW FOR COMPROMISE

Pius X

A Modernist error: evolution in the Church results from two conflicting forces, one tending to progress and the other to conservation

... studying more closely the ideas of the Modernists, evolution is described as resulting from the conflict of two forces, one of them tending towards progress, the other towards conservation. The conserving force in the Church is tradition [...] The progressive force, on the contrary, which responds to the inner needs lies in the individual consciences and ferments there [...] Now it is by a species of compromise between the forces of conservation and of progress, that is to say between authority and individual consciences, that changes and advances take place. [...] Thus then, Venerable Brethren, for the Modernists, both as authors and propagandists, there is to be nothing stable, nothing immutable in the Church. (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 27-28, September 8, 1907)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

In the first Council, the Apostles opposed

those who perverted the faith

Even in apostolic times there were perverse men who, for personal interest and ambition, confused and corrupted among the faithful the purity of the faith with abominable errors. The Apostles opposed them with preaching, with writings and with the infallible sentences of the first Council that occurred in Jerusalem. Ever since then, until now, the spirit of darkness has not ceased in his pernicious attacks against the Church and the divine truths of which it is the indefectible guardian; and constantly arousing new heresies, it has made attempts one after the other against all of the dogmas of the Christian religion. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 3126-3127)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

To protect the Gospel, Saint Paul did not admit concessions at the Council of Jerusalem

Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. I went up in accord with a revelation, and I presented to them the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles – but privately to those of repute – so that I might not be running, or have run, in vain. Moreover, not even Titus, who was with me, although he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised, but because of the false brothers secretly brought in, who slipped in to spy on our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, that they might enslave us – to them we did not submit even for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain intact for you. (Gal 2:1-5)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Apostles warned the faithful to hold fast to the traditions and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all

And so the apostolic preaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books, was to be preserved by an unending succession of preachers until the end of time. Therefore the Apostles, handing on what they themselves

had received, warn the faithful to hold fast to the traditions which they have learned either by word of mouth or by letter (2Thess 2:15), and to fight in defense of the faith handed on once and for all (Jude 1:3). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Dei Verbum*, no. 8, November 18, 1965)

PIUS X

The Pope must guard the purity of the Faith and discipline, especially when evil is concealed in ambiguous expressions with emotional high-sounding words

Our Apostolic Mandate requires from Us that We watch over the purity of the Faith and the integrity of Catholic discipline. It requires from Us that We protect the faithful from evil and error; especially so when evil and error are presented in dynamic language which, concealing vague notions and ambiguous expressions with emotional and high-sounding words, is likely to set ablaze the hearts of men in pursuit of ideals which, whilst attractive, are nonetheless nefarious. (Pius X. *Encyclical Notre charge apostolique*, no. 1, August 23, 1910)

PAUL VI

Grave responsibility of bishops to preserve unaltered the deposit of the faith

We also insisted on the grave responsibility incumbent upon us, but which we share with our Brothers in the Episcopate, of preserving unaltered the content of the Catholic faith which the Lord entrusted to the apostles. While being translated into all expressions, this content must be neither impaired nor mutilated. While being clothed with the outward forms proper to each people, and made explicit by theological expression which takes account of differing cultural, social and even racial milieu, it must remain the content of the Catholic faith just exactly as the ecclesial magisterium has received it and transmits it. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 65, December 8, 1975)

SAINT VINCENT OF LERINS

Bishops are keepers not authors – they should ‘keep the deposit’: transmit the pure gold of the doctrine confided to them

But it is worth while to expound the whole of that passage of the apostle more fully, ‘O Timothy, keep the deposit, avoiding profane novelties of words.’ [...] Who is the Timothy of today, but either generally the Universal Church, or in particular, the whole body of the Prelacy, whom it behooves either themselves to possess or to communicate to others a complete knowledge of religion? [...] What is ‘The deposit’? That which has been entrusted to you, not that which you have yourself devised: a matter not of wit, but of learning; not of private adoption, but of public tradition; a matter brought to you, not put forth by you, wherein you are bound to be not an author but a keeper, not a teacher but a disciple, not a leader but a follower. ‘Keep the deposit.’ Preserve the talent of Catholic Faith inviolate, unadulterate. That which has been entrusted to you, let it continue in your possession, let it be handed on by you. You have received gold; give gold in turn. Do not substitute one thing for another. Do not for gold impudently substitute lead or brass. Give real gold, not counterfeit. (Saint Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitory*, Ch. 22, no. 53)

LEO XIII

To suppress any doctrine handed down from the Apostles is to separate Catholics from the Church rather than to bring in those who differ

The underlying principle of these new opinions is that, in order to more easily attract those who differ from her, the Church should shape her teachings more in accord with the spirit of the age and relax some of her ancient severity and make some concessions to new opinions. Many think that these concessions should be made not only in regard to ways of living, but even in regard to doctrines which belong to the deposit of the faith. [...] It does not need many words, beloved son, to prove the falsity of these ideas if the nature and origin of the doctrine which the Church

proposes are recalled to mind. [...] Let it be far from anyone's mind to suppress for any reason any doctrine that has been handed down. Such a policy would tend rather to separate Catholics from the Church than to bring in those who differ. [...] History proves clearly that the Apostolic See, to which has been entrusted the mission not only of teaching but of governing the whole Church, has continued 'in one and the same doctrine, one and the same sense, and one and the same judgment' (Const. *De fide*, Chapter IV). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Testem benvolentiae nostrae*, January 22, 1899)

PIUS XII

Let no Christian embrace novelties lightly – the principles of natural and positive law do not change

For truth and its philosophic expression cannot change from day to day, least of all where there is question of self-evident principles of the human mind or of those propositions which are supported by the wisdom of the ages and by divine revelation. [...] Let no Christian therefore, whether philosopher or theologian, embrace eagerly and lightly whatever novelty happens to be thought up from day to day, but rather let him weigh it with painstaking care and a balanced judgment, lest he lose or corrupt the truth he already has, with grave danger and damage to his faith. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Humani generis*, no. 30, August 12, 1950)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Absolute and immutable value of the precepts of natural law

Furthermore, Christ instituted His Church as 'the pillar and bulwark of truth' (1Tm 3:15). With the Holy Spirit's assistance, she ceaselessly

preserves and transmits without error the truths of the moral order, and she authentically interprets not only the revealed positive law but 'also . . . those principles of the moral order which have their origin in human nature itself' (*Dign Hum*, 14; Pius XI, *CastComm*.; Pius XII, *Alloc. 2/XI/1954*; John XXIII, *Mater et Mag*; Paul VI, *Hum Vit*, 4) (and which concern man's full development and sanctification. Now in fact the Church throughout her history has always considered a certain number of precepts of the natural law as having an absolute and immutable value, and in their transgression she has seen a contradiction of the teaching and spirit of the Gospel. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Persona humana*, December 29, 1975)

JOHN PAUL II

The moral prescriptions of the law must be faithfully kept and continually put into practice

The moral prescriptions which God imparted in the Old Covenant, and which attained their perfection in the New and Eternal Covenant in the very person of the Son of God made man, must be faithfully kept and continually put into practice in the various different cultures throughout the course of history. [...] This constant 'putting into practice' of the commandments [...] can only confirm the permanent validity of Revelation and follow in the line of the interpretation given to it by the great Tradition of the Church's teaching and life, as witnessed by the teaching of the Fathers, the lives of the Saints, the Church's Liturgy and the teaching of the Magisterium. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 25, 27, August 6, 1993)

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I decided that the first thing to do was to appoint a group of eight cardinals to be my advisors. This is the beginning of a Church whose organization is not only vertical but also horizontal

When taking a look at Ecclesiastical writings of diverse eras, our attention is called by the frequent affirmations of Pontiffs, Bishops and holy men lamenting the adversities that the Church was passing through in their days. The storms that the attacks of external and internal enemies raised against the ship of Saint Peter were constant during the two millenniums of the Church's victorious navigation. This undeterred advance throughout all epochs may only be explained if we take into consideration that the Church is not a human institution, but rather divine. Born of the open side of Christ upon the cross and irrigated by his Blood, in its visible elements the Church should, therefore, seek the realization of the desires of its divine Founder in that which refers to its constitution, sanctity, mission and even its government.

At this time, when many question the form of government of the Church, one question seems essential to us, as essential as often forgotten: How did Jesus Christ conceive this Church that constitutes his own Mystical Body? In calling the Twelve and putting Saint Peter at their head, did he desire it to be hierarchical? Or rather, 'horizontal'?

The answer is easily at hand for all in the numerous documents of the Magisterium, even when some seem to want to veil it...

FRANCIS

But I am the Bishop of Rome and the Pope of the Catholic world. **I decided that the first thing to do was to appoint a group of eight cardinals to be my advisors.** They are not courtiers but rather wise men who share my intentions. **This is the beginning of a Church whose organization is not only vertical but also horizontal.** When *Cardinal* Martini spoke about this and emphasized the role of the Councils and Synods, he knew only too well how long and difficult the road ahead in that direction would be. (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari, October 1, 2013 – La Repubblica text*)¹

¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), and published within the weekly English edition of the *L'Osservatore Romano*, n. 41, 9 October 2013, lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine should be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

Fr. Lombardi explained that it had been decided that the interview with Scalfari would be taken off the Vatican web page: 'The information in the interview is reliable on a general level but not on the level of each individual point analyzed: this is why it was decided that the text should not be available for consultation on the Holy See website. Its removal is a final update on the nature of this text. Some mistakes were made regarding its value, which was questioned. The Secretariat of State took the decision' (VaticanInsider, November 15, 2013). **However, 'The Denzinger-Bergoglio_EN' confirms that it is still posted on the Vatican webpage, just as our Spanish counterpart confirms the same for their language edition.**

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I – THE CHURCH IS HIERARCHICAL BY DIVINE DISPOSITION

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Jesus Christ Himself has established the hierarchy in the Church

Q. Is there any distinction between the members of the Church?

A. There is a very notable distinction between the members of the Church; for there are some who rule and some who obey; some who teach and some who are taught. [...]

Q. Who has set up this distinction in the Church?

Jesus Christ Himself has established this distinction in the Church. (Catechism of Saint Pius X. *Apostles Creed*, article IX, no. 38, 41)

JOHN PAUL II

A great temptation of our times: to promote an ecclesial renewal that does

not take into account fundamental elements of the Mystical Body of Christ

We cannot forget that one of the greatest temptations of our times is that of trying to promote an ecclesial renewal that, centering its attention upon certain aspects – particularly recognized by modern sensibility – does not take sufficiently into account fundamental elements of the constitutive identity of the Mystical Body of Christ, such as its hierarchy, the unity desired by its divine Founder or its specifically sacramental nature. (John Paul II. *Address*, to the Bishops of Guatemala on their *ad limina* visit, no. 3, January 20, 1989)

The hierarchical structure pertains to the very nature of the Church

Christ instituted a hierarchical and ministerial structure of the Church, formed by the Apostles and their successors, a structure not derived from a previously constituted community, but rather it was created directly by him. [...]

This structure pertains, therefore, the very nature of the Church, according to the divine plan made by Jesus. According to this

plan, the structure has an essential role in the development of the Christian community, since the day of Pentecost, to the end of time. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1,8, July 1, 1992)

PIUS XII

The divine Redeemer has willed that the Church be supported on a holy hierarchical order that resembles the heavenly hierarchy

The Church is a society, and as such requires an authority and hierarchy of her own. Though it is true that all the members of the Mystical Body partake of the same blessings and pursue the same objective, they do not all enjoy the same powers, nor are they all qualified to perform the same acts. The divine Redeemer has willed, as a matter of fact, that His Kingdom should be built and solidly supported, as it were, on a holy order, which resembles in some sort the heavenly hierarchy. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 39, November 20, 1947)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

The power possessed by the Hierarchy comes solely from God

Does the power possessed by the members of the Hierarchy come from the people?

The power possessed by the Hierarchy does not come from the people, and it would be heresy to say it did: **it comes solely from God.** (Catechism of Saint Pius X. *Apostles Creed*, article IX, no. 48)

II – THE SUPREME POWER IN THE HIERARCHY PERTAINS TO THE ROMAN PONTIFF

LEO I, THE GREAT

Among the apostles it was given to one of them to be preeminent over the rest

Even among the most blessed apostles, there was a certain distinction of power along with a similarity of honor; and although the selection of them all was the same, nevertheless, **it was given to one of them to be preeminent over**

the rest. (Denzinger-Hünemann 282. Leo I (the Great), *Letter Quanta fraternitati*, to Bishop Anastasius of Thessalonica, c. 11, 446 AD)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Basis of the Primacy of Peter among the Twelve

‘First Simon, who is called Peter’ (Mt 10:2). With this significant emphasis on the primacy of Simon Peter, St Matthew inserts in his Gospel the list of the Twelve Apostles, which also begins with the name of Simon in the other two synoptic Gospels and in Acts. **This list, which has great evidential force, and other Gospel passages show clearly and simply that the New Testament canon received what Christ said about Peter and his role in the group of the Twelve.** [Note 8: Evidence for the Petrine ministry is found in all the expressions, however different, of the New Testament tradition, both in the Synoptics – here with different features in Matthew and Luke, as well as in St Mark – and in the Pauline corpus and the Johannine tradition, always with original elements, differing in their narrative aspects but in profound agreement about their essential meaning. This is a sign that the Petrine reality was regarded as a constitutive given of the Church] Thus, in the early Christian communities, as later throughout the Church, **the image of Peter remained fixed as that of the Apostle who, despite his human weakness, was expressly assigned by Christ to the first place among the Twelve and was called to exercise a distinctive, specific task in the Church.** He is the rock on which Christ will build his Church; he is the one, after he has been converted, whose faith will not fail and who will strengthen his brethren; lastly, he is the Shepherd who will lead the whole community of the Lord’s disciples. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *The primacy of the successor of Peter in the mystery of the Church*, no. 3, October 31, 1998)

CLEMENT VI

No Apostle except Peter received fullest power over all Christians

Blessed Peter received complete power of jurisdiction over all faithful Christians from our Lord Jesus Christ; and that every power of jurisdiction, which in certain lands and

provinces and in different parts of the world especially and particularly Jude Thaddeus and the other Apostles had, was completely subject to the authority and power which blessed Peter received from our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, over whomsoever are believers in Christ in all parts of the world, and that no apostle or any other one whosoever received that very complete power over all Christians except Peter alone. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1052. Clement VI. *Letter Super quibusdam to Mekhithar the Catholic on the Armenians*, September 29, 1351)

BONIFACE I

The care for the universal Church is the duty of the Apostle Peter

Through the pronouncement of the Lord, the responsibility received from him for the universal Church belongs to the blessed apostle Peter, who indeed knew, according to the testimony of the Gospel, that (this Church) was founded on him. Nor could his dignified office be without responsibilities, since it is certain that all matters depend on his deliberation... (Denzinger-Hünemann 234. Boniface I, *Letter Manet beatum, to Rufus and the other bishops in Macedonia*, March 11, 422 AD)

JOHN PAUL II

Primacy of authority in the Apostolic college and in the Church

Peter always appears in the first place on all the lists of the Apostles (in the text of Matthew 10:2, he is even described with the word 'first'). Jesus gives him a new name, Cephas, which is translated into Greek (which indicates that it was significant), to designate the office and the position that Simon would occupy in the Church of Christ. They are elements that help us to better comprehend the historical and ecclesiological significance of the promise of Jesus, contained in the text of Matthew (Mt 16: 18-19), and the commending of the pastoral mission described by John (Jn 21: 15-19): the primacy of the authority in the apostolic college and in the Church. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, December 16, 1992)

JOHN XXIII

Peter's divinely-given authority – He is put ahead of all those in charge of the Church

And since St. Leo regarded this indissoluble bond between Peter's divinely-given authority and that of the other apostles as fundamental to Catholic unity, he was never tired of insisting that 'this authority [to bind and to loose] was also passed on to the other apostles, and what was established by this decree found its way to all the princes of the Church. But there was good reason for committing what was intended for all to the care of one in particular. And so it was entrusted to Peter individually because the figure of Peter was to be put ahead of all those in charge of the Church' (cf. Sermon 83. 2 on the Feast of the Apostle Peter). (John XXIII. *Encyclical Aeterna Dei sapientia*, no. 43, November 11, 1961)

PIUS XII

Christ guides the Church through him who is His representative on earth

After He had ruled the 'little flock' (Lk 12:32) Himself during His mortal pilgrimage, Christ our Lord, when about to leave this world and return to the Father, entrusted to the Chief of the Apostles the visible government of the entire community He had founded. Since He was all wise He could not leave the body of the Church He had founded as a human society without a visible head. [...] For Peter in virtue of his primacy is only Christ's Vicar; so that there is only one chief Head of this Body, namely Christ, who never ceases Himself to guide the Church invisible, though at the same time He rules it visibly, through him who is His representative on earth. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 40, June 29, 1943)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

Both clergy and faithful are bound by the duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience

Furthermore We teach and declare that the

Roman Church, by the disposition of the Lord, holds the sovereignty of ordinary power over all others, and that this power of jurisdiction on the part of the Roman Pontiff, which is truly Episcopal, is immediate; and with respect to this the **pastors and the faithful of whatever rite and dignity**, both as separate individuals and all together, **are bound by the duty of hierarchical subordination and true obedience**, not only in things which pertain to faith and morals, but also in those which pertain to the discipline and government of the Church [which is] spread over the whole world, so that the Church of Christ, protected not only by the Roman Pontiff, but by the unity of communion as well as of the profession of the same faith is one flock under the one highest shepherd. **This is the doctrine of Catholic truth from which no one can deviate and keep his faith and salvation.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 3060. Vatican Council I, *Dogmatic constitution Pastor aeternus*, Ch. 3, July 18, 1870)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

The Roman Pontiff has the full power to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church

We likewise define that the holy Apostolic See, and the Roman Pontiff, hold the primacy throughout the entire world; and that **the Roman Pontiff himself is the successor of blessed Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, and that he is the head of the entire Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in blessed Peter by our Lord Jesus Christ, to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church;** just as is contained in the acts of the ecumenical Councils and in the sacred canons. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1307. *Eugene IV*, Council of Florence, from the Bull *Laetentur coeli*, July 6, 1439)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Roman Pontiff enjoys supreme, full, immediate, and universal authority

In this Church of Christ **the Roman pontiff**, as the successor of Peter, to whom Christ entrusted the feeding of His sheep and lambs,

enjoys **supreme, full, immediate, and universal authority** over the care of souls by divine institution. Therefore, as pastor of all the faithful, he is sent to provide for the common good of the universal Church and for the good of the individual churches. Hence, **he holds a primacy of ordinary power over all the churches.** (Vatican Council II. *Decree Christus Dominus*, no. 2, October 28, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

The Pope can exercise directly power without the permission or mediation of the bishops

The Council [Vatican II] emphasizes that **the power of the Pope** 'is ordinary and immediate, or over the churches altogether and individually, and over the pastors and the faithful' (DS 3064). **It is ordinary in the sense that is inherent to the Roman Pontiff** by virtue of the responsibility that corresponds to him and not by delegation of bishops; **It is immediate, because he can exercise directly, without the permission or mediation of the bishops.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, February 24, 1993)

CLEMENT VI

The Roman Pontiff has power over the complete and universal body of the Church militant

The Roman Pontiffs who have been and who now are the Roman Pontiff and, those who in future will be successively as legitimate vicars of Christ and full of power in the highest degree, **have received immediately from Christ Himself over the complete and universal body of the church militant, every jurisdiction of power which Christ as fitting head had in human life.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 1054. *Clement VI. Letter Super quibusdam to the Consolator, the Catholic on of the Armenians*, September 29, 1351)

PIUS VI

The Roman Pontiff is superior to other bishops; those who deny it are condemned

Those have been condemned who denied that

in blessed Peter, the prince of the Apostles, his successor, **the Roman Pontiff, was established by God as the visible head of the Church** and the vicar of Jesus Christ, that to him has been **transmitted full power of ruling the Church**, and that true obedience is due him from all who are considered Christians; and that such is the power of the primacy, which he holds by divine right, **that he is superior to other bishops** not only by his rank of honor but **by the plenitude of his supreme power?** (Denzinger-Hünemann 2593. *Pio VI. From the Brief Super soliditate*, November 28, 1786)

JOHN PAUL II

The successor of Peter should be faithful to the will of Christ in the exercise of authority

For the successor of Peter, it is not the case of claiming powers such as those ‘earthly rulers’, of which Jesus spoke (cf. Mt 20:25-28), but **to be faithful to the will of the Founder of the Church who established this type of society, and this manner of governing** at the service of communion in faith and charity. **To respond to the will of Christ, the successor of Peter should assume and exercise the authority that has been given to him** in a spirit of humble service and in order to ensure unity. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 5, February 24, 1993)

III – DOES COLLEGIALITY ANNUL THE PRIMACY?

LEO XIII

Nothing was conferred on the Apostles apart from Peter – and many things were received by Peter alone

Nothing was conferred on the apostles apart from Peter, but that several things were conferred upon Peter apart from the Apostles. [...] He alone was designated as the foundation of the Church. To him He gave the power of binding and loosing; to him alone was given the power of feeding. On the other hand, **whatever authority and office the Apostles received, they received in conjunction with**

Peter. ‘If the divine benignity willed anything to be in common between him and the other princes, **whatever He did not deny to the others He gave only through him.** So that whereas Peter alone received many things, He conferred nothing on any of the rest without Peter participating in it’ (S. Leo M. *Sermo iv.*, cap. 2). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 14, June 29, 1896)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The college of bishops has no authority unless together with the Roman Pontiff

But the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. **The pope’s power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact.** In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen Gentium*, no. 22, November 21, 1964)

Without the action of the Head, the Bishops are not able to act as a College

As supreme pastor of the Church, **the supreme pontiff can always exercise his Power at will**, as his very office demands. Though it is always in existence, **the college [...] acts as a college in the strict sense only from the time to time and only with the consent of its head.** [...] It is clear throughout that it is a question of the bishops acting in conjunction with their head, **never of the bishops acting independently of the pope.** In the latter instance, **without the action of the head, the bishops are not able to act as a college;** this is clear from the concept of “college”. This hierarchical communion of all the bishops with the supreme pontiff is certainly firmly established in tradition. (Denzinger-Hünemann 4357-4358. *Vatican Council II. Notifications given by the Secretary General of the Council at the 123rd General Congregation*, November 16, 1964. English translation: DzH, 43rd ed. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012, p. 970)

Pius XII

Bishops receive the power of jurisdiction directly from the Supreme Pontiff

Consequently, **Bishops** must be considered as the more illustrious members of the Universal Church, for they are united by a very special bond to the divine Head of the whole Body and so are rightly called 'principal parts of the members of the Lord;' moreover, as far as his own diocese is concerned, each one as a true Shepherd feeds the flock entrusted to him and rules it in the name of Christ. Yet in exercising this office they are not altogether independent, but are subordinate to the lawful authority of the Roman Pontiff, although enjoying the ordinary power of jurisdiction which they receive directly from the same Supreme Pontiff. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 42, June 29, 1943)

JOHN PAUL II

Any Council can only be convoked by the Roman Pontiff, who must also preside over it and it

The pastoral action of all, especially the college of the **Episcopate** obtains unity through the *ministerium Petrinum* of the Bishop of Rome. [...] And we must add, always with the Council, that, if the collegial power over the whole Church attains its particular expression in the ecumenical council, it is the 'prerogative of the Roman Pontiff to convoke these councils, to preside over them and to confirm them' (LG, n. 22). All, then, have as their head the Pope, the Bishop of Rome, as the principle of unity and communion. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 4, February 24, 1993)

LEO XIII

Without obedience to Peter, the Episcopal order would become a lawless and disorderly crowd

But the Episcopal order is rightly judged to be in communion with Peter, as Christ commanded, if it be subject to and obeys Peter; otherwise it necessarily becomes a lawless and

disorderly crowd. It is not sufficient for the due preservation of the unity of the faith that the head should merely have been charged with the office of superintendent, or should have been invested solely with a power of direction. But it is absolutely necessary that he should have received real and sovereign authority which the whole community is bound to obey. What had the Son of God in view when he promised the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to Peter alone? Biblical usage and the unanimous teaching of the Fathers clearly show that supreme authority is designated in the passage by the word keys. Nor is it lawful to interpret in a different sense what was given to Peter alone, and what was given to the other Apostles conjointly with him. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 15, June 29, 1896)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

The power of Bishops is asserted, confirmed, and vindicated by the supreme and universal shepherd

This power of the Supreme Pontiff is so far from interfering with that power of ordinary and immediate episcopal jurisdiction by which the bishops, who, 'placed by the Holy Spirit' (cf. Act 20,28), have succeeded to the places of the apostles, as true shepherds individually feed and rule the individual flocks assigned to them, that the same (power) is asserted, confirmed, and vindicated by the supreme and universal shepherd, according to the statement of Gregory the Great: 'My honor is the universal honor of the Church. My honor is the solid vigor of my brothers. Then am I truly honored, when the honor due to each and everyone is not denied.' (Denzinger-Hünemann 3061. *Vatican Council I. Dogmatic constitution*, Pastor aeternus, ch. 3, July 18, 1870)

IV – IS A 'HORIZONTAL' CHURCH POSSIBLE?

LEO XIII

The unity of the faith corresponds to the unity of government

Indeed no true and perfect human society can be conceived which is not governed by

some supreme authority. Christ therefore must have given to His Church a supreme authority to which all Christians must render obedience. For this reason, as the unity of the faith is of necessity required for the unity of the church, inasmuch as it is the body of the faithful, so also for this same unity, inasmuch as the Church is a divinely constituted society, unity of government, [...]

Jesus Christ, therefore, appointed Peter to be that head of the Church; and He also determined that the authority instituted in perpetuity for the salvation of all should be inherited by His successors, in whom the same permanent authority of Peter himself should continue. And so He made that remarkable promise to Peter and to no one else: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church' (Mt 16, 18). 'To Peter the Lord spoke: to one, therefore, that He might establish unity upon one' (S. Pacianus, *Ep. 3 ad Sempronium*, n. 11). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 11, June 29, 1896)

JOHN XXIII

There is unity in the administration of the Catholic Church

That there is unity in the administration of the Catholic Church is evident. For as the faithful are subject to their priests, so are priests to their bishops, whom 'the Holy Spirit has placed.....to rule the Church of God.'(Acts 20.28) So, too, every bishop is subject to the Roman pontiff, the successor of Saint Peter, whom Christ called a rock and made the foundation of His Church. It was to Peter that Christ gave in a special way the power to bind and loose on earth, to strengthen his brethren, to feed the entire flock. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Ad Petri cathedram*, no. 73, June 29, 1959)

PIUS VI

It is an error to believe that Christ wished His Church to be governed in the manner of a republic

All the more must be deplored that blind and rash temerity of the man who [the following errors] ...was eager to renew [...]

and insinuated indiscriminately by many ambiguities, that every bishop, no less than the pope, was called by God to govern the Church, and was endowed with no less power; that Christ gave the same power Himself to all the apostles; and that whatever some people believe is obtained and granted only by the pope, that very thing, whether it depends on consecration or ecclesiastical jurisdiction, can be obtained just as well from any bishop; that Christ wished His Church to be governed in the manner of a republic; and that, indeed, for that government there is need of a head for the good of unity, but one who does not dare to interfere in the affairs of others (bishops) who rule at the same time. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2593-2595. Pius VI, from the *Brief, Super soliditate*, November 28, 1786)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Petrine ministry differs in its essence human governments

The exercise of the Petrine ministry must be understood – so that it 'may lose nothing of its authenticity and transparency' (John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, n. 93) – on the basis of the Gospel, that is, on its essential place in the saving mystery of Christ and the building-up of the Church. The primacy differs in its essence and in its exercise from the offices of governance found in human societies: it is not an office of co-ordination or management, nor can it be reduced to a primacy of honour, or be conceived as a political monarchy. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *The primacy of the successor of Peter in the mystery of the Church*, no. 7, October 31, 1998)

LEO XIII

A primacy of honor could never secure unity or strength

It is consequently the office of St. Peter to support the Church, and to guard it in all its strength and indestructible unity. How could he fulfil this office without the power of commanding, forbidding, and judging, which is properly called jurisdiction? It is only by this power of jurisdiction that nations and commonwealths are held together. A

primacy of honour and the shadowy right of giving advice and admonition, which is called direction, could never secure to any society of men unity or strength. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 12, June 29, 1896)

BENEDICT XVI

The Church is not a place of confusion and anarchy; it is an organism, with an articulated structure that is derived ultimately from God himself

The Church, in fact, is not a place of confusion and anarchy where one can do what one likes all the time: each one in this organism, with an articulated structure, exercises his ministry in accordance with the vocation he has received.

[...] The norms that regulate it derive ultimately from God himself. The Father sent Jesus Christ, who in turn sent the Apostles. They then sent the first heads of communities and established that they would be succeeded by other worthy men. Everything, therefore, was made 'in an orderly way, according to the will of God.' (St. Clement of Rome, 42). (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, March 7, 2007)

PIUS XII

The Catholic Church will not be able to be ruled with 'autonomy of government'

The Catholic Church in your nation, as in all the others, will not be able to be ruled with 'autonomy of government', as they say today.

In fact, even then, as you well know, it will be entirely necessary for your Christian community, if it wishes to be part of the society divinely founded by our Redeemer, to be completely subject to the Supreme Pontiff, Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, and be strictly united with him in regard to religious faith and morals. With these words – and it is well to note them – is embraced the whole life and work of the Church, and also its constitution, its government, its discipline. All of these things depend certainly on the will of Jesus Christ, Founder of the Church. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Ad sinarum gentes*, no. 10-11, October 7, 1954)

JOHN PAUL II

The attempts to reduce the power of the Roman Pontiff are not in conformity with the mission that Christ conferred

There had been attempts to reduce the power of the Roman Pontiff to 'a charge of inspection or of direction'. Some had proposed that the Pope be simply an arbiter of conflicts between local churches, or give only a general direction to the autonomous activities of the local churches and Christians, with counsels and exhortations. But this limitation was not in conformity with the mission that Christ conferred upon Peter. For this reason the Vatican Council I emphasized the fullness of Papal power and defined that is not enough to recognize that the Roman Pontiff 'has the main part'; it must be admitted, rather, that he 'has the fullness of this supreme power' (DS 3064). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2, February 24, 1993)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

Denial of the form of government established by Christ the Lord: those who oppose the true primacy of jurisdiction of Peter

So we teach and declare that according to the testimonies of the Gospel the primacy of jurisdiction over the entire Church of God was promised and was conferred immediately and directly upon the blessed Apostle Peter by Christ the Lord. [...]

To this teaching of Sacred Scriptures, so manifest as it has been always understood by the Catholic Church, are opposed openly the vicious opinions of those who perversely deny that the form of government in His Church was established by Christ the Lord; that to Peter alone, before the other apostles, whether individually or all together, was confided the true and proper primacy of jurisdiction by Christ; or, of those who affirm that the same primacy was not immediately and directly bestowed upon the blessed Peter himself, but upon the Church, and through this Church upon him as the minister of the Church herself. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3053-3054. Vatican Council I, *Session IV, Dogmatic constitution Pastor aeternus*, Ch. 1, July 18, 1870)

Anathema: whoever diminishes the power of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff

If anyone thus speaks, that the Roman Pontiff has only the office of inspection or direction, but not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction over the universal Church, not only in things which pertain to faith and morals, but also in those which pertain to the discipline and government of the Church spread over the whole world; or, that he possesses only the more important parts, but not the whole plenitude of this supreme power; or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate, or over the churches altogether and individually, and over the pastors and the faithful altogether and individually: **let him be anathema.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 3064. *Vatican Council I*, Session IV, Dogmatic constitution *Pastor aeternus*, Ch. 1, July 18, 1870)

PIUS X

The Modernist illusion of a horizontal Church

It remains for Us now to say a few words about the **Modernist as reformer** [...] some idea may be gained of the **reforming mania which possesses them** [...] Ecclesiastical government

requires to be reformed in all its branches, but especially in its disciplinary and dogmatic parts. Its spirit with the public conscience, which is not wholly for democracy; **a share in ecclesiastical government should therefore be given to the lower ranks of the clergy, and even to the laity, and authority should be decentralised.** **The Roman Congregations, and especially the index and the Holy Office, are to be reformed.** The ecclesiastical authority must change its line of conduct in the social and political world; while keeping outside political and social organization, it must adapt itself to those which exist in order to penetrate them with its spirit. **With regard to morals, they adopt the principle of the Americanists, that the active virtues are more important than the passive, both in the estimation in which they must be held and in the exercise of them.** **The clergy are asked to return to their ancient lowliness and poverty, and in their ideas and action to be guided by the principles of Modernism;** and there are some who, echoing the teaching of their Protestant masters, would like the suppression of ecclesiastical celibacy. **What is there left in the Church which is not to be reformed according to their principles?** (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 38, September 8, 1907)

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The Court is the Plague of the Papacy.

The Church is or should go back to being a Community of God's People

Narcissists... without further ado, that is how Pope Francis has labeled several of the former 'Heads of the Church' and members of the Roman Curia. We suppose, with all due respect, that after two thousand years of history, the Bishop of Rome does not consider his august person nor that of his immediate collaborators as the only ones free from such a kind description – which, at first sight, appears to disdain the work of previous Popes. The fact is that while speaking of the Roman Curia or when meeting with it, Francis never misses an opportunity to point out its defects, as he *did this past December* – incredibly enough, during the official Christmas greeting! – inviting each one of its members to a profound examination of conscience. And yet, what stands out is the fact that he does not do this with other people and groups, even when they are far from fulfilling the divine precepts, even publically. What, then, is his motivation? A strange dislike for the ecclesiastical hierarchy of which he is a part? A hidden desire to change structures which he considers obsolete? Insufficient consideration or knowledge of the primacy of the Church of Rome? We may not affirm any of the above, though we may show a certain perplexity... The Curia – as any other organization constituted by human beings – is evidently subject to errors, defects, and above all, the effects of sin among its members. However, this does not mean that it ceases to play an important role in the Church, among them the, 'diaconia' of the Petrine ministry.

FRANCIS

[Francis] Do you know what I think about this point? **The leaders of the Church have often been narcissistic, flattered and wrongly incited by their courtiers. The court is the plague of the papacy.**

[Scalfari] The plague of the papacy, this is exactly what you said. But which court? Are you perhaps alluding to the Curia? I asked.

[Francis] No, **at times there are courtiers in the Curia, but the Curia as a whole is something else. It's what in the army is called the intendancy; it manages the entities that serve the Holy See. However, it has one defect: it is Vatican-centred.** It looks after and cares for the Vatican's interests, which are still to a great extent temporal. **This Vatican-centred vision ignores the world around it.** I do not share this vision and I will do all I can to change it. **The Church is and must become again a community of the People of God** and the clergy, parishes, the bishops who are charged with the care of souls, are at the service of the People of God. **This is what the Church is. It's not without reason that the word is different from the Holy See.** The latter has its own important role but it stands at the service of the Church. I could not have had full faith in God and in his Son had I not been formed in the Church and also had the good fortune in Argentina to be a member of a community without which I would not have come to know myself and my faith. (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari – L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly ed. in English, n. 41, October 9, 2013)¹

¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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on the links of the articles), lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

- ♦ Diaconia united to the Petrine Ministry
- ♦ Exceptional qualities placed at the service of the Church in silence

John XXIII

- ♦ Assiduous, prudent and faithful efforts
- ♦ Necessary and attentive care

Gregory I, the Great

- ♦ Submission to the Curia is a sign of love for the Pope
-

III – Rome: The centre of the Holy Church of God

Saint Ignatius of Antioch

- ♦ The Church of Rome exercises the primacy of love

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- ♦ The first among the Churches

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- ♦ Christ himself gave primacy to the Roman Church

Nicholas I

- ♦ Nothing and no one may alter the privileges established by Christ

Gregory VII

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Lateran Council IV

- ♦ The primacy of power

Council of Lyons II

- ♦ The Church of Rome has the highest and complete supremacy; consequently, it is called to defend the faith more than the others

John XXII

- ♦ Primacy that must be revered

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ The Church of Rome, base and foundation of the other Churches

John Paul II

- ♦ Look toward Rome
- ♦ He who confirms his brothers in the faith

Benedict XVI

- ♦ The Church of Rome has a special privilege due to the blood of the Apostles

I – NECESSITY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE ROMAN CURIA

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Everyone should put their gifts at the service of the Church

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1Pet 4:10)

Generously put to use the gifts received

For as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. **Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them:** if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Rom 12:4-8)

Diverse gifts and charismas

Some people God has designated in the church to be, **first, apostles**; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; **then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues.** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? (1Cor 12:28-30)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Apostles: origin of the Sacred Hierarchy

From the very beginning, the Lord Jesus 'called to Himself those whom He wished; and He caused twelve of them to be with Him, and to be sent out preaching' (Mk 3:13; cf. Mt 10:1-42). Thus **the Apostles were the first budding – forth of the New Israel, and at the same time the beginning of the sacred hierarchy.** (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no.5, December 1, 1965)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The diversity of duties in the Church and their purpose

The difference of states and duties in the Church regards three things. In the first place it regards the perfection of the Church. For even as in the order of natural things, perfection, which in God is simple and uniform, is not to be found in the created universe except in a multiform and manifold manner, so too, the fullness of grace, which is centered in Christ as head, flows forth to His members in various ways, for the perfecting of the body of the Church. This is the meaning of the Apostle's words (Eph. 4:11-12): 'He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors for the perfecting of the saints.' **Secondly, it regards the need of those actions which are necessary in the Church. For a diversity of actions requires a diversity of men appointed to them, in order that all things may be accomplished without delay or confusion;** and this is indicated by the Apostle (Rom 12:4,5), 'As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ.' **Thirdly, this belongs to the dignity and beauty of the Church, which consist in a certain order;** wherefore it is written (3Kings 10:4,5) that 'when the queen of Saba saw all the wisdom of Solomon... and the apartments of his servants, and the order of his ministers... she had no longer any spirit in her.' Hence the Apostle says (2Tim 2:20) that 'in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and of earth.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 183, a. 2)

INNOCENT III

Venerate all that is of the Church

But ecclesiastical orders and everything which in the holy Roman Church is read or sung as holy, we humbly praise and faithfully venerate. (Denzinger-Hünemann 796. *Innocent III*, From the letter *Eius exemplo* to the Archbishop of Terraco, 18 December, 1208)

Pius X

The Church is a society wherein some preside over others

The Scripture teaches us, and the tradition of the Fathers confirms the teaching, that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, ruled by the Pastors and Doctors (Eph 4:2) – a society of men containing within its own fold chiefs who have full and perfect powers for ruling, teaching and judging (Mt 28:18-20; 16:18-19; 18:17; Tit 2:15; 2Cor 10:6; 13:10 etc.) It follows that the Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end. (Pius X. *Encyclical Vehementer nos*, no. 8, February 11, 1906)

PAUL VI

The Episcopate should collaborate with the Curia, which in turn helps the Pope

It is superfluous to add that this collaboration of the Episcopate should be of great benefit to the Holy See and to the entire Church; and in a particular way, to the daily work of the Roman Curia, to which We are so grateful for the valuable assistance rendered, and which, just as the bishops in their diocese, We also have the permanent necessity for Our apostolic solitudes. (Paul VI. *Inaugural speech of the last session of the council*, September 14, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

The Hierarchy: a form of service to enable the entire Church to participate in the power of Christ

Vatican Council II has reminded us of the mystery of this power and the fact that the mission of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King, continues within the Church. All of the people of God participate in this triple mission.

Perhaps in the past the Triple Crown was placed upon the head of the Pope in order to express, through this symbol, the plan of the Lord over his Church. In other words, the entire hierarchical order of the Church of Christ, all of its 'sacred power' exercised, is nothing other than a form of service, service that has as its sole objective the participation of the entire people of God within the triple mission of Christ, remaining constantly under the power of the Lord, who has his origins not in the powers of this world, but in the heavenly Father, and in the mystery of the cross and resurrection. (John Paul II. *Homily at the beginning of the Pontificate*, no. 4, October 22, 1978)

II – THE ROMAN CURIA EXPRESSES THE DIGNITY OF SERVICE TO THE POPE

VATICAN COUNCIL II

Duties for the benefit of the entire Church

In exercising supreme, full, and immediate power in the universal Church, the Roman pontiff makes use of the departments of the Roman Curia which, therefore, perform their duties in his name and with his authority for the good of the churches and in the service of the sacred pastors. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Christus Dominus*, no. 9, October 28, 1965)

BENEDICT XVI

Valuable contribution to the Petrine Ministry

Our community, as you emphasized, Your Eminence, is truly a 'working community', bound by bonds of fraternal love which the Christmas festivities help to reinforce. In this spirit, you did not omit an appropriate mention of the former members of our Curial family who crossed the threshold of time in recent months and have entered into God's peace. On such an occasion it does our hearts good to feel close to those who shared the service to the Church with us and who now intercede for us at God's throne. I therefore thank you for your words, Your Eminence, Dean of the College of Cardinals, and I thank everyone present for the contribution that each one makes to the

fulfilment of the ministry entrusted to me by the Lord. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the Members of the Roman Curia*, December 21, 2007)

Appreciated collaboration

This morning, the family of the Roman Curia also comes together, following a fine custom which gives us the joy of meeting and exchanging greetings in this special spiritual milieu. To each of you I offer a cordial greeting, full of **gratitude for your valued collaboration with the ministry of the Successor of Peter.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the members of the Roman Curia*, December 22, 2008)

Superior service rendered to the successor of Peter

This meeting gives me the opportunity to reaffirm my esteem and respect for your lofty service to the Successor of Peter and to the whole Church, while for you it is an incentive to ever greater commitment in a context that is indeed arduous, but invaluable for the salvation of souls. **The principle that the *salus animarum* is the supreme law in the Church (cf. CIC, can. 1752) must indeed be borne in mind and every day must find in your work the strict respect that it merits.** (Benedict XVI. *Address for the inauguration of the Judicial Year of the Roman Rota*, January 26, 2013)

JOHN PAUL II

Purpose of the Curia: Rendering the mission of the Pope more effective

For the Roman Curia came into existence for this purpose, that the fruitful communion we mentioned might be strengthened and make ever more bountiful progress, rendering more effective the task of pastor of the Church which Christ entrusted to Peter and his successors, a task that has been growing and expanding from day to day. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus**, no. 3, June 28, 1988)

The Curia and its departments are at the service of the Church

In harmony with the Second Vatican Council,

this inspiration and intent establish and express the steadfast activity of the renewed Curia, as in these words of the Council: 'In exercising his supreme, full and immediate authority over the universal Church, the Roman Pontiff employs **the various departments of the Roman Curia, which act in his name and by his authority for the good of the Churches and in service of the sacred pastors.**' Consequently, it is evident **that the function of the Roman Curia, though not belonging to the essential constitution of the Church willed by God, has nevertheless a truly ecclesial character because it draws its existence and competence from the pastor of the universal Church.** For the Curia exists and operates only insofar as it has a relation to the Petrine ministry and is based on it. But just as the ministry of Peter as the 'servant of the servants of God' is exercised in relationship with both the whole Church and the bishops of the entire Church, similarly the Roman Curia, as the servant of Peter's successor, looks only to help the whole Church and its bishops. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus**, no. 7, June 28, 1988)

Diaconia united to the Petrine Ministry

By reason of its diaconia connected with the Petrine ministry, one concludes, on the one hand, that the Roman Curia is closely bound to the bishops of the whole world, and, on the other, that those pastors and their Churches are the first and principal beneficiaries of the work of the dicasteries. This is proved even by the composition of the Curia. For the Roman Curia is composed of nearly all the cardinals who, by definition, belong to the Roman Church, and they closely assist the Supreme Pontiff in governing the universal Church. When important matters are to be dealt with, they are all called together into regular or special consistories. **So they come to have a strong awareness of the needs of all of God's people, and they labor for the good of the whole Church.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution *Pastor Bonus**, no. 9, June 28, 1988)

Exceptional qualities placed at the service of the Church in silence

My profound and sincere gratitude to you all, for the work you perform for the Church and the Apostolic See, work performed with

competence, effort, generosity and humility. I know that **your service touches upon**, not infrequently, and for not a few of you, **important questions for the Church and for the Apostolic See**; this demands, therefore, **substantial doctrinal preparation and rich experience, united with prudence and equilibrium: an ensemble of exceptional qualities which are put at the disposition of the Church in silence and hidden from public sight. But, God sees, and will know how to recompense you.** (John Paul II. *Allocution to the cardinals and collaborators of the Roman Curia*, no. 1, June 28, 1986)

JOHN XXIII

Assiduous, prudent and faithful efforts

Since we have mentioned the motives of happiness, we also cannot fail to **mention the consolation we experienced during a visit undertaken in the last few days, to the seat of each one of the Dicasteries of the Roman Curia.** It has been very pleasing to us to see directly and clearly the **invaluable collaboration that is rendered by a numerous group of specialized ecclesiastics, as well as some lay people; for the expediency of questions pertaining to the Government of the Church.** This testimony of esteem and benevolence on our part, we believe to be a well deserved reward for **assiduous, prudent and faithful efforts, which we have long known by experience.** (John XXIII. *Address in the Secret Consistory for the creation of new cardinals*, January 8, 1960)

Necessary and attentive care

Who is unaware of **the necessary and attentive care with which the Roman Curia habitually examines the great and small problems that arise?** (John XXIII. *Address to Venetian pilgrims*, May 8, 1962)

GREGORY I, THE GREAT

Submission to the Curia is a sign of love for the Pope

If, then, the pastoral obligation is a testimony of love, the one who, possessing the necessary

qualities, does not feed the flock of the Lord, demonstrates a lack of love for the Supreme Shepherd. **It is a sign of even greater love that one, because of a friend, serves also others, and not exclusively his friend.** (Gregory I, the Great. *Pastoral Rule*, Book 1, Ch. 5)

III – ROME: THE CENTRE OF THE HOLY CHURCH OF GOD

SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

The Church of Rome exercises the primacy of love

Ignatius, who is also called Theophorus, to the Church which has obtained mercy, through the majesty of the Most High Father, and Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son; **the Church which is beloved and enlightened** by the will of Him that wills all things which are according to the love of Jesus Christ our God, **which also presides in the place of the region of the Romans, worthy of God, worthy of honor, worthy of the highest happiness, worthy of praise, worthy of obtaining her every desire, worthy of being deemed holy, and which presides over love, is named from Christ, and from the Father,** which I also salute in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father: to those who are united, both according to the flesh and spirit, to every one of His commandments; who are filled inseparably with the grace of God, and are purified from every strange taint, [I wish] abundance of happiness unblameably, in Jesus Christ our God. (Saint Ignatius of Antioch. *Epistle to the Romans*, Prologue.)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

Founded and Constituted by Peter and Paul

Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known **Church founded and organized at Rome**

by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, Book III, Ch. 3, no. 2)

CELESTINE I

The first among the Churches

Since the occasion demands, kindly review the sanctions and canons, you will find out which, after the Roman Church, is the second church, which the third. (Denzinger-Hünemann 235. *Celestine I*, Epistle *Manet beatum*, March 11, 422)

GELASIUS I

Christ himself gave primacy to the Roman Church

The Holy Roman Church has not been preferred to the other churches by reason of synodical decrees, but she has held the primacy by the evangelical voice of the Lord and Savior saying: Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven (Mt 16:18 f.). There is added also the association of the most blessed Paul the Apostle, the vessel of election, who not at a different time, as the heretics say, but at the one time, on one and the same day, while contending for the prize together with Peter was crowned with a glorious death under Caesar Nero in the City of Rome; and equally have they consecrated the above-mentioned Church of Rome to Christ the Lord and have raised it above all other cities in the whole world by their presence and their venerable triumph. Accordingly the see of Peter the Apostle of the Church of Rome is first, having neither

spot, nor wrinkle, nor anything of this kind. (Eph 5:27) (Denzinger-Hünemann 350-351. Gelasius I, *Decretum Gelasium*)

NICHOLAS I

Nothing and no one may alter the privileges established by Christ

Furthermore if you have not heard us, it remains for you to be with us of necessity, such as our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded those to be considered, who disdained to hear the Church of God, especially since the privileges of the Roman Church, built on Blessed Peter by the word of Christ, deposited in the Church herself, observed in ancient times and celebrated by the sacred universal Synods, and venerated jointly by the entire Church, can by no means be diminished, by no means infringed upon, by no means changed; for the foundation which God has established, no human effort has the power to destroy and what God has determined, remains firm and strong ... Thus the privileges granted to this holy Church by Christ, not given by the Synod, but now only celebrated and venerated... They oblige and impel us to have 'anxiety for all the churches' (2Cor 11:28). (Denzinger-Hünemann 640. Nicholas I, Letter *Prosueramus Quidem*, to Emperor Michael, September 28, 865)

GREGORY VII

The Roman Church: Mother and Teacher of all the others

All of those who, in the entire world, call themselves Christians, and truly profess the Christian faith, know and believe that Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, is the father of all Christians, and, after Jesus Christ, the primary shepherd; and that the Holy Roman Church is the Mother and Teacher of all the Churches. If you believe this and firmly maintain the faith, I supplicate you, or rather, I command, as your brother and unworthy teacher, that you seek, with the help of Omnipotent God, to aid and assist your Father and your Mother. (Gregory VII. *Epistle Pervenit fratres charissimi*, Migne PL 148, 710)

LATERAN COUNCIL IV (ECUMENICAL XII)

The primacy of power

Renewing the ancient privilege of the patriarchal sees, with the approval of the sacred universal synod, we sanction that after the **Roman Church**, which by the ordering of the Lord before all others holds the first place of **ordinary power as the mother and teacher of all the faithful** of Christ, the (Church of) Constantinople holds the first, Alexandria the second, Antioch the third, and Jerusalem the fourth place. (Denzinger-Hünemann 811. *Lateran Council IV*, November 11-30, 1215)

COUNCIL OF LYONS II (ECUMENICAL XIV)

The Church of Rome has the highest and complete supremacy; consequently, it is called to defend the faith more than the others

Also this same holy **Roman Church holds the highest and complete primacy and spiritual power over the universal Catholic Church** which she truly and humbly recognizes herself to have received with fullness of power from the Lord Himself in Blessed Peter, the chief or head of the Apostles whose successor is the Roman Pontiff. **And just as to defend the truth of Faith she is held before all other things**, so if any questions shall arise regarding faith they ought to be defined by her judgment. (Denzinger-Hünemann 861. *Council of Lyons II*, Letter from the Emperor Michael to Pope Gregory, July 6, 1274)

JOHN XXII

Primacy that must be revered

As a report worthy of faith holds, the sons of the above mentioned rashness and impiety have been driven to this weakness of mind, that they think impiously in opposition to the most renowned and salutary truth of the Christian faith; they condemn the sacraments of the Church which should be venerated, and in an attack of blind fury they who should be crushed by it, **press against the glorious primacy of the Roman Church, saying that it ought to be overthrown by all nations.** (Denzinger-

Hünemann 910. *John XXII*, Consitution *Gloriosam Ecclesiam*, January 23, 1308)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church of Rome, base and foundation of the other Churches

Particular Churches are fully catholic through their communion with one of them, the Church of Rome 'which presides in charity' (St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom.* 1, 1: Apostolic Fathers, II/2, 192; cf. LG 13). 'For with this church, by reason of its pre-eminence, the whole Church, that is the faithful everywhere, must necessarily be in accord' (Saint Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3, 3, 2; Cf. Vatican Council I DS 3057). Indeed, 'from the incarnate Word's descent to us, **all Christian churches everywhere have held and hold the great Church that is here [at Rome] to be their only basis and foundation** since, according to the Savior's promise, the gates of hell have never prevailed against her' (St. Maximus the Confessor, *Opuscula theo.*: PG 91 137-140). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 834)

JOHN PAUL II

Look toward Rome

The endowment to be established will be but a small stream flowing into the great river of Christian charity that courses through history. A small but significant stream: because of **the Jubilee the world has looked to Rome, the Church 'which presides in charity' and has brought its gifts to Peter. Now the charity displayed at the centre of Catholicism will in some way flow back to the world through this sign**, which is meant to be an enduring legacy and remembrance of the communion experienced during the Jubilee. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Novo millennio ineunte*, no. 53, January 6, 2001)

He who confirms his brothers in the faith

For, **by means of the Synod**, the Bishops of the local Churches, scattered throughout the world, bring to Peter the experiences and riches of Christian life in their regions; and,

by it, **Peter also confirms his brothers in the Faith, and presides truly and efficaciously in universal charity.** (John Paul II. *Address during the meeting of the general secretariat of the Synod of Bishops*, no. 3, March 21, 1981)

BENEDICT XVI

The Church of Rome has a special privilege due to the blood of the Apostles

It is a symbol of the special mission of Peter and his Successors to tend Christ's flock, keeping it united in faith and in charity. At the beginning of the second century St Ignatius of Antioch attributed a special primacy to **the Church** which is **in Rome**, greeting her in his Letter to the Romans as the one which 'presides in charity'. **It is because the Apostles Peter and Paul, together with many other martyrs, poured out their blood in this City, that this special task of service depends on the Community of Rome and on its Bishop. Let us, thus, return to the witness of blood and of charity.** The Chair of Peter is therefore the sign of authority, but of Christ's authority, based on faith and on love. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, February 19, 2012)

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The Church has the Sinful Habit of Focusing too much on Itself and being Self-Referential

'About Jesus Christ and the Church, I simply know they are just one thing, and we shouldn't complicate the matter,' replied Saint Joan of Arc during her trial (cf. CCC 795), demonstrating impressive theological precision despite her lack of education, due to her great union with the Divine Savior.

Indeed, Jesus Christ confided to his Church the mission of enlightening all peoples, announcing the Good News of salvation. This same light, however, pleases some and troubles others: 'For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, so that his works might not be exposed' (Jn 3:20). Being Lumen Christi in the world means manifesting the truth, but it also implies denouncing error.

What would we think then, if someone were to accuse the light of a kind of spiritually conceited narcissism in fulfilling exactly that which is proper to its condition of being light?

FRANCIS

[Cardinal Jaime Ortega, archbishop of La Habana, revealed the content of a document containing the speech that his counterpart Jorge Bergoglio pronounced before elected as pontiff. Ortega revealed the text that Bergoglio gave him, in his own hand writing which involves a declaration he had delivered before the Conclave in which the cardinals elected him Pope]. **'The Church is called to come out from itself** and to go to the peripheries, not only geographical ones, but also existential ones: those of the mystery of sin, of suffering, of injustice, those of ignorance and of the absence of faith, those of thought, those of every form of misery'. wrote the Pontiff. The second part **characterized the institution as a 'self-referential' Church, centered upon itself, a tendency that weakens the institution.** In the third point, Bergoglio went deeper into the problem. **'The Church, when self-referential, thinks, without realizing it, that it has its own light... and gives rise to that so grave evil of spiritual worldliness'**. The fourth contains a commentary regarding the characteristics that he considered necessary for a Pope in our days. **'The Pontiff should be', explains Bergoglio, 'a man who, through the contemplation of Jesus Christ... helps the Church to go out of itself toward the existential peripheries'**. (*Bergoglio's words to the Cardinals before the Conclave*, March 26, 2013)

The problem – and as I said in the general congregations before the Conclave, this may be self-criticism – is that **the Church has the shortcoming, the sinful habit of focusing too much on herself, as if she believes she shines her own light. The Church does not have her own light.** She needs to look to Jesus Christ. Why did the first Fathers call the Church 'mysterium lunae', the mystery of the moon? Because it gives off light, but not its own: it's what comes from the sun. **And when the Church focuses too much on herself, divisions arise.** And that's what happened after the first millennium. **At the table today**, Bartholomew and I were talking about the moment **when a cardinal – I don't remember which one – went to convey the Pope's excommunication to the Patriarch: the Church was focusing on herself too much at that moment! She wasn't looking to Jesus Christ.** I believe that all these problems which

arise between us, among Christians – at least speaking about our Catholic Church – come from **focusing on oneself: we become self-referential**. [...] When the Church mirrors herself, she stops being the Church and becomes a ‘theological NGO’. (*In-flight press conference from Istanbul to Rome*, November 30, 2014)

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I – JESUS CHRIST AND THE CHURCH: ONE BODY AND ONE LIGHT, OR TWO SEPARATE ENTITIES?

LEO XIII

The Church manifests Jesus Christ in all Her acts

For this reason the Church is so often called in Holy Writ a body, and even the body of Christ – ‘Now you are the body of Christ’ (1Cor 12:27) – and precisely because it is a body is the Church visible: and because it is the body of Christ is it living and energizing, because by the infusion of His power Christ guards and sustains it, just as the vine gives nourishment and renders fruitful the branches united to it. And as in animals the vital principle is unseen and invisible, and is evidenced and manifested by the movements and action of the members, so the principle of supernatural life in the Church is clearly shown in that which is done by it. From this it follows that those who arbitrarily conjure up and picture to themselves

a hidden and invisible Church are in grievous and pernicious error: as also are those who regard the Church as a human institution which claims a certain obedience in discipline and external duties, but which is without the perennial communication of the gifts of divine grace, and without all that which testifies by constant and undoubted signs to the existence of that life which is drawn from God. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 3, June 29, 1896)

BENEDICT XVI

The Church is always enlightened by the presence of Christ

And since the glory of God is Love, the heavenly Jerusalem is the icon of the Church, utterly holy and glorious, without spot or wrinkle (cf. Eph 5:27), permeated at her heart and in every part of her by the presence of the God who is Love. She is called a ‘bride’, ‘the bride of the Lamb’ (Rev 20:9), [...] The City and Bride is the locus of God’s full communion

with humanity; **She has no need of a temple or of any external source of light, because the indwelling presence of God and of the Lamb illuminates her from within.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily for the inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean*, May 13, 2007)

JOHN PAUL II

The light of Christ shines in the face of the Church

The Church lives not for herself, but for Christ. She wants to be the 'star', the point of reference which helps people find the path which leads to him. The theology of the Fathers loved to speak of the Church as *mysterium lunae*, in order to emphasize that, **like the moon, she shines not with her own light, but reflects Christ, who is her Sun.** And I gladly recall that this is how the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church begins: 'Christ is the light of the nations, *lumen gentium!*' And the Council Fathers went on to express their burning desire to 'enlighten all people with the light of Christ reflected on the face of the Church' (no. 1). (John Paul II. *Homily during the closing of the Holy Door on the Solemnity of the Epiphany*, January 6, 2001)

PIUS XII

The Church only has one light, that of Her divine Head, Christ

As the nerves extend from the head to all parts of the human body and give them power to feel and to move, in like manner **our Savior communicates strength and power to His Church** so that the things of God are understood more clearly and are more eagerly desired by the faithful. **From Him streams into the body of the Church all the light with which those who believe are divinely illumined, and all the grace by which they are made holy as He is holy. Christ enlightens His whole Church** [...] It is He who imparts the light of faith to believers; it is **He who enriches** pastors and teachers and above all **His Vicar on earth with the supernatural gifts of knowledge, understanding and wisdom, so that they may loyally preserve the treasury of faith, defend**

it vigorously, and explain it and confirm it with reverence and devotion. Finally, it is He who, though unseen, presides at the Councils of the Church and guides them. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 49-50, June 29, 1943)

The Church is like another Christ

This appellation of the Body of Christ is not to be explained solely by the fact that **Christ** must be called the Head of His Mystical Body, but also by the fact that **He so sustains the Church, and so in a certain sense lives in the Church, that she is, as it were, another Christ.** [...] Nevertheless this most noble title of the Church must not be so understood as if that ineffable bond by which the Son of God assumed a definite human nature belongs to the universal Church; but it consists in this, that **our Savior shares prerogatives peculiarly His own with the Church in such a way that she may portray, in her whole life, both exterior and interior, a most faithful image of Christ.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 53-54, June 29, 1943)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

It is Christ who lives in the Church

Not from her own light does **the Church** gleam, but from the light of Christ. From **the Sun of Justice has her brilliance been obtained**, so that it is said: 'It is now no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me' (cf. Gal 2:20). (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Hexameron*, Book IV, c.8, 33)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Christ and the Church are inseparable

The Lord Jesus, the only Savior, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: he himself is **in the Church and the Church is in him** (cf. Jn 15:1ff.; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:15-16; Acts 9:5). Therefore, the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. Indeed, **Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church** (cf. Col 1:24-27), which is his body

(cf. 1Cor 12:12-13, 27; Col 1:18). And thus, just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too **Christ and the Church can neither be confused nor separated, and constitute a single 'whole Christ'**. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Jesus*, no. 16, August 6, 2000)

II – HOLY AND IMMACULATE, THE CHURCH CONTEMPLATES CHRIST WHEN LOOKING TOWARDS HERSELF

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Church is holy and without blemish

Christ loved the church and handed himself over for her to sanctify her, cleansing her by the bath of water with the word, that he might present to himself the church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:25-27)

GREGORY XVI

The Church is not subject to defects, for She is guided by the Holy Spirit

To use the words of the fathers of Trent, it is certain that the Church 'was instructed by Jesus Christ and His Apostles and that all truth was daily taught it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit' (sess. 13, *prooemium*). **Therefore, it is obviously absurd and injurious to propose a certain 'restoration and regeneration' for Her as though necessary for Her safety and growth, as if She could be considered subject to defect or obscurity or other misfortune.** Indeed these authors of novelties consider that a 'foundation may be laid of a new human institution,' and what Cyprian detested may come to pass, that what was a divine thing 'may become a human church.' (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 10, August 15, 1832)

PIUS XII

The Church is indefectible in Her mission to teach and govern

But if our Savior, by His death, became, in the full and complete sense of the word, the Head

of the Church, it was likewise through His blood that **the Church was enriched with the fullest communication of the Holy Spirit, through which, from the time when the Son of Man was lifted up and glorified on the Cross by His sufferings, She is divinely illumined.** [...] so at the hour of His precious death He willed that His Church should be enriched with the abundant gifts of the Paraclete in order that in dispensing the divine fruits of the Redemption She might be, for the Incarnate Word, a powerful instrument that would never fail. For both the juridical mission of the Church, and the power to teach, govern and administer the Sacraments, derive their supernatural efficacy and force for the building up of the Body of Christ from the fact that **Jesus Christ, hanging on the Cross, opened up to His Church the fountain of those divine gifts, which prevent her from ever teaching false doctrine and enable her to rule them for the salvation of their souls through divinely enlightened pastors and to bestow on them an abundance of heavenly graces.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 31, June 29, 1943)

JOHN PAUL II

The sanctity, identity and beauty of the Church

Sanctity constitutes the profound identity of the Church as the Body of Christ, vivified and participant of his Spirit. Sanctity gives spiritual health to the Body. **Sanctity also determines its spiritual beauty:** that beauty that surpasses all the beauty of nature and art; a supernatural beauty, **in which the beauty of God himself is reflected,** in a more essential and direct way than all of the beauty of creation, precisely because it is the *Corpus Christi*. (John Paul II. *General audience*, November 28, 1990)

Those who desire a Church not concerned about Herself, despise Her

There are also conceptions which deliberately emphasize [...] of a **Church which is not concerned about herself,** but which is totally concerned with bearing witness to and serving the kingdom. It is a **'Church for others just as Christ is the 'man for others.'** The Church's task is described as though it had to proceed

in two directions: on the one hand promoting such 'values of the kingdom' as peace, justice, freedom, brotherhood, etc., while on the other hand fostering dialogue between peoples, cultures and religions, so that through a mutual enrichment they might help the world to be renewed and to journey ever closer toward the kingdom. [...] Furthermore, the kingdom, as they understand it, ends up either leaving very little room for the Church or undervaluing the Church in reaction to a presumed 'ecclesiocentrism' of the past. [...] One need not fear falling thereby into a form of 'ecclesiocentrism.' Pope Paul VI, who affirmed the existence of 'a profound link between Christ, the Church and evangelization,' also said that the Church 'is not an end unto herself, but rather is fervently concerned to be completely of Christ, in Christ and for Christ, as well as completely of men, among men and for men.' (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no.17, December 7, 1990)

PAUL VI

In contemplating Herself, the Church belongs more fully to Christ

The Church wishes, in the end, to contemplate itself; or rather, to seek herself in the mind of Christ, her divine Founder; this certainly is the same as rendering honor to the wisdom and charity of her Founder and - while professing faith and fidelity with continual observance - making herself even more fit to carry out the mission of salvation, for which she was instituted. No one, however, should think that the Church, in so doing, closes in on herself to auto-delight in herself and forgets either Christ, from whom she receives all and to whom she owes all, or humanity, for whose serve she was born. The Church is in between Christ and the human community, not turned in on herself, nor as an opaque veil that obscures vision, not oriented towards itself; but rather, on the contrary, constantly seeking to be entirely of Christ, in Christ, for Christ, to be entirely of men, among men, for men, a truly humble and excellent intermediary between the Divine Savior and humanity, instituted for the defending and spreading of the truth and the grace of supernatural life. (Paul VI. *Inauguration of the third session of the Second Vatican Council*, September 14, 1964)

III – BY PREACHING THE TRUTH AND CONDEMNING ERROR, THE CHURCH FULFILLS HER MISSION

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

By the will of Christ, the Church is the master of truth

In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church. For the Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that truth which is Christ Himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origins in human nature itself. [...] The disciple is bound by a grave obligation toward Christ, his Master, ever more fully to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Dignitatis humanae*, no. 14, December 7, 1965)

Bishops should ward off errors that threaten their flock

For Bishops are preachers of the faith, who lead new disciples to Christ, and they are authentic teachers, that is, teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach to the people committed to them the faith they must believe and put into practice, and by the light of the Holy Spirit illustrate that faith. They bring forth from the treasury of Revelation new things and old (cf. Mt 13:52), making it bear fruit and vigilantly warding off any errors that threaten their flock (2Tim 4:1-4). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 25, November 21, 1964)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The people of God must be informed regarding true doctrine

But by divine institution it is the exclusive task of these pastors alone, the successors of Peter and the other Apostles, to teach the faithful authentically, that is with the authority of Christ shared in different ways; [...] The

People of God has particular need of the intervention and assistance of the Magisterium when internal disagreements arise and spread concerning a doctrine that must be believed or held, lest it lose the communion of the one faith in the one Body of the Lord (cf. Eph 4:4, 5). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration *Mysterium ecclesiae**, no. 2, June 24, 1973)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

Inhibiting error avoids schism

The See of St. Peter always remains unimpaired by any error, according to the divine promise of our Lord the Savior made to the chief of His disciples: 'I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren' Lk 22:32). So, **this gift of truth and a never failing faith was divinely conferred upon Peter and his successors in this chair**, that they might administer their high duty for the salvation of all; **that the entire flock of Christ**, turned away by them from the poisonous food of error, **might be nourished on the sustenance of heavenly doctrine**, that with the occasion of schism removed the whole Church might be saved as **one**, and relying on her foundation might stay firm against the gates of hell. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3070-3071. *Vatican Council I*, Session IV, On the Church of Christ, Ch. 4, July 18, 1870)

PIUS XI

For the unity of charity, it is indispensable to have unity of faith

But some are more easily deceived by the outward appearance of good when there is question of fostering unity among all Christians. Is it not right, it is often repeated, indeed, even consonant with duty, that all who invoke the name of Christ should abstain from mutual reproaches and at long last be united in mutual charity? [...] These things and others that class of men who are known as pan-Christians continually repeat and amplify; and these men, so far from being quite few and scattered, have increased to the dimensions of an entire class, and have grouped

themselves into widely spread societies, most of which are directed by non-Catholics, although they are imbued with varying doctrines concerning the things of faith. [...] These pan-Christians who turn their minds to uniting the churches seem, indeed, to pursue the noblest of ideas in promoting charity among all Christians: **nevertheless how does it happen that this charity tends to injure faith? Everyone knows that John himself**, the Apostle of love, who seems to reveal in his Gospel the secrets of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and who never ceased to impress on the memories of his followers the new commandment 'Love one another,' altogether forbade any intercourse with those who professed a mutilated and corrupt version of Christ's teaching: 'If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him: God speed you. **For which reason, since charity is based on a complete and sincere faith, the disciples of Christ must be united principally by the bond of one faith.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical *Mortalium animos**, no. 3-4, 9, January 6, 1928)

Unity is only possible in the bosom of the Church

For the union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it. To the one true Church of Christ, we say, which is visible to all, and which is to remain, according to the will of its Author, exactly the same as He instituted it. [...] Furthermore, in this one Church of Christ no man can be or remain who does not accept, recognize and obey the authority and supremacy of Peter and his legitimate successors. Did not the ancestors of those who are now entangled in the errors of Photius and the reformers, obey the Bishop of Rome, the chief shepherd of souls? **Alas their children left the home of their fathers, but it did not fall to the ground and perish forever, for it was supported by God.** [...] Let, therefore, the separated children draw nigh to the Apostolic See, set up in the City which Peter and Paul, the Princes of the Apostles, consecrated by their blood; to that See, We repeat, which is 'the root and womb whence the Church of God springs'(S. Cyprian Ep. 48 *ad Cornelium*, 3), **not with the intention and the hope that**

‘the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth’ (1Tim 3:15) will cast aside the integrity of the faith and tolerate their errors, but, on the contrary, that they themselves submit to its teaching and government. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 10-12, January 6, 1928)

LEO XIII

To conserve the unity of the faith it is necessary to cast out the rebels

The Church, founded on these principles and mindful of her office, has done nothing with greater zeal and endeavour than she has displayed in guarding the integrity of the faith. Hence she regarded as rebels and expelled from the ranks of her children all who held beliefs on any point of doctrine different from her own. [...] The practice of the Church has always been the same, as is shown by the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, who were wont to hold as outside Catholic communion, and alien to the Church, whoever would recede in the least degree from any point of doctrine proposed by her authoritative Magisterium. [...] The need of this divinely instituted means for the preservation of unity, about which we speak is urged by Saint Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians. In this he first admonishes them to preserve with every care concord of minds: ‘Solicitous to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Eph 4:3). And as souls cannot be perfectly united in charity unless minds agree in faith, he wishes all to hold the same faith: ‘One Lord, one faith.’ (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 9, June 29, 1896)

Divisions arise from disobedience to the Pontiff

Hence the teaching of Cyprian, that heresy and schism arise and are begotten from the fact that due obedience is refused to the supreme authority. ‘Heresies and schisms have no other origin than that obedience is refused

to the priest of God, and that men lose sight of the fact that [in the Church] there is only one priest and only one judge, in the place of Christ.’ (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 15, June 29, 1896)

PIUS IX

It is necessary to anathemize those who spread false doctrines

We believe it our duty and office to cut and uproot the noxious weeds we perceive growing, so that they do not take root and spread damage in the field of the Lord. Certainly, ever since the origins of the early Church, due to the necessity that the faith of the elect be proven like gold in the fire, the Apostle, vessel of election, wished to warn the faithful that if someone arise, of those who alter and amend the Gospel of Christ, spreading false doctrines and betraying the depository of the faith, even if it was an angel who evangelized something other than he had, it would be necessary to anathemize him. (Pius IX. *Apostolic letter Ad apostolicæ sedis*, August 22, 1851)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Excommunication is fitting for whoever separates from the Church through schism

According to Wisdom 11:11 – ‘By what things a man sinneth, by the same also he should be punished’. Now a schismatic, as shown above (article 1), commits a twofold sin: first by separating himself from communion with the members of the Church, and in this respect the fitting punishment for schismatics is that they be excommunicated. Secondly, they refuse submission to the head of the Church, wherefore, since they are unwilling to be controlled by the Church’s spiritual power, it is just that they should be compelled by the secular power. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 39, a.4)

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The candidates to the episcopate must be pastors, close to the people: this is the first criterion. A great theologian, a learned mind: let him go to university! They must not have the mindset of princes

‘The sheep follow him, because they recognize his voice’ (Jn 10:4). The suggestive imagery of the shepherd with his flock is almost a synonym of the Episcopal ministry in the Church. The faithful who hear the voice of the Bishop are the good sheep, docile to the action of God made present to them in the person of the prelate. On the other hand, the rebellious sheep represent the faithful who prefer to follow their own whims rather than submitting to ecclesiastical authority. The shepherd, in turn, has the responsibility to lead the sheep to good pasture, defend them from ferocious wolves, and protect them from thieves. This is how the bishop should proceed with his flock; teaching, governing, sanctifying and most especially being the perfect example of virtue.

However, if the owner of numerous flocks had to choose several shepherds to take care of them, he would, without doubt, hire the most experienced and zealous... Only a madman would prefer those who do not have even the basic notions of the job at hand, and have no desire to learn more, but rather consider it sufficient to linger unconcerned nearby the flock, without taking precautions against the dangers that surround it.

In the great flock of Christ, which is the Church, what are the criteria for the selection of shepherds, especially at this point in time when demagogy and populist socialism seem to strut around with impunity?

FRANCIS

In the delicate task of carrying out the investigation required prior to making episcopal appointments, **be careful that the candidates are pastors close to the people: this is the first criterion.** Pastors close to the people. **He is a great theologian, has a learned mind: Let him go to university where he will do such great good!** Pastors! We need them! May they be fathers and brothers, may they be gentle, patient and merciful; may they love poverty, interior poverty, as freedom for the Lord, and exterior poverty, as well as simplicity and a modest lifestyle; **may they not have the mindset of ‘princes’.** (*Address to participants in the Papal Representatives’ Days, June 21, 2013*)

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Saint Augustine of Hippo

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Saint Thomas Aquinas

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I – TO BE SUITABLE FOR THE EPISCOPACY, THE CANDIDATE MUST BE A PRINCE IN MANY WAYS

SACRED SCRIPTURE

A bishop should exhort with sound doctrine and refute opponents

For a bishop as God's steward **must be blameless**, not arrogant, not irritable, not a drunkard, not aggressive, not greedy for sordid gain, but hospitable, a lover of goodness, temperate, just, holy, and self-controlled, **holding fast to the true message as taught so that he will be able both to exhort with sound doctrine and to refute opponents.** (Titus 1:7-9)

CODE OF CANON LAW

A candidate for the episcopacy should be outstanding in solid faith, and truly an expert in sacred scripture, theology, or canon law

In regard to the suitability of a candidate for the episcopacy, it is required that he is:

1. Outstanding in solid faith, good morals, piety, zeal for souls, wisdom, prudence, and human virtues, and endowed with other qualities which make him suitable to fulfill the office in question;
2. Of good reputation;
3. At least thirty-five years old;
4. Ordained to the presbyterate for at least five years;
5. In possession of a doctorate or at least a licentiate in sacred scripture, theology, or canon law from an institute of higher studies approved by the Apostolic See, or at least

truly expert in the same disciplines. (Code of Canon Law, Can. 378 §1)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

We ought to choose none but unstained and upright ministers

Having which things before our eyes, and solicitously and religiously considering them, **we ought in the ordinations of priests to choose none but unstained and upright ministers**, who, holily and worthily offering sacrifices to God, may be heard in the prayers which they make for the safety of the Lord's people, since it is written, God hears not a sinner; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and does His will, him He hears (Jn 9:31). On which account it is fitting, that with full diligence and sincere investigation **those should be chosen for God's priesthood whom it is manifest God will hear.** (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *Epistle 67*, to the Clergy and people abiding in Spain, no. 2)

SAINT HILARY OF POITIERS

An innocent minister is profitable to himself alone, unless he be instructed also

The Blessed apostle Paul in laying down the form for appointing a Bishop and creating by his instructions an entirely new type of member of the Church, **has taught us in the following words the sum total of all the virtues perfected in him: Holding fast the word according to the doctrine of the faith that he may be able to exhort to sound doctrine and to convict gainsayers.** For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers. **For in this way he points out that the essentials of orderliness and morals are only profitable for good service in the priesthood if at the**

same time the qualities needful for knowing how to teach and preserve the faith are not lacking, for a man is not straightway made a good and useful priest by a merely innocent life, or by a mere knowledge of preaching. For an innocent minister is profitable to himself alone unless he be instructed also: while he that be instructed has nothing to support his teaching unless he be innocent. (*Saint Hilary of Poitiers. Treatise on the Holy Trinity, Book, VIII, 1*)

BENEDICT XVI

Candidates for the episcopate should be models of life in the faith

Finally, as to the choice of candidates for the episcopate, while knowing your difficulties in this regard, I would like to remind you that they should be worthy priests, respected and loved by the faithful, models of life in the faith, and that they should possess a certain experience in the pastoral ministry, so that they are equipped to address the burdensome responsibility of a Pastor of the Church. (Benedict XVI. *Letter to members of the Catholic Church in the People's Republic of China*, no. 9, May 27, 2007)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

He who chooses for the episcopate whom he prefers and not those who are more useful to the Church, commits a grave sin

Hence Jerome, commenting on Titus 1:5, says against certain persons that 'some seek to erect as pillars of the Church, not those whom they know to be more useful to the Church, but those whom they love more, or those by whose obsequiousness they have been cajoled or undone, or for whom some person in authority has spoken, and, not to say worse than this, have succeeded by means of gifts in being made clerics.' Now this pertains to the respect of persons, which in such matters is a grave sin. Wherefore a gloss of Augustine [Ep. 167 *ad Hieron*] on James 2:1, 'Brethren, have not... respect of persons,' says: 'If this distinction of sitting and standing be referred to ecclesiastical honors, we must not deem it a slight sin to 'have the faith of the Lord of glory with respect of persons.' For who

would suffer a rich man to be chosen for the Church's seat of honor, in despite of a poor man who is better instructed and holier?'[...] This statement refers to the pursuits of the man who is placed in authority. For he should aim at showing himself to be more excellent than others in both knowledge and holiness. Wherefore Gregory says (*Pastor. 2, 1*) 'the occupations of a prelate ought to excel those of the people, as much as the shepherd's life excels that of his flock'. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 185, a. 3)

II - THE ELEVATED DIGNITY OF THE EPISCOPATE CONSTITUTES A TRUE SPIRITUAL PRINCESHIP

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The nobility of the episcopate

This saying is trustworthy: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. (1Tim 3:1-2)

SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Let all reverence the bishop as Jesus Christ

In like manner, let all reverence the deacons as an appointment of Jesus Christ, and the bishop as Jesus Christ, who is the Son of the Father, and the presbyters as the Sanhedrin of God, and assembly of the apostles. (Saint Ignatius of Antioch. *Letter to the Trallians*, III)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Among those various ministries the chief place belongs to the episcopate

Among those various ministries which, according to tradition, were exercised in the Church from the earliest times, the chief place belongs to the office of those who, appointed to the episcopate, by a succession running from the beginning (1Cor 7:7, cf. S. Augustine, *De Dono Persev.* 14, 37), are passers-on of the apostolic seed (cf. S. Augustine, *D Praed. Sanct.* 14, 27). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 20, November 21, 1964)

Men with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit for the supreme power of the sacred ministry

In the bishops, therefore, for whom priests are assistants, Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Supreme High Priest, is present in the midst of those who believe. [...] These pastors, chosen to shepherd the Lord's flock of the elect, are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God (cf. 1Cor 4:1), to whom has been assigned the bearing of witness to the Gospel of the grace of God (cf. Rom 15:16; Acts 20:24), and the ministration of the Spirit and of justice in glory (cf. 2Cor 3:8-9). For the discharging of such great duties, the apostles were enriched by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them (cf. Acts 1:8, 2:4, Jn 20:22-23), and they passed on this spiritual gift to their helpers by the imposition of hands (cf. 1Tim 4:14; 2Tim 1:6-7), and it has been transmitted down to us in Episcopal consecration (Denz. 959). And the Sacred Council teaches that by Episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Orders is conferred, that fullness of power, namely, which both in the Church's liturgical practice and in the language of the Fathers of the Church is called the high priesthood, the supreme power of the sacred ministry. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 21, November 21, 1964)

Bishops are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth

Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 25, November 21, 1964)

Bishops: true and authentic teachers of the faith, pontiffs, and pastors

The bishops themselves, however, having been appointed by the Holy Spirit, are successors of the Apostles as pastors of souls. Together with the supreme pontiff and under his authority

they are sent to continue throughout the ages the work of Christ, the eternal pastor. Christ gave the Apostles and their successors the command and the power to teach all nations, to hallow men in the truth, and to feed them. Bishops, therefore, have been made true and authentic teachers of the faith, pontiffs, and pastors through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Christus Dominus*, no. 2, October 28, 1965)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

The Bishop is responsible for proclaiming and bearing witness

The Bishop is *Doctor veritatis* and *magister fidei*. First of all he is responsible for proclaiming and bearing witness, proclamation and witness of hope for the world, in particular for the poor. Hence his commitment of holiness, which he builds day after day 'inside' the joy and fatigue of the pastoral ministry, in praying intimacy with his Lord, always faithful to the Gospel, also when situations are difficult, courageous defender of the Truth. (Synod of Bishops. *Bulletin of the commission for information of the X Ordinary General Assembly*, September 30- October 27, 2001)

PIUS XII

The fullness of the apostolic dignity resides in the Bishops

It is an undoubted fact that it was to Peter alone and to his successors, the Roman Pontiffs, that Jesus Christ entrusted the entirety of his flock: 'Feed my lambs; feed my sheep' (Jn 21:16-18). But even though each bishop is the pastor of that portion only of the Lord's flock entrusted to him, nevertheless as lawful successor of the Apostles by God's institution and commandment he is also responsible, together with all the other bishops, for the Apostolic task of the Church, according to the words of Christ to the Apostles: 'As the Father has sent me, I also send you' (Jn 20:21). This mission, or 'sending forth,' embraces 'all nations... even unto the consummation of the world' (Mt 28:19-20), and certainly did not cease with the death of the Apostles. Nay, it still continues

in the bishops who are in communion with the Vicar of Jesus Christ. **For in them**, as being specifically named ‘those who are sent,’ namely, Apostles of the Lord, **the fullness of the apostolic dignity resides**, which as Saint Thomas Aquinas testifies ‘**is the chief dignity in the Church**’ (Expos. in Ep. ad Rom., cap. 1, lect. 1). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Fidei Donum*, no. 42-43, April 21, 1957)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

A higher place was given the Bishops that they might be the guardians of the people

The Bishops also do this. **For a higher place was for this reason given the Bishops, that they might be themselves the superintendents** and as it were the guardians of the people. For the Greek word Episcopus, and the vernacular Superintendent, are the same; for the Bishop superintends, in that he looks over. **As a higher place is assigned to the vinedresser in the charge of the vineyard, so also to the Bishops a more exalted station is allotted.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Commentary on Psalm 127*, no. 2)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

The episcopal insignia are symbols of the nobility of the bishop’s vocation

The **ring** is the symbol of faithfulness, through integrity of faith and purity of life, towards the Church whom he must watch over as the Spouse of Christ. The **miter** recalls episcopal holiness and the crown of glory which the Chief Shepherd will confer on his faithful servants. The **crozier** is the symbol of the office of the Good Shepherd, who watches over and leads with care the flock entrusted to him by the Holy Spirit. The **pallium**, [...] woven from wool and decorated with crosses, it is a sign of the Bishop, identified with Christ the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for the sheep and who bears the lost sheep on his shoulders. Moreover, it stands for his care of all, especially those who have wandered from the flock. This significance receives support in both Eastern and Western tradition. The **cross** which the Bishop wears around his neck is a powerful sign of his belonging to Christ, his

confession of faith in him and the constant power which he draws from the Lord’s cross through the gift of life (Gal 6:14). (Synod of Bishops. *Instrumentum laboris of the X Ordinary General Assembly*, no. 41, June 1, 2001)

III – THE TRIPLE MISSION OF BISHOPS, A TRUE OFFICE OF PRINCESHIP

CODE OF CANON LAW

Through episcopal consecration, bishops receive the function of sanctifying, teaching and governing

Bishops, who by divine institution succeed to the place of the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, are constituted pastors in the Church, so that they are teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and ministers of governance. Through episcopal consecration itself, bishops receive with the function of sanctifying also the functions of teaching and governing; by their nature, however, these can only be exercised in hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college. (Code of Canon Law, can. 375, § 1-2)

COMPENDIUM OF THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC

CHURCH

A bishop governs with the authority of his own sacred power exercised in the name of Christ

A bishop to whom a particular Church has been entrusted governs that Church with the authority of his own sacred power which is ordinary and immediate and exercised in the name of Christ, the Good Shepherd, in communion with the entire Church and under the guidance of the Successor of Peter. (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 187)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The bishop receives a grace of strength to guide and defend the Church

The grace of the Holy Spirit proper to this

sacrament is configuration to Christ as Priest, Teacher, and Pastor, of whom the ordained is made a minister. **For the bishop, this is first of all a grace of strength** ('the governing spirit': Prayer of Episcopal Consecration in the Latin rite), **the grace to guide and defend his Church with strength and prudence** as a father and pastor, with gratuitous love for all and a preferential love for the poor, the sick, and the needy. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1585-1586)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Bishops: principal dispensers of the mysteries of God, governors, promoters, and guardians of the liturgical life

Therefore bishops are the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God, as well as being the governors, promoters, and guardians of the entire liturgical life in the church committed to them. They should, therefore, constantly exert themselves to have the faithful know and live the paschal mystery more deeply through the Eucharist and thus become a firmly-knit body in the unity of the charity of Christ. 'Intent upon prayer and the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:4), **they should devote their labor to this end that all those committed to their care may be of one mind in prayer** (cf. Acts 1:14 and 2:46) **and through the reception of the sacraments may grow in grace and be faithful witnesses to the Lord.** (Vatican Council II. *Decree Christus Dominus*, no.15, October 28, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

A decisive mission for the life of the Church is confided to bishops: the sanctification of the People of God

Indeed, to the grandeur of the 'lofty ministry' received from Christ as successors of the Apostles, corresponds their responsibility as 'Ministers of Christ and administrators of the mysteries of God'(cf. 1Cor 4:1). As administrators who direct the mysteries of God to distribute them in the name of Christ, **bishops should be closely united and firmly faithful to their Master, who has not doubted to confide to them, as to the Apostles, a**

decisive mission for the life of the Church of all times: the sanctification of the People of God. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 4, September 30, 1992)

BENEDICT XVI

The ministry of the Bishop is not human, administrative or sociological

This is a profound perspective of faith and not merely human, administrative or sociological, into which fits the ministry of the Bishop who is not a mere ruler or a bureaucrat or a simple moderator and organizer of diocesan life. It is fatherhood and brotherhood in Christ which give the person in charge the ability to create an atmosphere of trust, of welcome and of affection but also of frankness and justice. (Benedict XVI. *Address to a group of Bishops*, September 13, 2010)

IV – THE KNOWLEDGE OF DOCTRINE IS AN OBLIGATION INHERENT TO THE EPISCOPAL MINISTRY

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Doctrine is the first, for it is proper to the prelate

He then says: Since you are young of age, 'show yourself to be a model in good works'; because the prelate **should be an living example for his disciples.** 'Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ' (1Cor 11:1), 'I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do' (Jn 13:15). In saying then 'in doctrine', he resumes in which things, especially he is to show himself an example. **Doctrine is the first, for it is proper to the prelate 'shepherd wisely and prudently'** (Jer 3:15). [...] He then shows what is to be his doctrine and words, **and says that they should be healthful, not corrupt with falsehoods** (2Tim 1): 'Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me' etc. (Prov 17:7): 'lying words are out of place in the mouth of the prince'. Also, as for the mode, saying **'irreprehensible', that is, that it may be said timely, with all decency, and inducing correction.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Letter to Titus*, ch. 2, lect. 2 Titus 2: 1-6)

It is necessary for the bishop to be well versed and instructed, to shepherd his flock with true doctrine and protect it from heretics

The material for study should not be fables nor temporal banalities, but rather the faithful word, that is true (Ps 144), or of the Faith, in which it is necessary for the bishop to be well versed and instructed. But some study just to learn and to make effective that which they learned: but this is not sufficient for the bishop, for the bishop it is necessary to communicate to others what he learned this is why he says: 'as they have taught him'. [...] The utility of this faculty is to fulfill his function, and the office of the prelate is like that of a pastor (Jn 21) who has to shepherd the flock (1Pet 5) and ward off the wolf; so also the bishop should shepherd his flock with true doctrine (Jer 3); so he says: 'so that he may be capable to instruct in the true doctrine'. He does not say exhort and instruct, but rather that he may be capable of doing so when it be necessary [...] Also to protect the flock from the heretics: so says: 'and contest to those who contradict', that is, convince. And this is achieved by the study of the Sacred Scripture, as is said in 2Tim 3:16: 'All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation'. And these two things, in the Philosopher's opinion, pertain to the work of the wise man, namely, tell no lies, and unmask the one who tells lies. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the letter to Titus*, ch. 1, lect. 3, Titus 1: 1, 9-13)

CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS

The Bishop has an obligation to deepen his intellectual and theological preparation for the enlightenment of the People of God

Conscious of his responsibility for the entire ministry of the Word in his particular Church (cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 756 § 2), where he has been commissioned to proclaim the faith, to teach with authority and to bear witness to divine and catholic truth, the Bishop has an obligation to deepen his intellectual preparation through personal study, with a serious commitment to keeping abreast of cultural developments. [...] Keeping up to date in theology is necessary if the Bishop

is to explore the inexhaustible riches of revelation, faithfully to guard and expound the deposit of faith, and to establish a respectful and fruitful working relationship with theologians. [...] Through his theological reading, the Bishop can give an ever firmer foundation to his magisterial task for the enlightenment of the People of God. His knowledge of current theology also enables him to monitor the conformity of new theological ideas with the content of Tradition, countering objections to sound doctrine and correcting any distortions. (Congregation for Bishops. *Directory for the pastoral ministry of Bishops Apostolorum successores*, no. 52, February 22, 2004)

JOHN PAUL II

The bishop is responsible for the ongoing formation of his priests

The bishop [...] is responsible for ongoing formation, the purpose of which is to ensure that all his priests are generously faithful to the gift and ministry received, that they are priests such as the People of God wishes to have and has a 'right' to. This responsibility leads the bishop, in communion with the presbyterate, to outline a project and establish a program which can ensure that ongoing formation is not something haphazard but a systematic offering of subjects, which unfold by stages and take on precise forms. The bishop will live up to his responsibility not only by seeing to it that his presbyterate has places and times for its ongoing formation, but also by being present in person and taking part in an interested and friendly way. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores Dabo Vobis*, no. 79, March 25, 1992)

V – GIVING GOOD EXAMPLE: A PRIMORDIAL DUTY OF BISHOPS IN COHERENCY WITH THE SANCTITY OF DOCTRINE

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The obligation to give an example of holiness

As those who lead others to perfection, bishops should be diligent in fostering holiness among

their clerics, religious, and laity according to the special vocation of each. **They should also be mindful of their obligation to give an example of holiness** in charity, humility, and simplicity of life. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Christus Dominus*, no.15, October 28, 1965)

CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS

The Bishop should receive the sacraments in an exemplary way

The Bishop, as leader and model for priests and lay faithful, should receive the sacraments in an exemplary way. They bring necessary nourishment for his spiritual life, as they do for every member of the Church. Above all, the sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Bishop celebrates daily, preferably *cum populo*, should be the centre and source of his ministry and of his personal sanctification. He should have frequent recourse to the sacrament of penance as a means of reconciliation with God, and he himself should be a minister of reconciliation among the People of God (cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 276 § 2; John Paul II, *Pastores gregis*, 13). If he is ill and in danger of death, he should be prompt to receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick and sacred Viaticum, with due solemnity and with the participation of clergy and faithful, for the edification of all. (Congregation for Bishops. *Directory for the pastoral ministry of Bishops Apostolorum successores*, no. 46, February 22, 2004)

BENEDICT XVI

People listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers

To you, Pastors of God's flock, is entrusted the mandate of safeguarding and transmitting faith in Christ, passed on to us through the living tradition of the Church and for which so many have given their lives. **To carry out this task, it is essential that first of all you show you are 'in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity and sound speech that cannot be censured'** (Titus 2: 7-8). 'Modern man', wrote my Predecessor of venerable memory, the Servant of God Pope Paul VI, 'listens more willingly

to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses' (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, n. 41). For this reason, it is only right that you give priority in your episcopal ministry to prayer and to the constant aspiration to holiness. (Benedict XVI. *Address to a group of Bishops*, September 23, 2006)

JOHN PAUL II

Unless the episcopal office is based on the witness of holiness, it loses credibility

The Bishop's personal holiness, however, is never limited to the purely subjective level, since in its efficacy it always proves beneficial to the faithful entrusted to his pastoral care. In the practice of charity, as the content of the pastoral ministry he has received, the Bishop becomes a sign of Christ and acquires that moral authority needed for the effective exercise of his juridical authority. Unless the episcopal office is based on the witness of a holiness manifested in pastoral charity, humility and simplicity of life, it ends up being reduced to a solely functional role and, tragically, it loses credibility before the clergy and the faithful. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores gregis*, no. 11, October 16, 2003)

PAUL VI

We cannot be faithful administrators of the divine mysteries without first having availed ourselves of their richness

We cannot forget the solemn exhortations that were directed to us on the occasion of our Episcopal consecration. **We cannot exempt ourselves from the practice of an intense interior life.** We cannot announce the word of God without having meditated on it in the silence of the soul. We cannot be faithful administrators of the divine mysteries without first having availed ourselves of their richness. **We should not dedicate ourselves to apostolate, if we do not know how to corroborate it with the example of Christian and priestly virtues.** [...] Blessed are these times of ours, tormented and paradoxical, that almost oblige us to sanctity to correspond to our office which is so representative

and so full of responsibility, and obliges us to recuperate in the contemplation and the asceticism of the ministers of the Holy Spirit that intimate treasure of personality, from which the extremely demanding dedication of our office almost impels us. (Paul VI. *Homily during the inauguration of the II General Assembly of Bishops of Latin America*, August 24, 1968)

JOHN PAUL II

The ideal figure of the bishop: the Pastor who is configured to Christ in holiness of life

At the dawn of the third millennium the Church continues to rely on the ideal figure of the bishop, that of the Pastor who, configured to Christ in holiness of life, expends himself generously for the Church entrusted to him, at the same time carrying in his heart the solicitude for the churches spread over the face of the earth (cf. 2Cor 11:28). (John Paul II. *Homily during the conclusion of the Synod of Bishops*, no. 3, October 27, 2001)

The bishop who does not live what he teaches gives the community a contradictory message

He teaches with an authority exercised in the name of Jesus Christ the word which is heard in the community; **were he not to live what he teaches, he would be giving the community a contradictory message. One could say that, in a Bishop, mission and life are united in such a way that they can no longer be thought of as two separate things:** we Bishops are our mission. [...] **It is in the transmission of our faith that our lives become a visible sign of Christ's presence** in our communities. The witness of his life becomes for a Bishop a new basis for authority alongside the objective basis received in episcopal consecration. 'Authority' is thus joined by 'authoritativeness'. Both are necessary. The former, in fact, gives rise to the objective requirement that the faithful should assent to the authentic teaching of the Bishop; the latter helps them to put their trust in his message. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores gregis*, no. 31, October 16, 2003)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

The Bishop's hearers will put but little faith in him if he does not set the example

It is not sufficient for the Bishop to be *lucerna ardens* - a shining light as to his own interior; **he should also be *lucens* exteriorly by his good example if he wishes to see the flock walking the road of virtues.** In order that they may ascend the mountain, the shepherd must go before them within sight of them. **The bishop is this light placed by God himself on the candlestick, 'that it might shine to all that are in the house'.** In vain will he preach and recommend the practice of the evangelical maxims: **if he does not before set the example,** it will happen what is said by the Council of Vercelli, **that the hearers would put but little faith in him, because 'Men believe more with their eyes than their ears'.** (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The Complete Ascetical Works*, Vol. XVII, Reflections useful for Bishops, p. 455-6)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Wicked shepherds kill their sheep by their wicked lives and by giving bad example

The defects of the sheep are widespread. There are very few healthy and sound sheep, **few that are solidly sustained by the food of truth,** and few that enjoy the good pasture God gives them. **But the wicked shepherds do not spare such sheep.** It is not enough that they neglect those that are ill and weak, those that go stray and are lost. They even try, so far as it is in their power, **to kill the strong and healthy.** Yet such sheep live; yes, by God's mercy they live. As for the wicked shepherds themselves, they kill the sheep. **'How do they kill them?' you ask. By their wicked lives and by giving bad example.** Or was God's servant, who was high among the members of the chief shepherd, told this in vain: Show yourself as an example of good works toward all men, and, Be an example to the faithful? [...] I appeal to your love, and again I say, **even if the sheep have life and if they are strong in the word of the Lord, and if they hold fast to what they have heard from their Lord, Do what they say but not what they do. Still, as far as he himself is concerned, the shepherd who lives a wicked life before the people kills the sheep under his**

care. Let such a shepherd not deceive himself because the sheep is not dead, **for though it still lives, he is a murderer.** [...] **Therefore anyone who lives wickedly before those who have been placed under his care kills, as far as he himself is concerned, even the strong.** Whoever imitates him, dies; whoever does not, has life. But as for him, he kills both of them. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 46 on Pastors*, no. 4/9 - English)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Prelates are worthy of as many deaths as the many examples of damnation they pass on

'Prelates should know that they are worthy of as many deaths as the many examples of damnation they pass on' (Saint Gregory the Great); [...]. But it seems that a person must

render an account for himself only: 'All of us must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ, that everyone may receive the proper things of the body' (2Cor 5:10). **I answer that everyone will give an account mainly for his own deeds, but he will give an account for others to the extent that his acts pertain to others. But the acts of prelates pertain to others** according to Ezekiel (3:17); 'Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel; and you shall hear the word from out of my mouth and shall tell it to them.' Then he continues **that if the prelate, who is understood by the name of the watchman, has not told it to the wicked, the wicked man will, of course, die in his sin, but his blood will be required at the hand of the watchman.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Ch. 13, lec. 3: Heb 13:17-25)

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Being Pope doesn't mean being the most important in the Church; we are all equal. I am somewhat unaware

The veneration of the faithful toward the Holy Father has been a constant trace of Catholicism. This is understandable, considering his dignity as Vicar of Christ on earth and successor of Peter, who 'presides over the Church in charity,' with the power to bind and loose received from the very Redeemer of humanity.

In our days, however, some within the flock prefer a strange relationship with their shepherd – one no longer based on the admiration, respect and devotion that his elevated figure should inspire, but rather on a rapport between equals, reducing the person of the Supreme Pontiff to that of a populist leader, simultaneously and paradoxically a type of spokesman and slave of today's masses. At first sight, one might think that this radical change of 'image' could not but involve profound alterations in some fundamental doctrines of our holy Religion, for does this novelty have precedents in Christian tradition?

Let us examine some elements of our history...

FRANCIS

No one is the most important person in the Church; we are all equal in God's eyes. Some of you might say 'Listen, Mr. Pope, you are not our equal'. Yes, I am like each one of you, we are all equal, we are brothers and sisters! No one is anonymous: we all both constitute and build the Church. (*General audience, June 26, 2013*)

A little of it is my personality and **I would say that I am somewhat unaware. Therefore, my unawareness sometimes makes me impulsive.** (*Audience to the Schönstatt Apostolic Movement, October 25, 2014*)

God is good to me, he has bestowed on me a healthy dose of unawareness. I just do what I have to do. (*Interview published in La Nación entitled 'Pope Francis: "God has bestowed on me a healthy dose of unawareness,"' December 7, 2014*)

I ask you to pray for me because **this job is a 'taxing' job, far from easy...** Pray for me! (*Address to the young people of the Italian Diocese of Piacenza-Bobbio, August 28, 2013*)

From the start I said to myself: 'Jorge, don't change, just keep on being yourself, because to change at your age would be to make a fool of yourself.' That's why **I've always kept on doing what I used to do in Buenos Aires. Perhaps even making my old mistakes. But I prefer it like this, to be myself. That evidently caused some changes in the protocols,** not in the official protocols because I'm very careful about abiding by them. The thing is that I am who I am even where protocols are concerned, just as I was myself in Buenos Aires. You can see why 'not changing' suited me so well. (*Interview published in La Nación entitled 'Pope Francis: "God has bestowed on me a healthy dose of unawareness,"' December 7, 2014*)

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I – PETER: THE FIRST AMONG THE TWELVE

SACRED SCRIPTURE

You are Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church

Simon Peter said in reply, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah. For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my heavenly Father. And so I say to you, **you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church**, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it. **I will give you the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven**’. (Mt 16:16-19)

Simon called Peter, is the first of the twelve apostles

Then he summoned his twelve disciples and

gave them authority over unclean spirits to drive them out and to cure every disease and every illness. **The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon called Peter**, and his brother Andrew; James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus; Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him. (Mt 10:1-4)

Jesus appeared first to Kephias

That he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; **that he appeared to Kephias, then to the Twelve**. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. (1Cor 15:4-6)

Saint Paul went up to Jerusalem to confer with Kephias

Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to confer with Kephias and remained with him

for fifteen days. Then after fourteen years I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. I went up in accord with a revelation, and I presented to them the gospel that I preach to the Gentiles – but privately to those of repute – so that I might not be running, or have run, in vain. (Gal 1:18, 2:1-2)

Peter stood up and taught in the midst of the brothers

During those days Peter stood up in the midst of the brothers (there was a group of about one hundred and twenty persons in the one place). He said, ‘My brothers, the scripture had to be fulfilled which the holy Spirit spoke beforehand through the mouth of David’ (Acts 1:15-16)

Peter raised his voice and proclaimed ‘Listen to my words’

They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ But others said, scoffing, ‘They have had too much new wine.’ Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them, ‘You who are Jews, indeed all of you staying in Jerusalem. Let this be known to you, and listen to my words’. (Acts 2:12-14)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

The Pope alone is placed above all

Lastly, Saint Ambrose says: Because he alone of all of them professed (Christ) he was placed above all. (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Cited by the Catechism of Trent*, Ch. IX, The marks of the Church: unity in government)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

To affirm that Christians are endowed with equal spiritual power is to disarrange the ecclesiastical hierarchy

But if anyone should affirm that all Christians without distinction are priests of the New Testament, or that they are all endowed among themselves with an equal spiritual power, he seems to do nothing else than disarrange

[can. 6] the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is ‘as an army set in array’ (cf. Song 6:3), just as if, contrary to the teaching of blessed Paul, all were apostles, all prophets, all evangelists, all pastors, all doctors (cf. 1Cor 12:29, Eph 4:11). (Denzinger-Hünermann 1767. Council of Trent, Session XXIII, *The doctrine on the sacrament of orders*, ch. IV, *The ecclesiastical hierarchy and ordination*, July 15, 1563)

PIUS X

The Church is an unequal society, in which some preside over others

The Scripture teaches us, and the tradition of the Fathers confirms the teaching, that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, ruled by the Pastors and Doctors (1Eph 4:2 ss) – a society of men containing within its own fold chiefs who have full and perfect powers for ruling, teaching and judging (Mt 28:18-20, 16:18-19, 18:17, Tit 2:15, 2Cor 10:6, 13:10, etc.) It follows that the Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end. (Pius X. *Encyclical Vehementer nos*, no. 8, February 11, 1906)

SIRICIUS

We must possess greater zeal than the others for the Christian religion

To your inquiry we do not deny a legal reply, because we, upon whom greater zeal for the Christian religion is incumbent than upon the whole body, out of consideration for our office do not have the liberty to dissimulate, nor to remain silent. We carry the weight of all who are burdened; nay rather the blessed apostle Peter bears these in us, who, as we trust, protects us in all matters of his administration, and guards his heirs. (Denzinger-Hünermann 181. Siricius, *Epistle Directa ad decessorem to Himerius, Bishop of Terracina*, February 10, 385)

JOHN PAUL II

Saint Gregory the Great and consciousness of the dignity of the Papacy

'*Servus servorum Dei*': it is known that this title, chosen by him [Saint Gregory the Great] ever since he was a deacon – and used in not a few of his letters – gradually became a traditional title and almost a definition of the person of the Bishop of Rome. It is also certain, that from sincere humility, he made it the motto of his ministry and that, precisely because of his universal function in the Church of Christ, he always considered and showed himself to be the maximum and primary servant – the servant of the servants of God – servant of all, following the example of Christ himself, who had explicitly affirmed that he 'came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' (Mt 20:28). **Most profound was, therefore, his consciousness of the dignity [of the Papacy],** which he accepted with great trepidation after having unsuccessfully tried to remain hidden in an attempt to avoid it; but, at the same time, possessing a clear awareness of his duty to serve, convinced himself and attempting to instill in the others the conviction that all authority, above all within the Church, is essentially service. **The awareness of his own pontifical office and, proportionally, of all pastoral ministry, is condensed in the word 'responsibility': he who exercises an ecclesiastical ministry should respond for what he does, not only to men, not only to the souls that were confided to him, but also and in the first place to God and to his Son, in whose name he acts each time he distributes the supernatural treasures of grace, announces the truths of the Gospel and undertakes activities of legislation and of government.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Plurimum significans*, June 29, 1990)

The Bishop of Rome is more obliged than others to seek the good of the Universal Church

The Good Shepherd, the Lord Christ Jesus (cf. Jn 10:11,14), conferred on the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, and in a singular way on the bishop of Rome, the successor of Peter, the mission of making disciples in all nations and of preaching the Gospel to every creature. [...] This applies to each and

every bishop in his own particular Church; but all the more does it apply to the bishop of Rome, whose Petrine ministry works for the good and benefit of the universal Church. The Roman Church has charge over the 'whole body of charity' and so it is the servant of love. It is largely from this principle that those great words of old have come – 'The servant of the servants of God' –, by which Peter's successor is known and defined. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution Pastor Bonus*, no. 2, June 28, 1998)

SIXTUS V

The Pope bears the solicitude for all the Churches

The Roman Pontiff, to whom Christ the Lord instituted as visible Head of his Body, which is the Church, and desired that he bear the solicitude for all of the Churches, called and assumed many collaborators for an immense responsibility...so that, sharing with them (that is, the cardinals) and the other magistrates of the Roman Curia, the vast bulk of cares and concerns, the holder of the great power of the keys, with the help of divine grace, would not yield. (Sixtus V. *Constitution Immensa aeterni*, February 11, 1588)

BONIFACE I

No one dared to establish anyone above Peter

The institution of the nascent universal Church took origin from the office of Blessed Peter, in which consists its direction and apex. In effect, from this source flowed, in accordance with the development of religion, the ecclesiastic discipline in all of the Churches. The definitions of the Council of Nicaea do not testify anything else; in effect, it did not dare to establish anyone above him, since it acknowledged that no one may be put above his rank, and lastly it understood that all had been granted to him by the Lord's word. It is certain that this Roman Church is for all of the other churches, spread around the world, just as a head is for the members. (Denzinger-Hünemann 233. Boniface I, *Epistle Institutio to the Bishops of Thessaly*, March 11, 422)

II COUNCIL OF LYONS (ECUMENICAL XIV)

The Church of Rome received the fullness of power from the Lord

Also **this same holy Roman Church** holds the highest and complete primacy and spiritual power over the universal Catholic Church which she **truly and humbly recognizes herself to have received with fullness of power from the Lord Himself** in Blessed Peter, the chief or head of the Apostles whose successor is the Roman Pontiff. **And just as to defend the truth of Faith she is held before all other things, so if any questions shall arise regarding faith they ought to be defined by her judgment.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 861. II Council of Lyons, *Profession of Faith of the emperor Michael Palaeologus before Gregory X*, July 6, 1274)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

The Councils and the sacred canons confirm the authority of the Apostolic See

We likewise define that **the holy Apostolic See and the Roman Pontiff hold the primacy throughout the entire world;** and that the Roman Pontiff himself is the successor of blessed Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, and that he is the head of the entire Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that **full power was given to him in blessed Peter by our Lord Jesus Christ, to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church; just as is contained in the acts of the ecumenical Councils and in the sacred canons.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 1307. Council of Florence, *Bull Laetentur caeli*, July 6, 1439)

LEO XIII

The role of Peter, supreme head to whom all owe submission and obedience

Indeed no true and perfect human society can be conceived which is not governed by some supreme authority. Christ therefore must have given to His Church a supreme authority to which all Christians must render obedience. [...] Certainly Christ is a King for ever; and

though invisible, He continues unto the end of time to govern and guard His church from Heaven. But since He willed that His kingdom should be visible He was obliged, when He ascended into Heaven, to designate a vicegerent on earth. [...] **It is clear that by the will and command of God the Church rests upon Saint Peter, just as a building rests on its foundation.** Now the proper nature of a foundation is to be a principle of cohesion for the various parts of the building. It must be the necessary condition of stability and strength. Remove it and the whole building falls. **It is consequently the office of Saint Peter to support the Church, and to guard it in all its strength and indestructible unity. How could he fulfill this office without the power of commanding, forbidding, and judging, which is properly called jurisdiction?** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, nos. 11-12, June 29, 1896)

JOHN XXIII

Unrestricted power to bind and loose

That **there is unity in the administration of the Catholic Church** is evident. For as the faithful are subject to their priests, so are priests to their bishops, whom 'the Holy Spirit has placed to rule the Church of God' (Acts 20:28). So, too, **every bishop is subject to the Roman pontiff, the successor of Saint Peter, whom Christ called a rock and made the foundation of His Church (Mt 16:18). It was to Peter that Christ gave in a special way the power to bind and loose on earth, (Mt 16:19) to strengthen his brethren (Lk 22:32), to feed the entire flock (Jn 21:15-17).** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Ad Petri cathedram*, no. 73, June 29, 1959)

CODE OF CANON LAW

The Pope holds supreme, full, immediate and universal power

The Bishop of the Roman Church, in whom continues the office given by the Lord uniquely to Peter, the first of the Apostles, and to be transmitted to his successors, is the head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ, and the pastor of the universal Church on earth. By virtue of his office he possesses supreme, full,

immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he is always able to exercise freely. (Code of Canon Law, can. 331)

II – THE ROMAN PONTIFF: GUIDE OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

NICHOLAS I

Nothing and no one may alter the privileges conferred by Christ to Peter

Furthermore if you have not heard us, it remains for you to be with us of necessity, such as our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded those to be considered, who disdained to hear the Church of God, especially since **the privileges of the Roman Church, built on Blessed Peter by the word of Christ**, deposited in the Church herself, observed in ancient times and celebrated by the sacred universal Synods, and venerated jointly by the entire Church, **can by no means be diminished, by no means infringed upon, by no means changed; for the foundation which God has established, no human effort has the power to destroy and what God has determined, remains firm and strong.** . . . Thus the privileges granted to this holy Church by Christ, not given by the Synod, but now only celebrated and venerated. (Denzinger-Hünemann 640. Nicholas I, *Epistle Proposueramus quidem to Michael the Emperor*, September 28, 865)

PIUS XII

Christ entrusted the visible government of the Mystical Body to the Chief of the Apostles

But we must not think that He rules only in a hidden (Cf. Leo XIII, *Satis Cognitum*: A.S.S., XXVIII, 725) or extraordinary manner. On the contrary, **our Redeemer also governs His Mystical Body in a visible and normal way through His Vicar on earth.** You know, Venerable Brethren, that after He had ruled the 'little flock' (Lk 12:32) Himself during His mortal pilgrimage, **Christ our Lord, when about to leave this world and return to the Father, entrusted to the Chief of the Apostles the visible government of the entire community He had founded.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici*

Corporis Christi, no. 40, June 29, 1943)

BONIFACE VIII

The authority of Peter is not human, but rather divine

But **this authority, although it is given to man and is exercised by man, is not human, but rather divine**, and has been given by the divine Word to Peter himself and to his successors in him, whom the Lord acknowledged an established rock, when he said to Peter himself: 'Whatsoever you shall bind' etc. (Denzinger-Hünemann 874. Boniface VIII, *Bull Unum sanctam*, November 18, 1302)

COUNCIL OF EPHESUS (ECUMENICAL III)

Peter always lives and judges in his successors

No one doubts, but rather it has been known to all generations, that the holy and most blessed **Peter, chief and head of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith, the foundation stone of the Catholic church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ the Savior and Redeemer of the human race, and that the power of binding and loosing sins was given to him, who up to this moment and always lives in his successors, and judges.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 112. Council of Ephesus, *Session III, On the Primacy of the Roman Pontiff*, 431)

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

Christ bestows on his servants that which is His

Peter is made the foundation, because he says: Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God; and hears in reply that he is a rock. But although a rock, he is not such a rock as Christ; for Christ is truly an immovable rock, but Peter, only by virtue of that rock. For **Jesus bestows His dignities on others; He is a priest, and He makes priests; a rock, and He makes a rock; what belongs to Himself, He bestows on His servants.** (Saint Basil the Great. *Cited by the Catechism of Trent*, Article IX, 'I Believe in the Holy Catholic Church' – Unity in government)

BONIFACE I

The government of the Church does not leave the Pope free from cares

The watchful care over the universal Church confided to **Peter** abides with him by reason of the Lord's statement; for he **knows on the testimony of the Gospel (Mt 16:18) that the Church was founded on him. His office can never be free from cares, since it is certain that all things depend on his deliberation.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 234. *Boniface I*, Epistle *Manet beatum* to Rufus and the other Bishops throughout Macedonia, March 11, 422)

PIUS IX

Mission to guard the flock from poisoned pastures

With how great care and pastoral vigilance **the Roman Pontiffs, our predecessors, fulfilling the duty and office committed to them by the Lord Christ Himself in the person of most Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, of feeding the lambs and the sheep, have never ceased sedulously to nourish the Lord's whole flock**

with words of faith and with salutary doctrine, **and to guard it from poisoned pastures,** is thoroughly known to all, and especially to you, Venerable Brethren. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Quanta cura*, no.1, December 8, 1864)

PAUL VI

The Church must draw inspiration from a deeper scrutiny of its own origin, nature, mission and destiny

In short, Venerable Brethren, there are three policies which principally exercise Our mind when We reflect on the enormous responsibility for the Church of Christ which, unsought and undeserved, the providence of God has laid upon Us in making Us Bishop of Rome, successor to Saint Peter the Apostle and Key-bearer of the Kingdom of Heaven, and Vicar of Christ who appointed Peter the first Shepherd of his worldwide flock. **First We are convinced that the Church must look with penetrating eyes within itself, ponder the mystery of its own being, and draw enlightenment and inspiration from a deeper scrutiny of the doctrine of its own origin, nature, mission, and destiny.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 8-9, August 6, 1964)

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We take up this journey: Bishop and People. Before the Bishop blesses his people, I ask you to pray to the Lord that he will bless me.

‘You water the hills from your lofty abode; the earth is sated with the fruit of your works’ (Psalm 103:13). This simple material reality presented by the sacred text – of rain that irrigates the mountains, giving rise to springs and streams that in turn water the earth – was chosen by the Angelic Doctor for his inaugural lecture at the University of Paris. Like a soaring eagle, with his characteristic genius, Saint Thomas summed up an important law of the spiritual order from this simple natural fact: ‘The King and Lord of the heavens set down this law from all eternity that the gifts of his Providence should come to the lower through intermediaries’ (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Principium Rigans montes, preface*).

Indeed, the Most High created a succession of intermediaries, and is pleased to grant His graces through their agency. We can observe this in the Scriptures themselves. For example, the innumerable occasions in which Moses interceded for the chosen people, delivering them from chastisement, and sometimes even from extermination, by obtaining divine pardon. Or within the incomparable sacerdotal prayer of Jesus (Jn 17), when He prayed to His Father for the Apostles, and for all of those who would believe through them. In our daily lives as well, these mediations are also present. For example, in the case of priests, who are instruments chosen by Christ to dispense the precious fruits of the Redemption among the faithful by means of the Sacraments, or even parents who, by virtue of the common priesthood received in baptism, bless their children.

These are some considerations that come to mind as we recall March 13th 2013, when the universal Church breathlessly awaited the blessing of its new Supreme Pastor. The Bishop of Rome appeared on the Central loggia...However, he inclined and expressed his desire to receive the divine blessing invoked by the people!

What happened? By any chance, can the earth irrigate the mountains? Had the disposition of the Eternal Wisdom been inverted? Let us examine what the Magisterium has to say.

FRANCIS

And now, **we take up this journey: bishop and people. This journey of the Church of Rome** which presides in charity over all the Churches. A journey of fraternity, of love, of trust among us. Let us always pray for one another. Let us pray for the whole world, that there may be a great spirit of fraternity. **It is my hope for you that this journey of the Church, which we start today, and in which my Cardinal Vicar, here present, will assist me, will be fruitful for the evangelization of this most beautiful city.** And now I would like to give the blessing, **but first - first I ask a favor of you: before the Bishop blesses his people, I ask you to pray to the Lord that he will bless me: the prayer of the people asking the blessing for their Bishop. Let us make, in silence, this prayer: your prayer over me.** (*Apostolic Blessing ‘urbi et orbi’*, March 13, 2013)

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I – THE POPE AND THE PEOPLE: WHO SHOULD INVOKE THE DIVINE BLESSING?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

A lesser person is blessed by a greater

Unquestionably, a lesser person is blessed by a greater. (Heb 7:7)

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

There exists a hierarchy in the ministry of blessings; in the presence of an ordained minister, the laity should concede the presidency

The ministry of the blessing is united to a particular exercise of the priesthood of Christ, and, according to the place and the office proper to each of those within the people of God, is exercised in the following manner:

- a) It corresponds principally to the Bishop to preside over those celebrations concerning the entire diocesan community, undertaken with particular solemnity and large attendance of the people [...]
- b) It corresponds to the priests, as requires the nature of their service to the people of God, to preside over the blessings [...]; therefore, they may celebrate all of the blessings contained in this book, as long as a presiding Bishop is not present.
- c) It corresponds to the deacons [...] in their quality as ministers of the word, of the altar and of charity, to preside over some celebrations, as is indicated by their corresponding place. **But always, when a priest is present, it is better that he concede to the priest the presiding.** [...]
- d) **The laity**, men and women, through the efficacy of their common priesthood, of which they were made participants through baptism and confirmation, in virtue of their own position (such as parents with respect to their children), or in virtue of an extraordinary ministry, or due to the fulfilling of a function particular to the Church [...] may celebrate some blessings, with the rite and the formulas predetermined for them, according to the indication for each

one of the blessings. **But in the presence of the priest or deacon, they should concede the presidency to them.** (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Book of Blessings*, General Indications, no. 18, Spanish Episcopal Liturgical Commission (Spain) and Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM), *Bendicional*, Ripollet, (Barcelona), Coeditores Litúrgicos, 1986, p. 19-20)

PIUS XII

The Church is a body with a variety of members reciprocally dependent; those who exercise sacred power in this Body are its chief members

Again, as in nature a body is not formed by any haphazard grouping of members but must be constituted of organs, that is of members, that have not the same function and are arranged in due order; so for this reason above all the Church is called a body, that it is constituted by the coalescence of structurally untied parts, and that it has a variety of members reciprocally dependent. [...] That those who exercise sacred power in this Body are its chief members must be maintained uncompromisingly. It is through them, by commission of the Divine Redeemer Himself, that Christ's apostolate as Teacher, King and Priest is to endure. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis*, no. 16-17, June 29, 1943)

PIUS X

The Church is essentially an unequal society comprising two categories, Pastors and the flock

The Scripture teaches us, and the tradition of the Fathers confirms the teaching, that the Church is the mystical body of Christ, ruled by the Pastors and Doctors (Eph 4:11) – a society of men containing within its own fold chiefs who have full and perfect powers for ruling, teaching and judging (Mt 28:18-20, 16:18-19, 18:17, Titus 2:15; 2Cor 10: 6, 13:10 etc.). It follows that the Church is essentially an unequal society, that is, a society comprising two categories of persons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of

the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastoral body only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors. (Pius X. *Encyclical Vehementer nos*, no. 8, February 11, 1906)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

To affirm that all Christians are endowed with an equal spiritual power is to disarrange the ecclesiastical hierarchy

But if anyone should affirm that all Christians without distinction are priests of the New Testament, or that they are all endowed among themselves with an equal spiritual power, he seems to do nothing else than disarrange [can. 6] the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which is 'as an army set in array' (cf. Cant 6:3), just as if, contrary to the teaching of blessed Paul, all were apostles, all prophets, all evangelists, all pastors, all doctors (cf. 1Cor 12:29, Eph 4:11). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1767. Council of Trent, Session XXIII, Doctrine on the Sacrament of Orders, July 15, 1563)

PIUS XII

The members of the Mystical Body are not all qualified to perform the same acts

The Church is a society, and as such requires an authority and hierarchy of her own. Though it is true that all the members of the Mystical Body partake of the same blessings and pursue the same objective, they do not all enjoy the same powers, nor are they all qualified to perform the same acts. The divine Redeemer has willed, as a matter of fact, that His Kingdom should be built and solidly supported, as it were, on a holy order, which resembles in some sort the heavenly hierarchy. Only to the apostles, and thenceforth to those on whom their successors have imposed hands, is granted the power of the priesthood, in virtue of which they represent the person of Jesus Christ before their people, acting at the same time as representatives of their people before God. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 39-40, November 20, 1947)

CLEMENT I

Each one only gives thanks to God honorably in his own order and not transgressing the prescribed rule of his own office

[The Lord] commanded that the offerings and ministries be fulfilled, not by chance and without order or harmony, but rather in determined times and seasons. And where or by whom they be performed, He himself determined with his sovereign will, in order that, performing everything in a pure and holy manner according to his satisfaction, it be acceptable to his divine will. [...] (For) they do not go astray who follow the commands of the Lord. Inasmuch as peculiar gifts have been bestowed upon the chief priest, a special place has been assigned to the priests, and particular duties are incumbent upon the Levites. The layman is bound by the precepts pertaining to the laity. Let each of us, brethren, 'in his own order' (1Cor 15:23) with a good conscience not transgressing the prescribed rule of his own office give thanks to God honorably. (Denzinger-Hünemann 101. Clement I, *Letter to the Corinthians*, 96)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Specific apostolic powers are derived from the sacrament of Holy Orders

And so, even though all the baptized enjoy the same dignity before God, in the Christian community, which was deliberately structured hierarchically by its divine Founder, there have existed from its earliest days specific apostolic powers deriving from the sacrament of Holy Orders. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter Sacerdotium ministeriale*, III, no. 3, August 6, 1983)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Only ministers may perform the priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ

The same Lord, however, has established ministers among his faithful to unite them together in one body in which, 'not all the

members have the same function' (Rom 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful are able **by the sacred power of orders** to offer sacrifice and to forgive sins, and they **perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ**. Therefore, having sent the apostles just as he himself been sent by the Father, Christ, through the apostles themselves, made their successors, the bishops, sharers in his consecration and mission. The office of their ministry has been handed down, in a lesser degree indeed, to the priests. Established in the order of the priesthood they can be co-workers of the episcopal order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission entrusted to priests by Christ. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 2, December 7, 1965)

PIUS XII

The sacrament of Holy Orders sets the priest apart from the rest of the faithful...

In the same way, actually, that baptism is the distinctive mark of all Christians, and serves to differentiate them from those who have not been cleansed in this purifying stream and consequently are not members of Christ, **the sacrament of holy orders sets the priest apart from the rest of the faithful** who have not received this consecration. For **they alone**, in answer to an inward supernatural call, **have entered the august ministry, where they are assigned to service in the sanctuary and become, as it were, the instruments God uses to communicate supernatural life** from on high to the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ. Add to this, as We have noted above, the fact that they alone have been marked with the indelible sign 'conforming' them to Christ the Priest, and that **their hands alone have been consecrated 'in order that whatever they bless may be blessed, whatever they consecrate may become sacred and holy, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ'** (Roman Pontifical, Ordination of a priest: anointing of hands). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 43, November 20, 1947)

...qualifying him to perform those official acts of religion by which men are sanctified

That is why the visible, external **priesthood**

of Jesus Christ is not handed down **indiscriminately to all members of the Church in general, but is conferred on designated men, through what may be called the spiritual generation of holy orders**. This latter, one of the seven sacraments, **not only imparts** the grace appropriate to the clerical function and state of life, but imparts **an indelible 'character' besides, indicating the sacred ministers' conformity to Jesus Christ the Priest and qualifying them to perform those official acts of religion by which men are sanctified** and God is duly glorified in keeping with the divine laws and regulations. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 41-42, November 20, 1947)

PIUS XI

From the cradle to the grave the priest is ever beside the faithful as a dispenser of grace and blessing

Besides this power over the real Body of Christ, **the priest has received other powers, august and sublime, over His Mystical Body of Christ, [...] The Christian**, at almost every important stage of his mortal career, **finds at his side the priest with power received from God, in the act of communicating or increasing that grace which is the supernatural life of his soul. [...]** Thus, **from the cradle to the grave the priest is ever beside the faithful, a guide, a solace, a minister of salvation and dispenser of grace and blessing**. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 17-19, December 20, 1935)

The priest is a public and official intercessor of humanity before God

Finally, **the priest**, in another way, follows the example of Christ. Of Him it is written that He 'passed the whole night in the prayer of God' and 'ever lives to make intercession for us'; and like Him, **the priest, is public and official intercessor of humanity before God; he has the duty and commission of offering to God in the name of the Church, over and above sacrifice strictly so-called, the 'sacrifice of praise,' in public and official prayer; for several times each day with psalms, prayers and hymns taken in great part from the inspired books, he pays to God this dutiful tribute of adoration and thus performs his necessary**

office of interceding for humanity. [...] **The Christian** [...] in every distress, in every peril whether private or public, **has recourse with special trust to the prayer of the priest.** To it the unfortunate of every sort look for comfort; to it they have recourse, seeking divine aid in all the vicissitudes of this exile here on earth. **Truly does the 'priest occupy a place midway between God and human nature: from Him bringing to us absolving beneficence, offering our prayers to Him and appeasing the wrathful Lord'.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad Catholici sacerdotii*, no. 28-29, December 20, 1935)

II – THE BISHOP OF ROME: MERELY AN INTER PARES OR UNIVERSAL PASTOR?

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

The Successor of Saint Peter was given charge of all the sheep of the whole flock, not just those of a certain city or country

Who art thou? **Thou art the High Priest and the Sovereign Pontiff. Thou art the Prince of pastors and the Heir of the apostles.** By the primacy thou art an Abel; by thy office of pilot (in Peter's barque), a Noe; by thy patriarchate, an Abraham; by thy orders, a Melchisedech; by thy dignity, an Aaron; by thy authority, a Moses; by thy judicial power, a Samuel; **by thy jurisdiction, a Peter; and by thy unction, a Christ.** **Thou art he to whom the keys have been delivered (Mt 16: 19) and the sheep entrusted (Jn 21:17).** There are indeed other gate-keepers of heaven, and there are other shepherds of the flock; but thou art in both respects more glorious than they in proportion as thou hast 'inherited a more excellent name' (Heb I: 4). **They have assigned to them particular portions of the flock, his own to each; whereas thou art given charge of all the sheep, as the one Chief Shepherd of the whole flock. Yea, not only of the sheep, but of the other pastors also art thou the sole supreme shepherd.** Wouldst thou know how I prove this? I prove it from the words of Christ. 'If thou lovest Me,' He said to Peter, 'feed My sheep' (Jn 21:17). **To which – I do not say of the other bishops, but even of the other apostles, was the entire flock entrusted so absolutely and so indiscriminately? For to what sheep did the Saviour refer? Was it to the people of**

this or that city? Of this or that country or kingdom? 'Feed My sheep' – these were His words. Who does not see plainly that, instead of designating some portion of the flock, they rather assign the whole? For there can be no exception where there is no distinction. (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Treatise on consideration to Pope Eugene III*, Book II, ch. VIII)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Bishop of Rome is the Successor of Peter in his primatial service in the universal Church

From the beginning and with increasing clarity, the Church has understood that, just as there is a succession of the Apostles in the ministry of Bishops, so too **the ministry of unity entrusted to Peter belongs to the permanent structure of Christ's Church and that this succession is established in the see of his martyrdom.** On the basis of the New Testament witness, **the Catholic Church teaches, as a doctrine of faith, that the Bishop of Rome is the Successor of Peter in his primatial service in the universal Church;** this succession explains the preeminence of the Church of Rome. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the mystery of the Church*, no. 3-4, October 31, 1998)

BENEDICT XVI

The indissoluble bond between romanum and petrinum implies and requires universal concern

Thus, humbly attached to Christ, our One Lord, together we can and must encourage **that 'exemplarity' of the Church of Rome which is genuine service to our Sister Churches across the world. The indissoluble bond between romanum and petrinum implies and indeed requires the Church of Rome's participation in the universal concern of her Bishops.** [...] Rome is a very large Diocese and truly a very special one, because of the universal concern that the Lord has entrusted to his Bishop. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the clergy of Rome*, May 13, 2005)

JOHN PAUL II

The See of Rome has a universal mission

Today the new Bishop of Rome solemnly begins his ministry and the mission of Peter. In this city, in fact, Peter completed and fulfilled the mission entrusted to him by the Lord. [...] Yes, Brothers and sons and daughters, Rome is the See of Peter. Down the centuries new Bishops continually succeeded him in this See. Today a new, Bishop comes to the Chair of Peter in Rome, a Bishop full of trepidation, conscious of his unworthiness. And how could one not tremble before the greatness of this call and before the universal mission of this See of Rome! (John Paul II. *Homily for the inauguration of his pontificate*, no.3, October 22, 1978)

BONIFACE I

The watchful care over the universal Church is confided to Peter – His office can never be free from cares

The watchful care over the universal Church confided to Peter abides with him by reason of the Lord's statement; for he knows on the testimony of the Gospel (Mt 16:18) that the Church was founded on him. His office can never be free from cares, since it is certain that all things depend on his deliberation. (Denzinger-Hünemann 234. Boniface I, *Epistle Manet beatum to Rufus and the other Bishops throughout Macedonia*, March 11, 422)

JOHN PAUL II

The bishop of Rome is more obliged than other bishops to work for the good of the universal Church

The Good Shepherd, the Lord Christ Jesus (cf. Jn 10:11,14), conferred on the bishops, the successors of the Apostles, and in a singular way on the bishop of Rome, the successor of Peter, the mission of making disciples in all nations and of preaching the Gospel to every creature. [...] This applies to each and every bishop in his own particular Church; but all the more does it apply to the bishop of Rome, whose Petrine ministry works for the good

and benefit of the universal Church. The Roman Church has charge over the "whole body of charity" and so it is the servant of love. It is largely from this principle that those great words of old have come – 'The servant of the servants of God'–, by which Peter's successor is known and defined. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution Pastor Bonus*, no. 1-2, June 28, 1988)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Bishop of Rome has a unique sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum due to full and supreme power in the Church

All the Bishops are subjects of the *sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum* (Cor 11:28) as members of the Episcopal College which has succeeded to the College of the Apostles, [...] In the case of the Bishop of Rome – Vicar of Christ in the way proper to Peter as Head of the College of Bishops – the *sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum* acquires particular force because it is combined with the full and supreme power in the Church: a truly episcopal power, not only supreme, full and universal, but also immediate, over all pastors and other faithful. The ministry of Peter's Successor, therefore, is not a service that reaches each Church from outside, but is inscribed in the heart of each particular Church, in which 'the Church of Christ is truly present and active' (Vatican Council II, *Christus Dominus*, no. 11) and for this reason it includes openness to the ministry of unity. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *The Primacy of the Successor of Peter in the mystery of the Church*, no. 6, October 31, 1988)

CLEMENT VI

Those who have succeeded blessed Peter hold the same power over the complete and universal body of the church

All the Roman Pontiffs, who succeeding blessed Peter have entered canonically and will enter canonically, have succeeded blessed Peter the Roman Pontiff and will succeed in the same plenitude in the jurisdiction of power over the complete and universal body of the militant church which blessed Peter himself received from our Lord Jesus Christ. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1053. Clement VI.

Letter Super quibusdam to the Consolator, the Catholicon of the Armenians, September 20, 1351)

no. 12)

PIUS XII

Christ entrusted the visible government of the entire community He founded to the Chief of the Apostles

On the contrary, our Redeemer also governs His Mystical Body in a visible and normal way through His Vicar on earth. You know, Venerable Brethren, that after He had ruled the 'little flock' (Lk 12:32) Himself during His mortal pilgrimage, Christ our Lord, when about to leave this world and return to the Father, entrusted to the Chief of the Apostles the visible government of the entire community He had founded. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 40, June 29, 1943)

JOHN PAUL II

To the ministry of Peter is confided both flock and the shepherds

But just as the ministry of Peter as the 'servant of the servants of God' is exercised in relationship with both the whole Church and the bishops of the entire Church, similarly the Roman Curia, as the servant of Peter's successor, looks only to help the whole Church and its bishops. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution Pastor Bonus*, no. 7, June 28, 1988)

LEO I

Even among the blessed Apostles, it was given only to Peter to lead the rest

The connection of the whole body makes all alike healthy, all alike beautiful: and this connection requires the unanimity indeed of the whole body, but it especially demands harmony among the priests. And though they have a common dignity, yet they have not uniform rank; inasmuch as even among the blessed Apostles, notwithstanding the similarity of their honourable estate, there was a certain distinction of power, and while the election of them all was equal, yet it was given to one to take the lead of the rest. (Leo I. *Letter XIV*,

JOHN XXII

The affirmation that Peter had no more authority than the other Apostles is condemned

[Condemned doctrine] That blessed Peter the Apostle had no more authority than the other Apostles had nor was he the head of the other apostles. Likewise that God did not send forth any head of the Church, nor did He make anyone His vicar. [...] [Condemned doctrine] That all priests, whether the pope or archbishop or a simple priest, are by the institution of Christ equal in authority and jurisdiction. [...] We declare by sentence the above mentioned articles.....to be contrary to Sacred Scripture and enemies of the Catholic faith, heretics, or heretical and erroneous. (Denzinger-Hünemann 942.944.946. John XXII, *Constitution Licet iuxta doctrinam*, October 23, 1327)

LEO I

Peter governs all of those who are principally governed by Christ

From the midst of the entire world, Peter alone is chosen, who is placed in front of all of the nations called, of all of the apostles, of all of the Fathers of the Church: in such a way that, even though there be among the people of God many priests and many pastors, Peter specifically governs all of those who are principally governed by Christ. (Leo I. *Sermon IV*, no. 2)

JOHN XXIII

All bishops are subject to the Roman pontiff

That there is unity in the administration of the Catholic Church is evident. For as the faithful are subject to their priests, so are priests to their bishops, whom 'the Holy Spirit has placed...to rule the Church of God' (Acts 20:28). So, too, every bishop is subject to the Roman pontiff, the successor of Saint Peter, whom Christ called a rock and made the

foundation of His Church. It was to Peter that Christ gave in a special way the power to bind and loose on earth, **to strengthen his brethren, to feed the entire flock.** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Ad Petri cathedram*, no. 73, June 29, 1959)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The college of bishops has no authority unless together with the Roman Pontiff

The college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, **the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power** over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 22, November 21, 1964)

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Who am I to judge? Religion has the right to express its opinion in the service of the people, but God in creation has set us free: it is not possible to interfere spiritually in the life of a person

Ever since antiquity, as people congregated together in societies, the power of judgment was always attributed to individuals or groups qualified to judge issues and infractions that tended to arise within human interaction. In the Old Testament, Moses determined that wise, intelligent and experienced men be elected among the people in order to guide and judge the tribes in their concerns and controversies, for alone, he could not continue (Deut 1:12-1). Unfortunately, human wretchedness ended up corrupting many of those who occupied such positions, to such a point that in his day, Jesus was very severe with the hypocrites who pointed out the 'splinter' in their brother's eye while not taking the 'beam' out of their own (Mt 7:3). Consequently, he warned in the Sermon on the Mount: 'Stop judging, that you may not be judged. For as you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you.' (Mt 7:1)

However, He further taught how one should judge: 'Stop judging by appearances, but judge justly' (Jn 7:24). Jesus had been given the 'power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man' (Jn 5:27), and when He conceded the apostolic primacy to Peter, through the 'power of the keys' He constituted him as supreme judge of the Church, investing him with power to judge and condemn evil, and commend good. This power to judge is extended, naturally, into the entire ambit of human morals, even when they enter the temporal sphere. Here we observe the grave responsibility that weighs upon the one who assumes the Pontifical throne. Saint Augustine cautions: 'If you have been constituted judge, if you have received the power to judge, if someone is accused before you, and proven guilty of sin, through real proofs, and truthful witnesses: oblige him, correct him, excommunicate him, degrade him, in conformity with the ecclesiastical norm. May tolerance be kept awake in such a way that discipline does not sleep.' (Sermon 164, 7,11). Above all, during these days of confusion, the Pope has the obligation to be the 'faithful echo and authentic interpretation of the permanent conviction of the Church'— which is not a collection of 'personal opinions'! — especially regarding such current and serious topics as the question of homosexuality and the ideologies accompany it, with the objective of undermining the entire moral order down to its very roots. On the contrary, unfortunate and ambiguous declarations bring about insufferable concessions, unfortunately, even on the part of many pastors who should defend the truth. Saint Alphonsus Liguori warns: 'The pastor who does not correct his sheep will give an account to Jesus Christ for the wrongdoings that resulted'.

FRANCIS

Then, you spoke about the gay lobby. So much is written about the gay lobby. I still haven't found anyone with an identity card in the Vatican with 'gay' on it. They say there are some there. I believe that when you are dealing with such a person, you must distinguish between the fact of a person being gay and the fact of someone forming a lobby, because not all lobbies are good. This one is not good. **If someone is gay and is searching for the Lord and has good will, then who am I to judge him? The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains this in a beautiful way, saying ... wait a moment, how does it say it... it says: 'no one should marginalize these people for this, they must be integrated into society'. The problem is not having this tendency, no, we must be brothers and sisters to one another, and there is this one and there is**

that one. The problem is in making a lobby of this tendency: a lobby of misers, a lobby of politicians, a lobby of masons, so many lobbies. For me, this is the greater problem. Thank you so much for asking this question. Many thanks. (*Press Conference during the return flight from Rio de Janeiro to Rome, July 28, 2013*)

‘We need to proclaim the Gospel on every street corner,’ the pope says, ‘preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing, even with our preaching, every kind of disease and wound. In Buenos Aires I used to receive letters from homosexual persons who are “socially wounded” because **they tell me that they feel like the church has always condemned them. But the church does not want to do this. During the return flight from Rio de Janeiro I said that if a homosexual person is of good will and is in search of God, I am no one to judge.** By saying this, I said what the catechism says. **Religion has the right to express its opinion in the service of the people,** but God in creation has set us free: **it is not possible to interfere spiritually in the life of a person.** A person once asked me, in a provocative manner, if I approved of homosexuality. I replied with another question: “Tell me: **when God looks at a gay person, does he endorse the existence of this person with love, or reject and condemn this person?**” We must always consider the person. Here we enter into the mystery of the human being. In life, God accompanies persons, and we must accompany them, starting from their situation. It is necessary to accompany them with mercy. When that happens, the Holy Spirit inspires the priest to say the right thing.’ (*Interview with Antonio Spadaro, August 19, 2013*)

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I – THE PRIMACY OF PETER MAKES THE POPE THE SUPREME JUDGE WHO NO ONE MAY JUDGE

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

The Roman Pontiff is the supreme judge of the faithful

[Recourse to the Roman Pontiff as the supreme judge] And since the **Roman Pontiff is at the head of the universal Church by the divine right of apostolic primacy**, We teach and declare also that he is the **supreme judge of the faithful** [cf. n. 1500], and that in all cases pertaining to ecclesiastical examination recourse can be had to his judgment [cf. n. 466]; moreover, that **the judgment of the Apostolic See, whose authority is not surpassed, is to be disclaimed by no one, nor is anyone permitted to pass judgment on its judgment** [cf. n. 330 ff.]. Therefore, they stray from the straight path of truth who affirm that it is permitted to appeal from the judgments of the Roman Pontiffs to an ecumenical Council, as to an authority higher than the Roman Pontiff.

[Canon] **If anyone thus speaks, that the Roman Pontiff has only the office of inspection or direction, but not the full and supreme power of jurisdiction** over the universal Church, not only in things which pertain to faith and morals, but also in those which pertain to the discipline and government of the Church spread over the whole world; or, that he possesses only the more important parts, but not the whole plenitude of this supreme power; **or that this power of his is not ordinary and immediate**, or over the churches altogether and individually, and over the pastors and the faithful altogether and individually: **let him be anathema**. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3063-3064. Vatican Council I. Session IV, *Dogmatic constitution on the Church of Christ*, July 18, 1870)

INNOCENT I

The Pope has authority to condemn evils and to approve praiseworthy things

In seeking the things of God... preserving the examples of ancient tradition... you have strengthened the vigor of your religion... with true reason, **for you have confirmed that reference must be made to our judgment,**

realizing what is due the Apostolic See, since all of us placed in this position desire to follow the Apostle, from whom the episcopate itself and all the authority of this name have emerged. Following him we know how to condemn evils just as (well as how) to approve praiseworthy things. Take this as an example, guarding with your sacerdotal office the practices of the fathers you resolve that (they) must not be trampled upon, because they **made their decisions not by human, but by divine judgment**, so that they thought that nothing whatever, although it concerned separated and remote provinces, **should be concluded, unless it first came to the attention of this See**, so that what was a just proclamation might be confirmed by the total authority of this See, and from this source (just as all waters proceed from their natal fountain and through diverse regions of the whole world remain pure liquids of an uncorrupted source), the other churches might assume **what [they ought] to teach, whom they ought to wash, those whom the water worthy of clean bodies would shun as though defiled with filth incapable of being cleansed**. (Denzinger-Hünemann 217. Innocent I, *Epistle 29 Inquirendis to the African bishops*, January 27, 417)

COUNCIL OF EPHESUS (ECUMENICAL III)

Peter lives and judges in his successors up to this moment and always

No one doubts, but rather it has been known to all generations, **that the holy and most blessed Peter**, chief and head of the Apostles, the pillar of the faith, the foundation stone of the Catholic church, **received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ** the Savior and Redeemer of the human race, and **that the power of binding and loosing sins was given to him, who up to this moment and always lives in his successors, and judges**. (Denzinger-Schönmetzer 112. Council of Ephesus, *from the speech of Philip the Roman legate*, Session III, 431)

CLEMENT VI

The Roman Pontiff may judge all and be judged by no one

In the third place, if you and the Armenians subject to you have believed and do believe that

the Roman Pontiffs who have been and we who now are the Roman Pontiff and, those who in future will be successively as legitimate vicars of Christ and full of power in the highest degree, have received immediately from Christ Himself over the complete and universal body of the church militant, every jurisdiction of power which Christ as fitting head had in human life. In the fourth place, if you have believed and now believe that all the Roman Pontiffs who have been and we who are, and others who will be in the future from the plentitude of past power and authority have been able, are able, and will be able directly by our own power and theirs both to judge all those subject to our jurisdiction and theirs, and to establish and delegate ecclesiastical judges to judge whomsoever we wish. In the fifth place, if you have believed and now believe that to such an extent has been, is, and will be both pre-eminent authority together with juridical power of the Roman Pontiffs who have been, of us who are, and of those who in future will be, has been, is, and will be so extensive, that by no one have they been, can we be, or will they in the future be able to be judged; but they have been, we are, and they will be reserved for judgment by God alone; and that from our sentences and judgments it has not been possible nor will it be possible for an appeal to be made to any judges. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1054-1056. Clement VI, *Letter Super quisbusdam, to the Consolator*, September 20, 1351)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

The Pope has full power to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church

We likewise define that the holy Apostolic See, and the Roman Pontiff, hold the primacy throughout the entire world; and that the Roman Pontiff himself is the successor of blessed Peter, the chief of the Apostles, and the true vicar of Christ, and that he is the head of the entire Church, and the father and teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in blessed Peter by our Lord Jesus Christ, to feed, rule, and govern the universal Church; just as is contained in the acts of the ecumenical Councils and in the sacred canons. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1307. Council of Florence, *Bull Laetentur coeli, Decree for the Greeks*, July 6, 1439)

ZOSIMUS

No one can retract from any decision made by the authority of the Pope

Although the tradition of the Fathers has attributed such great authority to the Apostolic See that no one dared to challenge its judgment and has always preserved it through canons and regulations and (although) current ecclesiastical discipline still displays by its laws the reverence it should to the name of Peter, from whom it itself also descends... (3) Although, therefore, Peter is the source of such great authority and the subsequent decisions of all the forefathers have confirmed it, that the Roman Church might be strengthened by all the laws and customs, both human and divine – you are not unaware, rather, you have learned, my very dear brothers, and as priests must know that We govern in his place and also hold Our office by virtue of his name –: (4) and, although such great authority belongs to Us that no one could argue again with Our decision, We have done nothing that We would not have brought to your attention of Our own accord in Our letter, granting this to Our fraternal relationship and taking counsel in common... (Denzinger-Hünemann 221. Zosimus, *from the letter Quamvis Patrum traditio to the African bishops*, March 21, 418)

BONIFACE I

It is not licit to put up opposition to the apostolic supremacy

No one has ever boldly raised his hands in opposition to the apostolic supremacy, from whose judgment there may be no withdrawal; no one in this has been rebellious, except him who wished judgment to be passed on himself. (Denzinger- Hünemann 235. Boniface I, *Letter Manet beatum*, March 11, 422)

GREGORY XVI

The government and administration of the whole Church rests with the Roman Pontiff

Remember also that the government and administration of the whole Church rests with

the **Roman Pontiff to whom**, in the words of the Fathers of the Council of Florence, **‘the full power of nourishing, ruling, and governing the universal Church was given by Christ the Lord’** (Council of Florence, Session 25, *in definit. apud Labb., ed. Venet.*, vol. 18, col. 527.). (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 8, August 15, 1832)

LEO XIII

The Supreme Pastor has all power to judge

By certain indications that have been observed, it is not difficult to perceive that among Catholics, perhaps due to the evils of our times, there are those who, not content with being among the subjects – the position befitting them within the Church – wish to have some part in the governing of the same; or at least think that they have the right to examine and judge, in their own manner, the acts of the authority. This would be, if it prevailed, of grave harm to the Church of God, in which, **through the manifest will of its divine Founder, can be distinguished in two parts, in an absolute way; the teachers and those taught, the flock and the shepherds, and among the Shepherds there is one who is the Head and the Supreme Pastor. Only to the Pastors was all power given to teach, to judge, to conduct, and to the faithful the duty to follow their teachings was imposed, to submit with docility to their judgment, to let themselves be governed, corrected and conducted toward salvation.** (Leo XIII. *Leter to the Archbishop of Paris*, June 17, 1885)

Peter has the power of commanding, forbidding, and judging...

From this text it is clear that by the will and command of God **the Church rests upon Saint Peter, just as a building rests on its foundation.** Now the proper nature of a foundation is to be a principle of cohesion for the various parts of the building. It must be the necessary condition of stability and strength. Remove it and the whole building falls. It is consequently **the office of Saint Peter to support the Church, and to guard it in all its strength and indestructible unity. How could he fulfil this office without the power of commanding, forbidding, and**

judging, which is properly called jurisdiction? It is only by this power of jurisdiction that nations and commonwealths are held together. [...] **Therefore God confided His Church to Peter so that he might safely guard it with his unconquerable power.** He invested him, therefore, with the needful authority; since **the right to rule is absolutely required** by him who has to guard human society really and effectively. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no.12, June 29, 1896)

...binding and loosing, making laws and punishing

In this same sense He says: ‘Whatsoever thou shall bind upon earth it shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in Heaven.’ **This metaphorical expression of binding and loosing indicates the power of making laws, of judging and of punishing; and the power is said to be of such amplitude and force that God will ratify whatever is decreed by it. Thus it is supreme and absolutely independent, so that, having no other power on earth as its superior, it embraces the whole Church and all things committed to the Church.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 12, June 29, 1896)

The jurisdiction of the Roman pontiffs extends to the whole Christian world

Moreover, he who is set over the whole flock must have authority, not only over the sheep dispersed throughout the Church, but also when they are assembled together. Do the sheep when they are all assembled together rule and guide the shepherd? Do the successors of the Apostles assembled together constitute the foundation on which the successor of Saint Peter rests in order to derive therefrom strength and stability? Surely jurisdiction and authority belong to him in whose power have been placed the keys of the Kingdom taken collectively. And as the Bishops, each in his own district, command with real power not only individuals but the whole community, **so the Roman pontiffs, whose jurisdiction extends to the whole Christian commonwealth, must have all its parts, even taken collectively, subject and obedient to their authority.** Christ the Lord, as we have quite sufficiently shown, made Peter and his successors His vicars, to

exercise forever in the Church the power which He exercised during His mortal life. Can the Apostolic College be said to have been above its master in authority? This power over the Episcopal College to which we refer, and which is clearly set forth in Holy Writ, has ever been acknowledged and attested by the Church, as is clear from the teaching of General Councils. **'We read that the Roman Pontiff has pronounced judgments on the prelates of all the churches; we do not read that anybody has pronounced sentence on him'** (*Hadrianus ii., in Allocutione iii., ad Synodum Romanum an. 869*). The reason for which is stated thus: **'there is no authority greater than that of the Apostolic See'** (*Nicholaus in Epist. lxxxvi. ad Michael. Imperat.*). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 15, June 29, 1896)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The 'power of the keys' designates authority to govern the Church

Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven' (Mt 16:19). **The 'power of the keys' designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church.** Jesus, the Good Shepherd, confirmed this mandate after his Resurrection: 'Feed my sheep' (Jn 21:15-17). **The power to 'bind and loose' connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgements, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church.** Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles (Mt 18:18) and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 553)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Vicar of Christ has full, supreme and universal power

Just as in the Gospel, the Lord so disposing, Saint Peter and the other apostles constitute one apostolic college, so in a similar way the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are joined

together. [...] But the college or body of bishops has no authority unless it is understood together with the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter as its head. The pope's power of primacy over all, both pastors and faithful, remains whole and intact. In virtue of his office, that is as Vicar of Christ and pastor of the whole Church, the Roman Pontiff has full, supreme and universal power over the Church. And he is always free to exercise this power. [...] The Roman Pontiff, as the successor of Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity of both the bishops and of the faithful. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 22-23, November 21, 1964)

II – HIDDEN WORKS ARE SUBJECT TO THE JUDGMENT OF HE WHO KNOWS THE INTERIOR OF CONSCIENCES

SACRED SCRIPTURE

I am the searcher of hearts and minds

Thus shall all the churches come to know that **I am the searcher of hearts and minds and that I will give each of you what your works deserve.** (Rev 2:23)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Sins are known to God in our heart although not known to men by deed

For there are three things which go to complete sin: the suggestion of, the taking pleasure in, and the consenting to. Suggestion takes place either by means of memory, or by means of the bodily senses, when we see, or hear, or smell, or taste, or touch anything. And if it give us pleasure to enjoy this, this pleasure, if illicit, must be restrained. Just as when we are fasting, and on seeing food the appetite of the palate is stirred up, this does not happen without pleasure; but we do not consent to this liking, and we repress it by the right of reason, which has the supremacy. **But if consent shall take place, the sin will be complete, known to God in our heart, although it may not become known to men by deed.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount*, I, 34, no. 15)

STEPHEN V

The hidden crimes should be left to the judgment of He who alone who knows the hearts

Crimes effectively made public through a spontaneous confession and the proof of witness, having before their eyes the fear of God are **confided to our governing in order to be judged; but the hidden and unknown should be left to the judgement of He 'who alone who knows the hearts of the children of men'** (cf. 1Kings 8:39). (Denzinger-Hünemann 670. Stephen V, *Letter Consuluisti de infantibus, to Archbishop Ludbert of Mainz, between 887-888*)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Man has in his heart a law written by God; according to it he will be judged

In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience when necessary speaks to his heart: do this, shun that. **For man has in his heart a law written by God; to obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged** (cf. *Rom 2:15-16*). Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a man. There he is alone with God, Whose voice echoes in his depths (cf. Pius XII, *Radio address on the correct formation of a Christian conscience in the young*). In a wonderful manner conscience reveals that law which is fulfilled by love of God and neighbor (*Mt 22:37-40; Gal 5:14*). **In fidelity to conscience, Christians are joined with the rest of men in the search for truth, and for the genuine solution to the numerous problems which arise in the life of individuals from social relationships.** Hence the more right conscience holds sway, the more persons and groups turn aside from blind choice and strive to be guided by the objective norms of morality. Conscience frequently errs from invincible ignorance without losing its dignity. **The same cannot be said for a man who cares but little for truth and goodness, or for a conscience which by degrees grows practically sightless as a result of habitual sin.** (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 16, December 7, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

The interior judgment of the conscience demands a 'convincing concerning sin'

Conversion requires convincing of sin; it includes the interior judgment of the conscience, and this, being a proof of the action of the Spirit of truth in man's inmost being, becomes at the same time a new beginning of the bestowal of grace and love: 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (*Jn 20:22*). Thus in this 'convincing concerning sin' we discover a double gift: the gift of the truth of conscience and the gift of the certainty of redemption. The Spirit of truth is the Counselor. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Dominum et vivificantem*, no. 31, May 18, 1986)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts

But to do its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us 'righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.' Like a physician who probes the wound before treating it, God, by his Word and by his Spirit, casts a living light on sin. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1848)

PIUS XI

Confessors have the grave responsibility to guide each penitent according to their spiritual needs

Whoever has no aptitude for study and who will be unable to follow the prescribed courses with due satisfaction; all such cases show that they are not intended for the priesthood. By letting them go on almost to the threshold of the sanctuary, superiors only make it ever more difficult for them to draw back; and, perhaps, even cause them to accept ordination through human respect, without vocation and without the priestly spirit. **Let Superiors of seminaries, together with the spiritual directors and confessors, reflect how weighty a responsibility they assume** before God, before the Church, and before the youths themselves,

if they do not take all means at their disposal to avoid a false step. We declare too, that confessors and spiritual directors could also be responsible for such a grave error; and not indeed because they can take any outward action, since that is severely forbidden them by their most delicate office itself, and often also by the inviolable sacramental seal; but because they can have a great influence on the souls of the individual students, and with paternal firmness they should guide each according to his spiritual needs. [...] Let confessors remember the words of Saint Alphonsus Liguori on a similar matter: 'In general . . . in such cases the more severity the confessor uses with his penitents, the more will he help them towards their salvation; and on the contrary, the more cruel will he be the more he is benign.' Saint Thomas of Villanova called such over-kind confessors: *Impie pios* – 'wickedly kind'; 'such charity is contrary to charity.' (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ad catholici sacerdotii*, no. 70-71, December 20, 1935)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

Correct privately, especially if the crime is hidden

Monsignor San-felice, of dear memory, one day asked me trembling: 'Don Alfonso, how may I rest when I know that one of my sheep lives in God's disgrace?' **Saint Gregory incriminates the bishop who does not correct with the same crime committed by the wicked.** But in order that the correction be given correctly, it is necessary in the first place, that it be done with charity, and if by chance, in extreme cases, it is necessary to resort to firmness, always mix the wine with oil, rigor with sweetness. [...] **Correct privately, especially if the crime is hidden.** He who has lost his good name, easily allows himself to be taken over by vices. (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Useful reflections for Bishops*, c. II, no. 9)

III – EXTERIOR WORKS ARE KNOWN AND SUBJECT TO THE JUDGMENT OF THE PASTORS OF SOULS, ABOVE ALL IF THEY PROVOKE SCANDAL: THE POPE HAS THE DUTY TO JUDGE

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Jesus severely condemns the sin of scandal

Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. **Woe to the world because of things that cause sin! Such things must come, but woe to the one through whom they come!** (Mt 18: 6-7)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Scandal may induce spiritual ruin due to a lack of rectitude

As Jerome observes the Greek *skandalon* may be rendered offense, downfall, or a stumbling against something. For when a body, while moving along a path, meets with an obstacle, it may happen to stumble against it, and be disposed to fall down: such an obstacle is a *skandalon*. **In like manner, while going along the spiritual way, a man may be disposed to a spiritual downfall by another's word or deed,** in so far, to wit, as one man by his injunction, inducement or example, moves another to sin; and this is scandal properly so called. Now nothing by its very nature disposes a man to spiritual downfall, except that which has some lack of rectitude, since what is perfectly right, secures man against a fall, instead of conducing to his downfall. Scandal is, therefore, fittingly defined as 'something less rightly done or said, that occasions another's spiritual downfall'. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 43, a.1)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

The scandalous take from Jesus Christ the souls that he redeemed by his blood

The sin of scandal consists not only in directly advising others to do evil, but also in inducing them indirectly by acts to the commission of sin: *Dictum vel factum minus*

rectum, prebens alleri ruinam. Scandal is thus defined how Saint Thomas and other theologians: 'Every Word or action, more or less inordinate, that constitutes for the neighbor na occasion of falling into sin.' To understand the grievousness of the sin of scandal, it is enough to know that according to Saint Paul **he who offends against a brother by leading him into sin, offends against Jesus Christ:** When you sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ? (1Cor 8:12). And Saint Bernard assigns the reason, saying that **the author of scandal robs Jesus Christ of the souls redeemed by his Blood. The saint goes so far as to say that Jesus Christ suffers more from those that scandalize others than He did from his crucifiers.** 'If our Lord, ' he says, 'has given his blood to redeem souls, do you not think that of these two persecutions, the one in which scandal robs him of souls purchased by his blood, the other in which the Jews shed his blood, the first is much more cruel to his heart?' (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Selva or the Dignity and Duties of a Priest*, Part I, Ch. 8)

CODE OF CANON LAW

It belongs to the Church to render judgment insofar as the salvation of souls requires

It belongs to the Church always and everywhere to announce moral principles, even about the social order, and to **render judgment concerning any human affairs insofar as the fundamental rights of the human person or the salvation of souls requires it.** (Code of Canon Law, can. 747 §2)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church needs the dedication of pastors in applying Christian morality

In the work of teaching and applying Christian morality, the Church needs the dedication of pastors, the knowledge of theologians, and the contribution of all Christians and men of good will. [...] As far as possible conscience should take account of the good of all, as expressed in the moral law, natural and revealed, and consequently in the law of the Church and in the authoritative teaching of the Magisterium

on moral questions. **Personal conscience and reason should not be set in opposition to the moral law or the Magisterium of the Church.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2038-2039)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Duty of the Roman Pontiff to provide for the common good of the Church and the care of souls

In this Church of Christ the **Roman pontiff**, as the successor of Peter, to whom Christ entrusted the feeding of His sheep and lambs, **enjoys supreme, full, immediate, and universal authority over the care of souls by divine institution.** Therefore, as pastor of all the faithful, **he is sent to provide for the common good of the universal Church and for the good of the individual churches. Hence, he holds a primacy of ordinary power over all the churches.** (Vatican Council II. *Decree Christus Dominus*, no. 2, October 28, 1965)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Successor of Peter has a specific ministerial grace for serving the unity of faith of the Church

The **Roman Pontiff**, as the Successor of Peter, is 'the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity both of the Bishops and of the multitude of the faithful' (*Lumen gentium*, n. 23) and therefore **he has a specific ministerial grace for serving that unity of faith and communion which is necessary for the Church to fulfil her saving mission.** (Cf. Jn 17:21-23, *Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 1; Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*; John Paul II, *Ut unum sint*, no. 98) (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *The primacy of the successor of Peter in the mystery of the Church*, no. 4, October 31, 1988)

The Roman Pontiff must guarantee a rigorous fidelity to the Word of God

The exercise of the Petrine ministry must be understood – so that it 'may lose nothing of its authenticity and transparency' (John Paul II. *Ut unum sint*) – on the basis of the Gospel, that is, on its essential place in the saving

mystery of Christ and the building-up of the Church. The primacy differs in its essence and in its exercise from the offices of governance found in human societies: **it is not an office of co-ordination or management**, nor can it be reduced to a primacy of honour, or be conceived as a political monarchy. **The Roman Pontiff** – like all the faithful – is subject to the Word of God, to the Catholic faith, and **is the guarantor of the Church's obedience; in this sense he is *servus servorum Dei***. He does not make arbitrary decisions, but **is spokesman for the will of the Lord, who speaks to man in the Scriptures lived and interpreted by Tradition**; in other words, the *episkope* of the primacy has limits set by divine law and by the Church's divine, inviolable constitution found in Revelation (cf. Joint Declaration of the German Bishops, Jan.-Feb. 1875: Denz-Hun. 3114.). **The Successor of Peter is the rock which guarantees a rigorous fidelity to the Word of God against arbitrariness and conformism: hence the martyrological nature of his primacy.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *The primacy of the successor of Peter in the mystery of the Church*, no. 7, October 31, 1988)

BENEDICT XV

Peter is the common teacher and rector of all

To Peter the Prince of the Apostles, **the divine Founder of the Church allotted the gifts of inerrancy (Lk 22:32) in matters of faith and of union with God.** This relationship is similar to that of a 'Choir Director of the Choir of the Apostles' (Saint Theodore the Studite, epistle 2 to the Emperor Michael). **He is the common teacher and rector** (Saint Cyril of Alexandria, *De Trinit.*, dialogue 4) **of all**, so that he might feed the flock of Him who established His Church (Mt 16:18.) on the authority of Peter himself and his successors. And on this mystical rock the foundation (Saint Cyril of Alexandria, *Comm. in Luc 22:32*) of the entire ecclesiastical structure stands firm as on a hinge. From it rises the unity of Christian charity as well as our Christian faith. (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Principi Apostolorum Petro*, no. 1, October 5, 1920)

BONIFACE I

The Pope may never feel free from the cares of the Chair of Peter

The watchful care over the universal Church confided to Peter abides with him by reason of the Lord's statement; for he knows on the testimony of the Gospel (Mt 16:18) that the Church was founded on him. **His office can never be free from cares, since it is certain that all things depend on his deliberation.** These considerations turn my mind to the regions of the Orient, which we behold in a way with genuine solicitude. **Far be it from the priests of the Lord, that anyone of them fall into the offense of making the decrees of our elders foreign to him, by attempting something in the way of a novel and unlawful usurpation, realizing that he thus makes him a rival, in whom our Christ has placed the highest power of the priesthood, and whoever rises to reproach him cannot be an inhabitant of the heavenly regions.** 'To you,' He said, 'I shall give the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Mt 16:19) into which no one shall enter without the favor of the door-keeper. He said: 'Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my church' (Mt 11:29). Whoever, therefore, desires before God to be judged worthy of the dignity of the priesthood, [...] should be 'meek and humble of heart' (Mt 11:29). lest as a contumacious disciple of him, whose pride he has imitated, he undergo the punishment of the teachers. [...] **No one has ever boldly raised his hands in opposition to the apostolic supremacy, from whose judgment there may be no withdrawal; no one in this has been rebellious, except him who wished judgment to be passed on himself.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 234. *Boniface I*, Letter Manes beatum, March 11, 422)

JOHN PAUL II

The Successor of Peter has the duty to admonish, to caution and to declare certain opinions as irreconcilable with the unity of faith

With the power and the authority without which such an office would be illusory, the Bishop of Rome must ensure the communion of all the Churches. For this reason, he is the first servant of unity. This primacy is exercised

on various levels, including vigilance over the handing down of the Word, the celebration of the Liturgy and the Sacraments, the Church's mission, discipline and the Christian life. **It is the responsibility of the Successor of Peter to recall the requirements of the common good of the Church, should anyone be tempted to overlook it in the pursuit of personal interests. He has the duty to admonish, to caution and to declare at times that this or that opinion being circulated is irreconcilable with the unity of faith.** When circumstances require it, he speaks in the name of all the Pastors in communion with him. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ut unum sint*, no. 94, May 25, 1995)

The forceful expressions of the Roman Pontiffs are only the faithful echo and authentic interpretation of the Church's permanent conviction

The Roman Pontiff in fact has the '*sacra potestas*' to teach the truth of the Gospel, administer the sacraments and pastorally govern the Church in the name and with the authority of Christ, but this power does not include per se any power over the divine law, natural or positive. Neither Scripture nor Tradition recognizes any faculty of the Roman Pontiff for dissolving a ratified and consummated marriage; on the contrary, the Church's constant practice shows the certain knowledge of Tradition that such a power does not exist. **The forceful expressions of the Roman Pontiffs are only the faithful echo and authentic interpretation of the Church's permanent conviction.** (John Paul II. *Address to members of the Tribunal of the Sacred Roman Rota*, no. 8, January 21, 2000)

PIUS IX

Words of conformity constitute an error and a danger for the Church

In these times of confusion and disorder, it is not unusual to see Christians, Catholics – even within the secular clergy and cloisters – who constantly have a word of conformity, of conciliation and negotiation on their lips. Very well! I do not hesitate to declare: **these men are in error, and do not consider them to be the lesser enemies of the Church.** We live in a corrupt and pestilent atmosphere and we must

know how to preserve ourselves from it. Let us not allow ourselves to be contaminated by false doctrines, which lose all things under the pretext of saving all. (Pius IX. *Speech in the Church of Aracoeli*, September 17, 1861)

PIUS X

The pastors of the Christian people have the duty to resist neutrality and compromise

It is for you, therefore, venerable brethren, whom Divine Providence has constituted to be the pastors and leaders of the Christian people, **to resist with all your strength this most fatal tendency of modern society to lull itself in a shameful indolence while war is being waged against religion, seeking a cowardly neutrality made up of weak schemes and compromises to the injury of divine and human rights, to the oblivion of Christ's clear sentence: 'He that is not with me is against me' (Mt 12:30).** (Pius X. *Encyclical Communionium rerum*, no. 31, April 21, 1909)

BENEDICT XVI

The Pope bears the highest responsibility for Catholic Christianity

But the invitation to give this address was extended to me as Pope, as the Bishop of Rome, who bears the highest responsibility for Catholic Christianity. In issuing this invitation you are **acknowledging the role that the Holy See plays as a partner within the community of peoples and states. Setting out from this international responsibility that I hold, I should like to propose to you some thoughts on the foundations of a free state of law.** (Benedict XVI. *Address, Visit to the Federal Parliament, the Budenstag, in the Reichstag building, Berlin*, September 22, 2011)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

The pastor that does not correct his sheep will give an account to Jesus Christ for the wrongdoing that resulted

It is also the office of the pastor to detach the sheep from an evil life with correction,

of which he is obliged, even at the cost of his own life. 'The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep' (Jn 10:11). If he does not work in this way, he must give an account to Jesus Christ for the wrongdoing that resulted and which could have been avoided with correction. This is the great weight that makes holy bishops tremble. (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Reflections Useful for Bishops*, Ch.II,no.9)

IV – BASICS OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE REGARDING HOMOSEXUALITY

1 – Sacred Scripture

The Lord rained down sulphurous fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah

Before they went to bed, all the townsmen of Sodom, both young and old – all the people to the last man – closed in on the house. They called to Lot and said to him, 'Where are the men who came to your house tonight? Bring them out to us that we may have intimacies with them.' [...] 'We are about to destroy this place, for the outcry reaching the Lord against those in the city is so great that he has sent us to destroy it'. [...] At the same time the Lord rained down sulphurous fire upon Sodom and Gomorrah (from the Lord out of heaven). He overthrew those cities and the whole Plain, together with the inhabitants of the cities and the produce of the soil. (Gen 19:4-5,13, 24-25)

Abominations that defiled their land

Do not defile yourselves by any of these things by which the nations whom I am driving out of your way have defiled themselves. **Because their land has become defiled, I am punishing it for its wickedness, by making it vomit out its inhabitants.** [...] otherwise the land will vomit you out also for having defiled it, just as it vomited out the nations before you. **Everyone who does any of these abominations shall be cut off from among his people.** (Lev 18:24-25, 28)

An abomination to the Lord

You shall not offer a harlot's fee or a dog's price as any kind of votive offering in the house of the Lord, your God; **both these things are**

an abomination to the Lord, your God. (Deut 23:19)

The mutual degradation of their bodies – God handed them over to degrading passions

Therefore, God handed them over to **impurity through the lusts of their hearts for the mutual degradation of their bodies.** They exchanged the truth of God for a lie and revered and worshiped the creature rather than the creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. Therefore, **God handed them over to degrading passions.** Their females exchanged natural relations for unnatural, and the males likewise gave up natural relations with females and burned with lust for one another. **Males did shameful things with males** and thus received in their own persons the due penalty for their perversity. (Rom 1:24-27)

The law is meant for the lawless – practicing homosexuals, and those opposed to sound teaching

With the understanding that law is meant not for a righteous person but for the lawless and unruly, the godless and sinful, the unholy and profane, those who kill their fathers or mothers, murderers, **the unchaste, practicing homosexuals,** kidnapers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is opposed to sound teaching. (1Tim 1:9-10)

Neither boy prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals will inherit the kingdom of God

Do you not know that **the unjust will not inherit the kingdom of God?** Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers **will inherit the kingdom of God.** (1Cor 6:9-10)

No impure person has any inheritance in the kingdom of God

Be sure of this, **that no immoral or impure or greedy person,** that is, an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Eph 5:5)

Licentious conduct condemned Sodom and Gomorrah

...and if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (to destruction), reducing them to ashes, making them an example for the godless (people) of what is coming; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man oppressed by the licentious conduct of unprincipled people (for day after day that righteous man living among them was tormented in his righteous soul at the lawless deeds that he saw and heard). (2Pet 2:6-8)

For having indulged in unnatural vice it underwent the punishment of eternal fire

Likewise, Sodom, Gomorrah, and the surrounding towns, which, in the same manner as they, indulged in sexual promiscuity and practiced unnatural vice, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire. (Jude 7)

2 – Magisterium of the Church

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Duty to respect homosexual persons, but without legitimizing behavior opposed to moral law

Homosexual persons are to be fully respected in their human dignity and encouraged to follow God's plan with particular attention in the exercise of chastity (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2357-2359). **This duty calling for respect does not justify the legitimization of behaviour that is not consistent with moral law, even less does it justify the recognition of a right to marriage between persons of the same sex** and its being considered equivalent to the family (cf. John Paul II, Address to Spanish Bishops on their *Ad Limina* Visit (February 19, 1998); Pontifical Council for the Family, Family, Marriage and *de facto* unions (July 26, 2000); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons (June 3, 2003). (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 228)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Homosexual acts constitute a grave depravity and can under no circumstances be approved

Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. **Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity (cf. Gen 19:1-29; Rom 1:24-27), tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.'** (CDF, *Persona humana* 8). **They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2357)

Homosexual persons are called to chastity

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. **They do not choose their homosexual condition; for most of them it is a trial.** They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. **Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided.** These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition. **Homosexual persons are called to chastity.** By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2358-2359)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

No pastoral method with homosexuals can be employed which would give moral justification to these acts

At the present time there are those who,

basing themselves on observations in the psychological order, have begun to judge indulgently, and even to excuse completely, homosexual relations between certain people. This they do in opposition to the constant teaching of the Magisterium and to the moral sense of the Christian people. A distinction is drawn, and it seems with some reason, between homosexuals whose tendency comes from a false education, from a lack of normal sexual development, from habit, from bad example, or from other similar causes, and is transitory or at least not incurable; and homosexuals who are definitively such because of some kind of innate instinct or a pathological constitution judged to be incurable. In regard to this second category of subjects, some people conclude that their tendency is so natural that it justifies in their case homosexual relations within a sincere communion of life and love analogous to marriage, in so far as such homosexuals feel incapable of enduring a solitary life. In the pastoral field, these homosexuals must certainly be treated with understanding and sustained in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their inability to fit into society. Their culpability will be judged with prudence. **But no pastoral method can be employed which would give moral justification to these acts on the grounds that they would be consonant with the condition of such people. For according to the objective moral order, homosexual relations are acts which lack an essential and indispensable finality. In Sacred Scripture they are condemned as a serious depravity and even presented as the sad consequence of rejecting God (Rom 1:24-27 – See also what Saint Paul says of ‘*masculorum concubitores*’ in 1Cor 6:10; 1Tim 1:10). This judgment of Scripture does not of course permit us to conclude that all those who suffer from this anomaly are personally responsible for it, but it does attest to the fact that homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration on certain questions concerning sexual ethics – Persona humana*, no. 8, December 29, 1975)

Every direct violation of the moral order of sexuality is objectively serious

According to the Church’s teaching, mortal

sin, which is opposed to God, does not consist only in formal and direct resistance to the commandment of charity. **It is equally to be found in this opposition to authentic love which is included in every deliberate transgression, in serious matter, of each of the moral laws.** Christ Himself has indicated the double commandment of love as the basis of the moral life. But on this commandment depends ‘the whole Law, and the Prophets also.’ (Mt 22:38, 40). It therefore includes the other particular precepts. In fact, to the young man who asked, ‘. . . what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?’ Jesus replied: ‘. . . if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments . . . You must not kill. You must not commit adultery. You must not steal. You must not bring false witness. Honor your father and mother, and: you must love your neighbor as yourself’ (Mt 19:16-19). **A person therefore sins mortally not only when his action comes from direct contempt for love of God and neighbor, but also when he consciously and freely, for whatever reason, chooses something which is seriously disordered.** For in this choice, as has been said above, there is already included contempt for the Divine commandment: the person turns himself away from God and loses charity. Now according to Christian tradition and the Church’s teaching, and as right reason also recognizes, **the moral order of sexuality involves such high values of human life that every direct violation of this order is objectively serious** (cf. note 17 and 19 above Decree of the Holy Office, March 18th, 1666, DS 2060; Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 13, 14). It is true that in sins of the sexual order, in view of their kind and their causes, it more easily happens that free consent is not fully given; this is a fact which calls for caution in all judgment as to the subject’s responsibility. In this matter it is particularly opportune to recall the following words of Scripture: ‘Man looks at appearances but God looks at the heart’ (Sam 16:7). **However, although prudence is recommended in judging the subjective seriousness of a particular sinful act, it in no way follows that one can hold the view that in the sexual field mortal sins are not committed.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration on certain questions concerning sexual ethics Persona humana*, no. 9, December 29, 1975)

Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it must be seen as an objective disorder – living out of this orientation is not a morally acceptable option

Explicit treatment of the problem was given in this Congregation's 'Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics' of December 29, 1975. That document stressed the duty of trying to understand the homosexual condition and noted that culpability for homosexual acts should only be judged with prudence. At the same time the Congregation took note of the distinction commonly drawn between the homosexual condition or tendency and individual homosexual actions. These were described as deprived of their essential and indispensable finality, as being 'intrinsically disordered', and able in no case to be approved of (cf. no. 8, 4) In the discussion which followed the publication of the Declaration, however, an overly benign interpretation was given to the homosexual condition itself, some going so far as to call it neutral, or even good. **Although the particular inclination of the homosexual person is not a sin, it is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder. Therefore special concern and pastoral attention should be directed toward those who have this condition, lest they be led to believe that the living out of this orientation in homosexual activity is a morally acceptable option. It is not.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the bishops of the Catholic church on the pastoral care of homosexual persons*, no. 3, October 1, 1986)

The Church rejects erroneous opinions regarding homosexuality

As in every moral disorder, homosexual activity prevents one's own fulfillment and happiness by acting contrary to the creative wisdom of God. **The Church, in rejecting erroneous opinions regarding homosexuality, does not limit but rather defends personal freedom and dignity realistically and authentically understood.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church on the pastoral care of homosexual persons*, no. 7, October 1, 1986)

Protecting those who have no intention of abandoning their homosexual behavior is opposed to the teachings of the Church

Thus, the Church's teaching today is in organic continuity with the Scriptural perspective and with her own constant Tradition. Though today's world is in many ways quite new, the Christian community senses the profound and lasting bonds which join us to those generations who have gone before us, 'marked with the sign of faith'. Nevertheless, **increasing numbers of people today, even within the Church, are bringing enormous pressure to bear on the Church to accept the homosexual condition as though it were not disordered and to condone homosexual activity.** Those within the Church who argue in this fashion often have close ties with those with similar views outside it. These latter groups are guided by a vision opposed to the truth about the human person, which is fully disclosed in the mystery of Christ. They reflect, even if not entirely consciously, a materialistic ideology which denies the transcendent nature of the human person as well as the supernatural vocation of every individual. **The Church's ministers must ensure that homosexual persons in their care will not be misled by this point of view, so profoundly opposed to the teaching of the Church.** But the risk is great and there are many who seek to create confusion regarding the Church's position, and then to use that confusion to their own advantage. **The movement within the Church, which takes the form of pressure groups of various names and sizes, attempts to give the impression that it represents all homosexual persons who are Catholics.** As a matter of fact, its membership is by and large restricted to those who **either ignore the teaching of the Church or seek somehow to undermine it.** It brings together under the aegis of Catholicism homosexual persons who have no intention of abandoning their homosexual behaviour. **One tactic used is to protest that any and all criticism of or reservations about homosexual people, their activity and lifestyle, are simply diverse forms of unjust discrimination.** There is an effort in some countries to manipulate the Church by gaining the often well-intentioned support of her pastors with a view to changing civil-statutes and laws. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the bishops of the Catholic Church*

on the pastoral care of homosexual persons, no. 8-9, October 1, 1986)

Homosexual orientation is an objective disorder evoking moral concern

‘Sexual orientation’ does not constitute a quality comparable to race, ethnic background, etc. in respect to non-discrimination. Unlike these, **homosexual orientation is an objective disorder** (cf. Letter *Homosexualitatis problema*, no. 3) **and evokes moral concern**. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Some considerations concerning the response to legislative proposals on the non-discrimination of homosexual persons*, no. 10, July 23, 1992)

Homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered – this same moral judgment is unanimously accepted by Catholic Tradition

There are absolutely no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and family. Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law. Homosexual acts ‘close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. **Under no circumstances can they be approved**’. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2357). Sacred Scripture condemns homosexual acts ‘as a serious depravity’... (cf. Rom 1:24-27; 1Cor 6:10; 1Tim 1:10). This judgment of Scripture does not of course permit us to conclude that all those who suffer from this anomaly are personally responsible for it, but it does attest to the fact that **homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered**. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Persona humana*). **This same moral judgment is found in many Christian writers of the first centuries** (cf., for example, Saint Polycarp, Letter to the Philippians, V, 3; Saint Justin Martyr, First Apology, 27, 1-4; Athenagoras, Supplication for the Christians, 34.) **and is unanimously accepted by Catholic Tradition**. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons*, no. 4, June 3, 2003)

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Sacred Scripture and Tradition has considered the practice of homosexuality as intrinsically immoral, a grave sin and an impediment to Holy Orders

From the time of the Second Vatican Council until today, various Documents of the Magisterium, and especially the Catechism of the Catholic Church, have confirmed the teaching of the Church on homosexuality. The Catechism distinguishes between homosexual acts and homosexual tendencies.

Regarding acts, it teaches that Sacred Scripture presents them as grave sins. The Tradition has constantly considered them as intrinsically immoral and contrary to the natural law. Consequently, under no circumstance can they be approved. [...] the Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2358; cf. also CIC, can. 208 and CCEO, can. 11.), **cannot admit to the seminary or to holy orders those who practise homosexuality, present deep-seated homosexual tendencies or support the so-called ‘gay culture’** (cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, A memorandum to Bishops seeking advice in matters concerning homosexuality and candidates for admission to Seminary, July 9, 1985; Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Letter *Notitiae* 38, May 16, 2002, 586). (Congregation for Catholic Education. *Instruction concerning the criteria for the discernment of vocations with regard to persons with homosexual tendencies in view of their admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders*, no. 2, November 4, 2005)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY

Homosexuality must be presented to the youth in light of the documents of the Church

A particular problem that can appear during the process of sexual maturation is **homosexuality, which is also spreading more and more in urbanized societies. This phenomenon must be presented with balanced judgement, in the light of the documents of the Church**. Young

people need to be helped to distinguish between the concepts of what is normal and abnormal, between subjective guilt and objective disorder, avoiding what would arouse hostility. On the other hand, the structural and complementary orientation of sexuality must be well clarified in relation to marriage, procreation and Christian chastity. (Pontifical Council for the Family. *The truth and meaning of human sexuality*, guidelines for education within the family, no. 104, December 8, 1995)

The demand to grant ‘marital’ status to unions between persons of the same sex is incongruous

The truth about conjugal love also makes it possible to understand the serious social consequences of the institutionalization of homosexual relations: ‘We can also see how incongruous is the demand to grant ‘marital’ status to unions between persons of the same sex. It is opposed, first of all, by the objective impossibility of making the partnership fruitful through the transmission of life according to the plan inscribed by God in the very structure of the human being. Another obstacle is the absence of the conditions for that interpersonal complementarity between male and female willed by the Creator at both the physical-biological and the eminently psychological levels’ (John Paul II. Discourse to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, January 2, 1999). **Marriage cannot be reduced to a condition similar to that of a homosexual relationship: this is contrary to common sense** ‘there is no equivalence between the relationship of two persons of the same sex and the relationship formed by a man and a woman. Only the latter can be described as a couple because it implies sexual difference, the conjugal dimension, the ability to exercise fatherhood and motherhood. Obviously, homosexuality cannot represent this symbolic whole’. Statement by the Permanent Council of the French Bishops’ Conference regarding the legislative bill ‘Civil Pact of Solidarity’, September 17, 1998.) In the case of homosexual relations, which demand to be considered *de facto* unions, the moral and juridical consequences take on special relevance. (With regard to the grave, intrinsic moral disorder, contrary to natural law, of homosexual acts, see: Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2357-2359; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Persona*

Humana, December 29, 1975; Pontifical Council for the Family, Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality, December 8, 1995, no. 104). **‘Lastly, de facto unions between homosexuals are a deplorable distortion of what should be a communion of love and life between a man and a woman in a reciprocal gift open to life’** (John Paul II. Discourse to the Participants in the XIV General Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family, June 4, 1999; cf. John Paul II, Angelus, June 19, 1994). However, the presumption to make these unions equivalent to ‘legal marriage’, as some recent initiatives attempt to do, is even more serious (cf. Pontifical Council For The Family, Statement on the Resolution by the European Parliament making *de facto* unions, including same sex unions, equal to the family, March 17, 2000). Furthermore, the attempts to legalize the adoption of children by homosexual couples adds an element of great danger to all the previous ones. (‘It cannot be overlooked that, as some of its promoters acknowledge, this legislation constitutes a first step toward, for example, the adoption of children by persons living in a homosexual relation. We fear for the future as we deplore what has happened’ Statement by the Chairman of the French Bishops’ Conference after the promulgation of the ‘Civil Pact of Solidarity’, October 13, 1999). ‘The bond between two men or two women cannot constitute a real family and much less can the right be attributed to that union to adopt children without a family’ (John Paul II. Angelus, February 20, 1994). **To recall the social transcendence of the truth about conjugal love and consequently the grave error of recognizing or even making homosexual relations equivalent to marriage does not presume to discriminate against these persons in any way.** (Pontifical Council for the Family. *Marriage and ‘de facto’ unions*, no. 23, November 21, 2000)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The dynamism towards procreation is intrinsically linked to the natural inclination that leads man to woman and woman to man

The good of the species appears in this way as one of the fundamental aspirations present in the person. We become particularly aware of it in our time, when certain issues such as global

warming revive our sense of responsibility for the planet, as well as for the human species in particular. This openness to a certain common good of the species is already an assertion of certain aspirations proper to the human person. **The dynamism towards procreation is intrinsically linked to the natural inclination that leads man to woman and woman to man, a universal datum recognized in all societies.** It is the same for the inclination to care for one's children and to educate them. **These inclinations imply that the permanence of the union of man and woman, indeed even their mutual fidelity, are already values to pursue, even if they can only fully flourish in the spiritual order of interpersonal communion** (cf. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 16). (International Theological Commission. *In search of a universal ethic: a new look at the Natural Law*, no. 49, May 20, 2009)

PIUS V

The nefarious crime against nature

If someone commits the **nefarious crime against nature, for which the divine anger condemned the children of iniquity**, he should be given over to the secular authorities to be punished according to the law, and **if he is a cleric, no matter what his position, he shall be degraded and subjected to analogous punishment.** (Pius V. *Constitution Cum primum*, Bullarium romanum, April 1, 1566)

The crime which caused the destruction of the corrupted cities

That horrible crime, which caused the destruction of the cities corrupted by the conflagration of the tremendous justice of God, marks us with bitter sorrow and gravely wounds our soul, bringing us to repress it with the greatest possible zeal. [...] All and any priests, be they regular or secular clerics, of whatever degree or dignity, by this present canonical authority, we deprive of all clerical privileges, all positions, dignities and ecclesiastical benefits. And degraded by this Ecclesiastical Tribunal, be given over to the power of the secular State to be submitted to the due punishments, for they shall be returned to the lay state. (Pius V. *Constitution Horrendum*

illud scelus 3, August 30, 1568, Bullarium Romanum, p. 267)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

The sin against nature provokes God and cries out for His vengeance

Q. Which are the sins that are said to cry to God for vengeance?

A. The sins that are said to cry to God for vengeance are these four: (1) Willful murder; (2) **The sin of sodomy**; (3) Oppression of the poor; (4) Defrauding labourers of their wages.

Q. Why are these sins said to cry to God for vengeance?

A. These sins are said to cry to God for vengeance because the Holy Ghost says so, and **because their iniquity is so great and so manifest that it provokes God to punish them with the severest chastisements.** (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 8-9)

JOHN PAUL II

Saint Paul declares that the immoral are excluded from the Kingdom of God

A doctrine which dissociates the moral act from the bodily dimensions of its exercise is contrary to the teaching of Scripture and Tradition. Such a doctrine revives, in new forms, certain ancient errors which have always been opposed by the Church, inasmuch as they reduce the human person to a 'spiritual' and purely formal freedom. This reduction misunderstands the moral meaning of the body and of kinds of behaviour involving it (cf. 1Cor 6:19). **Saint Paul declares that 'the immoral, idolaters, adulterers, sexual perverts, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers' are excluded from the Kingdom of God** (cf. 1Cor 6:9). **This condemnation – repeated by the Council of Trent – lists as 'mortal sins' or 'immoral practices' certain specific kinds of behaviour the wilful acceptance of which prevents believers from sharing in the inheritance promised to them.** In fact, body and soul are inseparable: in the person, in the willing agent and in the deliberate act, they stand or fall together. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 49, August 6, 1993)

BENEDICT XVI

Christian faith and ethics do not wish to stifle love, but to make it healthy

Christian faith and ethics do not wish to stifle love but to make it healthy, strong and truly free: this is the exact meaning of the **Ten Commandments, which are not a series of 'noes' but a great 'yes' to love and to life.** Human love, in fact, needs to be purified, to mature and also to surpass itself if it is to be able to become fully human, to be the beginning of true and lasting joy, to respond, that is, to the question of eternity which it bears within it and which it cannot renounce without betraying itself. **This is the principal reason why love between a man and a woman is only completely fulfilled in marriage.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants of the Ecclesial Convention of the Diocese of Rome*, June 5, 2006)

There is a biological basis of the difference between the sexes

Creatures differ from one another and can be protected, or endangered, in different ways, as we know from daily experience. **One such attack comes from laws or proposals which, in the name of fighting discrimination, strike at the biological basis of the difference between the sexes.** I am thinking, for example, of certain countries in Europe or North and South America. Saint Columban stated that: 'If you take away freedom, you take away dignity' (Ep. 4 ad Attela, in S. Columbani Opera, Dublin, 1957, p. 34). Yet freedom cannot be absolute, since man is not himself God, but the image of God, God's creation. **For man, the path to be taken cannot be determined by caprice or willfulness, but must rather correspond to the structure willed by the Creator.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the diplomatic corps accredited to the Holy See for the traditional exchange of New Year greetings*, January 11, 2010)

Profound falsehood of the 'anthropological revolution' within the new philosophy of sexuality in our times

While up to now we regarded a false understanding of the nature of human freedom as one cause of the crisis of the family, **it is**

now becoming clear that the very notion of being – of what being human really means – is being called into question. He quotes the famous saying of Simone de Beauvoir: 'one is not born a woman, one becomes so' (*on ne naît pas femme, on le devient*). **These words lay the foundation for what is put forward today under the term 'gender' as a new philosophy of sexuality.** According to this philosophy, sex is no longer a given element of nature, that man has to accept and personally make sense of: it is a social role that we choose for ourselves, **while in the past it was chosen for us by society.** The profound falsehood of this theory and of the anthropological revolution contained within it is obvious. **People dispute the idea that they have a nature, given by their bodily identity, that serves as a defining element of the human being. They deny their nature and decide that it is not something previously given to them, but that they make it for themselves.** According to the biblical creation account, being created by God as male and female pertains to the essence of the human creature. This duality is an essential aspect of what being human is all about, as ordained by God. This very duality as something previously given is what is now disputed. The words of the creation account: 'male and female he created them' (Gen 1:27) no longer apply. No, what applies now is this: it was not God who created them male and female – hitherto society did this, now we decide for ourselves. **Man and woman as created realities, as the nature of the human being, no longer exist. Man calls his nature into question.** From now on he is merely spirit and will. The manipulation of nature, which we deplore today where our environment is concerned, now becomes man's fundamental choice where he himself is concerned. From now on there is only the abstract human being, who chooses for himself what his nature is to be. **Man and woman in their created state as complementary versions of what it means to be human are disputed.** (Benedict XVI. *Address, Christmas greetings to the members of the Roman Curia*, December 21, 2012)

Denying the natural structure of marriage between a man and a woman brings serious harm to justice and peace

There is also a need to acknowledge and

promote the natural structure of marriage as the union of a man and a woman in the face of attempts to make it juridically equivalent to radically different types of union; such attempts actually harm and help to destabilize marriage, obscuring its specific nature and its indispensable role in society. **These principles are not truths of faith, nor are they simply a corollary of the right to religious freedom. They are inscribed in human nature itself, accessible to reason and thus common to all humanity.** The Church's efforts to promote them are not therefore confessional in character, but addressed to all people, whatever their religious affiliation. **Efforts of this kind are all the more necessary the more these principles are denied or misunderstood,** since this constitutes an offence against the truth of the human person, with serious harm to justice and peace. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the celebration of the 46th World Day of Peace*, no. 4, January 1, 2013)

A radical denial of the nature of the creature

The most dangerous snare of this current of thought is in fact the absolutization of man: man wants to be *ab-solutus*, freed from every bond and from every natural constitution. He claims to be independent and thinks that his happiness lies in his own self-affirmation. **'Man calls his nature into question . [...] From now on there is only the abstract human being, who chooses for himself what his nature is to be'** (Discourse to the Roman Curia, 21 December 2012). This is a radical denial of the nature of the creature and child in man, which ends in tragic loneliness. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council Cor unum*, January 19, 2013)

3 – Fathers, Doctors and Saints of the Church

SAINT POLYCARP OF SMYRNA

It is needful to abstain from all these things

In like manner, let the young men also be

blameless in all things, being especially careful to preserve purity, and keeping themselves in, as with a bridle, from every kind of evil. For it is well that they should be cut off from the lusts that are in the world, since **'every lust wars against the spirit;'** and **'neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God,'** nor those who do things inconsistent and unbecoming. Wherefore, it is needful to abstain from all these things, being subject to the presbyters and deacons, as unto God and Christ. (Saint Polycarp of Smyrna. *Epistle to the Philippians*, V, 3)

ATHENAGORAS OF ATHENS

Those who dishonor the fair workmanship of God

For those who have set up a market for fornication and established infamous resorts for the young for every kind of vile pleasure,—who do not abstain even from males, males with males committing shocking abominations, outraging all the noblest and comeliest bodies in all sorts of ways, so dishonouring the fair workmanship of God (for beauty on earth is not self-made, but sent hither by the hand and will of God),—these men, I say, revile us for the very things which they are conscious of themselves, and ascribe to their own gods, boasting of them as noble deeds, and worthy of the gods. **These adulterers and pæderasts defame the eunuchs and the once-married** (while they themselves live like fishes; for these gulp down whatever falls in their way, and the stronger chases the weaker: and, in fact, **this is to feed upon human flesh, to do violence in contravention of the very laws which you and your ancestors, with due care for all that is fair and right, have enacted**), so that not even the governors of the provinces sent by you suffice for the hearing of the complaints against those, to whom it even is not lawful, when they are struck, not to offer themselves for more blows, nor when defamed not to bless: for it is not enough to be just (and justice is to return like for like), but it is incumbent on us to be good and patient of evil. (Athenagoras of Athens. *A plea for the Christians*, 34)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Sodomites ruin the soul with the body – nothing more grievous than this insolent dealing

And thus not only was their doctrine Satanical, but their life too was diabolical. [...] For the murderer dissevers the soul from the body, but this man ruins the soul with the body. And name what sin you will, none will you mention equal to this lawlessness. And if they that suffer such things perceived them, they would accept ten thousand deaths so they might not suffer this evil. **For there is not, there surely is not, a more grievous evil than this insolent dealing.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily IV, On the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans*)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Offences contrary to nature are to everywhere and always be detested and punished

Therefore **those offences which be contrary to nature are everywhere and at all times to be held in detestation and punished;** such were those of the Sodomites, **which should all nations commit, they should all be held guilty of the same crime by the divine law, which hath not so made men that they should in that way abuse one another.** For even that fellowship which should be between God and us is violated, when that same nature of which He is author is polluted by the perversity of lust. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Confessions*, Book III, ch. 8, no. 15)

GREGORY I

By their just punishment they might be taught the gravity of unjust desire

Forasmuch as they had been kindled to bad desires in the ill savour of the flesh, **it was meet that they should perish by fire and brimstone combined; that by their just punishment they might be taught what they had done in unjust desire.** (Gregory I. *Morals on the Book of Job*, Book XIV, no. 23)

SAINT PETER DAMIAN

Sodomy should not be considered an ordinary vice, for it exceeds in gravity all of the other sins – it destroys the body and throws the soul into the abyss

Sodomy should not be considered an ordinary vice, for it exceeds in gravity all of the other sins, as it destroys the body, throws the soul into the abyss, pollutes the flesh, extinguishes the light of reason, expels the Holy Spirit from the temple of the soul and introduces the devil of impurity. **Sodomy induces error, expels the truth from the deceived spirit, deceiving the pilgrim and projecting him into the abyss from where he may never escape, opening to him the gates of hell,** closing to him the entrance to Paradise, transforming him from a citizen of the Celestial Jerusalem to an heir of the Infernal Babylon. **This vice is considered as precisely the worst of crimes for it is the only that provokes divine vengeance,** in violating austerity, suffocating purity, enslaving chastity, definitively destroying virginity with the violence of impure contagion, as it makes all filthy, stains all, and renders the survival of anything pure, chaste or clean impossible. (Saint Peter Damian. *Liber gomorrhianus*, XVI: PL: 145, 175-176)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Unnatural vice transgresses what has been determined by nature; it is the gravest of all, and an injury to God the Author of nature

In every genus, worst of all is the corruption of the principle on which the rest depend. Now the principles of reason are those things that are according to nature, because reason presupposes things as determined by nature, before disposing of other things according as it is fitting. This may be observed both in speculative and in practical matters. Wherefore just as in speculative matters the most grievous and shameful error is that which is about things the knowledge of which is naturally bestowed on man, so in matters of action it is most grave and shameful to act against things as determined by nature. Therefore, **since by the unnatural vices man transgresses that which has been determined by nature with regard to**

the use of venereal actions, it follows that in this matter this sin is gravest of all. [...] Just as the ordering of right reason proceeds from man, so the order of nature is from God Himself: wherefore in sins contrary to nature, whereby the very order of nature is violated, an injury is done to God, the Author of nature. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 154, a. 12; ad 1)

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

A divine revelation: the devils themselves who incite sin, loath the sight of that horrendous sin

But they do just the opposite to me, for they come to this mystery wholly impure – and not simply with the sort of impurity and weakness to which you are all naturally inclined because of your weak nature (although reason can calm its rebellion if free choice so wills). No, these wretches not only do not restrain their weaknesses; they make it worse by committing that cursed unnatural sin. As if they were blind and stupid, with the light of their understanding extinguished, they do not recognize what miserable filth they are wallowing in. The stench reaches even up to me, Supreme Purity. And is so hateful to me that for this sin alone five cities were struck down by my divine judgment. For my divine justice could no longer tolerate it, so despicable to me is this abominable sin. But the stench displeases not only me, as I have said, but the devils as well, those very devils these wretches have made their masters. It is not its sinfulness

that displeases them, for they like nothing that is good. But because their nature is angelic, that nature still loathes the sight of that horrendous sin actually being committed. It is true that it was they who in the beginning shot the poisoned arrows of concupiscence, but when it comes to the sinful act itself they run away. (Saint Catherine. *Dialogue*, ch. 124)

SAINT BONAVENTURE

The death of the sodomites was necessary for the restoration of chastity on the earth

All sodomites, both men and women, died all over the face of the earth, according to that which Saint Jerome taught about the Psalm: 'A light dawned for the just', to show that he who was to be born would come to reform nature and promote chastity. (Saint Bonaventure. *In Nativitate Domini*, Sermon XXII, vol. IX, p. 123)

SAINT PETER CANISIUS

Nature itself abhors this horrible and abominable sin

The men of Sodom, saith the Scripture, were very naught, and sinners before God too much. This horrible and abominable sin Saint Peter and Saint Paul do reproach: yea nature herself doth abhor: and the Scripture also doth declare the greatness of foul a wickedness (Saint Peter Canisius. *Summa of Christian Doctrine III*, Of sins that cry unto heaven, pg. 137 – Latin)

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We will all be up there in Heaven together

Despite the indifferentism of our days, it often happens that the same question, which someone – perhaps afflicted with the perspective of eternal condemnation – had posed long ago to the Redeemer keeps coming back: ‘Lord, will only a few people be saved?’ (Lk 13:23). And although hardly anyone might want to recognize the fact, we know that the question of eternal happiness is related to fulfilling the commandments, persevering in the state of grace, and firm adhesion to the one true Church. Today, some tend to put the question in simplified terms: contaminated by false ideas, they erroneously try to show the way to Heaven as though it were as spacious as that leading to eternal condemnation (cf. Mt 7:13). But truth will always wield on the upright of heart the same power of attraction and strength of conversion that it always has... These are the ones who discern that while the Lord’s ‘yoke is easy and His burden light’ (cf. Mt 11:30), yet ‘the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force’ (cf. Mt 11:12).

FRANCIS

We will finally be clothed in the joy, peace and love of God, completely, without any limit, and we will come face to face with Him! (cf. 1Cor 13:12). It is beautiful to think of this, to think of **Heaven. We will all be there together. [All of us]**. It is beautiful, it gives strength to the soul. (*General audience, November 26, 2014*)

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- ◆ No one may be saved outside of obedience to the Popes

Council of Florence (Ecumenical XVII)

- ◆ Those who are not united to the Church will go to everlasting fire

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ◆ To reach heaven it is necessary to live in a saintly manner

- ◆ Obeying the commandments is the condition for salvation

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ Those who work evil do not deserve the future life
- ◆ It is not unjust for God to inflict eternal punishment to an obstinate sinner
- ◆ Graver punishment is due for offense to a greater person – God is infinite, offense to Him merits infinite punishment

Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments

- ◆ Salvation is not brought in a mechanistic way without one's participation

Gregory XVI

- ◆ Those who seek eternal life in any other religion are not with Christ

Pius IX

- ◆ Catholic faith is necessary in order to reach eternal life
- ◆ A very grave error of some Catholics: to believe that men living in error can attain eternal life
- ◆ No one will be chastised if not guilty of deliberate faults
- ◆ The condemnation of obstinate sinners is an act of justice
- ◆ An impious idea to be removed from the minds of all: eternal salvation can be found in any religion

Pius XII

- ◆ Those who do not belong to the visible Body of the Catholic Church cannot be sure of salvation

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ◆ Those that refuse to enter the Church cannot be saved
- ◆ Constant vigilance is necessary so as not to be ordered to go into eternal fire

John Paul II

- ◆ Man is condemned to eternal damnation for the misuse of his liberty
- ◆ The words of Christ are clear: there are those who will go to eternal punishment

Benedict XVI

- ◆ 'God will be good to all': a beautiful hope, but murderers cannot suddenly sit down at God's table together with their victims

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ To die in mortal sin is to separate oneself from God forever by free choice

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Keep the commandments to enter into life

If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments. (Mt 19:17)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Christ died for all, yet not all receive the benefit of His death

But although Christ died for all (2Cor 5:15), yet not all receive the benefit of His death, but those only to whom the merit of His passion is communicated. For [...], unless they were born again in Christ, they never would be justified [can. 2 and 10], since in that new birth through the merit of His passion, the grace, whereby they are made just, is bestowed upon them. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1523. Council of Trent, Session VI, Ch. 3, Decree on Justification, January 13, 1547)

SYNOD OF CONSTANTINOPLE

He who denies eternal chastisement, is anathema

If anyone says or holds that the punishment of the demons and of impious men is temporary, and that it will have an end at some time, that is to say, there will be a complete restoration of the demons or of impious men, let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 411. Synod of Constantinople II confirmed by Pope Vigilius, *Canons against the doctrine of Origen, from the book of Emperor Justinian*, 543)

PSEUDO-ANTHANASIAN PROFESSION QUICUMQUE

Catholic faith is necessary in order to be saved

Whoever wishes to be saved, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity. (Denzinger Hünemann 75. *Pseudo-Anthanasian Profession Quicumque*)

INNOCENT III

We believe in one Church; not of the heretics, but the Catholic Church

By the heart we believe and by the mouth we confess the one Church, not of heretics but the Holy Roman, Catholic, and Apostolic (Church) outside which we believe that no one is saved. (Denzinger-Hünemann 792. Innocent III, *Profession of Faith prescribed for Durand of Osca and his Waldensian companions*, December 18, 1208)

CLEMENT VI

No one may be saved outside of obedience to the Popes

In the second place, we ask whether you and the Armenians obedient to you believe that no man of the wayfarers outside the faith of this Church, and outside the obedience of the Pope of Rome, can finally be saved. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1051. Clement VI. *From the letter Super quisbusdam to the Consolator*, September 20, 1351)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

Those who are not united to the Church will go to everlasting fire

It firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart 'into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt 25:41), unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock; and that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is so strong that only to those remaining in it are the sacraments of the Church of benefit for salvation, and do fastings, almsgiving, and other functions of piety and exercises of Christian service produce eternal reward, and that no one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1351. Council of Florence, *Bull Cantata Domino*, February 4, 1442)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

To reach heaven it is necessary to live in a saintly manner

Knowing that, of certain rather obscure sentences of the Apostle Paul, certain unrighteous men had taken occasion so as to be careless about a good life, as though secure of the salvation which is in faith, [Saint Peter] made mention that there are certain things difficult to understand in his Epistles, which men perverted, as also they did other Scriptures, unto their own destruction. When, notwithstanding that Apostle [Saint Paul] held, the same as the other Apostles, concerning eternal salvation, as what was not given except to them who live a good life. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *De Fide et operibus*, no. 22 – English)

Obeying the commandments is the condition for salvation

The third question is one very full of danger, whence, in that it hath been little considered, and not handled according to the divine sayings, it seems to me that all that opinion hath arisen, whereby promise is made unto persons living most wicked and shameful lives, even although they go on so to live and only believe in Christ and receive His Sacraments, that they shall come unto salvation and life everlasting; in opposition to the most open sentence of the Lord, Who made answer unto him that was longing for life everlasting: ‘If thou wilt come unto life, keep the Commandments’; and made mention of what Commandments, wherein those very sins are shunned, unto which is promised, I know not how, salvation everlasting, on account of faith without works. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *De Fide et operibus*, no. 49 – English)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Those who work evil do not deserve the future life

In this matter we should note that contrary causes beget contrary effects. Thus action

that proceeds from malice is contrary to action that proceeds from virtue. Accordingly **wretchedness, in which evil action issues, is the opposite of happiness, which virtuous action merits.** Furthermore, contraries pertain to the same genus. Therefore, since final happiness, which is reached by virtuous action, is a good that belongs not to this life but to the next life, as is clear from an earlier discussion, **final wretchedness, also, to which vice leads, must be an evil belonging to the next world.** Besides, all goods and ills of this life are found to serve some purpose. External goods, and also bodily goods, are organically connected with virtue, which is the way leading directly to beatitude, for those who use such goods well. But for those who use these goods ill, they are instruments of vice, which ends up in misery. Similarly the ills opposed to such goods, as sickness, poverty, and the like, are an occasion of progress in virtue for some but aggravate the viciousness of others, according as men react differently to such conditions. But what is ordained to something else cannot be the final end, because it is not the ultimate in reward or punishment. Therefore neither ultimate happiness nor ultimate misery consists in the goods or ills of this life. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Compendium of Theology*, Ch. 173)

It is not unjust for God to inflict eternal punishment to an obstinate sinner

The suffering of eternal punishment is in no way opposed to divine justice. Even in the laws men make, punishment need not correspond to the offense in point of time. For the crime of adultery or murder, either of which may be committed in a brief span of time, human law may prescribe lifelong exile or even death, by both of which the criminal is banned forever from the society of the state. Exile, it is true, does not last forever, but this is purely accidental, owing to the fact that man’s life is not everlasting; but the intention of the judge, we may assume, is to sentence the criminal to perpetual punishment, so far as he can. In the same way **it is not unjust for God to inflict eternal punishment for a sin committed in a moment of time. We should also take into consideration the fact that eternal**

punishment is inflicted on a sinner who does not repent of his sin, and so he continues in his sin up to his death. And since he is in sin for eternity, he is reasonably punished by God for all eternity. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Compendium of Theology*, Ch. 183)

Graver punishment is due for offense to a greater person – God is infinite, offense to Him merits infinite punishment

Furthermore, any sin committed against God has a certain infinity when regarded from the side of God, against whom it is committed. For, clearly, **the greater the person who is offended, the more grievous is the offense.** He who strikes a soldier is held more gravely accountable than if he struck a peasant; and his offense is much more serious if he strikes a prince or a king. Accordingly, **since God is infinitely great, an offense committed against Him is in a certain respect infinite; and so a punishment that is in a certain respect infinite is duly attached to it.** Such a punishment cannot be infinite in intensity, for nothing created can be infinite in this way. **Consequently a punishment that is infinite in duration is rightly inflicted for mortal sin.** Moreover, while a person is still capable of correction, temporal punishment is imposed for his emendation or cleansing. **But if a sinner is incorrigible, so that his will is obstinately fixed in sin,** as we said above is the case with the damned, **his punishment ought never to come to an end.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Compendium of Theology*, Ch. 183)

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

AND THE DISCIPLINE OF SACRAMENTS

Salvation is not brought in a mechanistic way without one's participation

The expression 'for many', while remaining open to the inclusion of each human person, is reflective also of the fact that this salvation is not brought about in some mechanistic way, without one's own willing or participation; rather, the believer is invited to accept in faith the gift that is being offered and to receive the supernatural life that is given to those who

participate in this mystery, living it out in their lives as well so as to be numbered among the 'many' to whom the text refers. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of Sacraments. *Letter from Cardinal Francis Arinze on the translation of 'pro multis'*, October 17, 2006)

GREGORY XVI

Those who seek eternal life in any other religion are not with Christ

Now We consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: indifferentism. This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained. Surely, in so clear a matter, you will drive this deadly error far from the people committed to your care. **With the admonition of the apostle that 'there is one God, one faith, one baptism' (Eph 4:5) may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever.** They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that 'those who are not with Christ are against Him,' (Lk 11:23), and **that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. Therefore 'without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate'** (Symbol. S. Athanasius). Let them hear Jerome who, while the Church was torn into three parts by schism, tells us that whenever someone tried to persuade him to join his group he always exclaimed: **'He who is for the See of Peter is for me'** (Saint Jerome, epistle 57). **A schismatic flatters himself falsely if he asserts that he, too, has been washed in the waters of regeneration.** Indeed Augustine would reply to such a man: **'The branch has the same form when it has been cut off from the vine; but of what profit for it is the form, if it does not live from the root?'** (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 13, August 15, 1832)

Pius IX

Catholic faith is necessary in order to reach eternal life

In particular, ensure that the faithful are deeply and thoroughly convinced of the truth of the doctrine that the Catholic faith is necessary for attaining salvation. The Catholic laity and clergy should repeatedly offer special thanks to God in public prayers for the priceless gift of the Catholic religion. They should also beseech God to protect the profession of this faith in our country and to keep it unharmed. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Noscitis et nobiscum*, no. 10, December 8, 1849)

A very grave error of some Catholics: to believe that men living in error can attain eternal life

And here, beloved Sons and Venerable Brothers, We should mention again and censure a very grave error in which some Catholics are unhappily engaged, who believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life. Indeed, this is certainly quite contrary to Catholic teaching. (Denzinger-Hünermann 2865-2867. Pius IX, *Encyclical Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863)

No one will be chastised if not guilty of deliberate faults

It is known to Us and to you that they who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion and who, zealously keeping the natural law and its precepts engraved in the hearts of all by God, and being ready to obey God, live an honest and upright life, can, by the operating power of divine light and grace, attain eternal life, since God who clearly beholds, searches, and knows the minds, souls, thoughts, and habits of all men, because of His great goodness and mercy, will by no means suffer anyone to be punished with eternal torment who has not the guilt of deliberate sin. But, the Catholic dogma that no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church is well-known; and also that those who are obstinate toward the authority and definitions of the same Church, and who

persistently separate themselves from the unity of the Church, and from the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, to whom 'the guardianship of the vine has been entrusted by the Savior', cannot obtain eternal salvation. (Denzinger-Hünermann 2865-2867. Pius IX, *Encyclical Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863)

The condemnation of obstinate sinners is an act of justice

[Condemned error:] 15. Every man is free to embrace and profess that religion which he, led by the light of reason, thinks to be the true religion.

[Condemned error:] 16. In the worship of any religion whatever, men can find the way to eternal salvation, and can attain eternal salvation.

[Condemned error:] 17. We must have at least good hope concerning the eternal salvation of all those who in no wise are in the true Church of Christ. (Denzinger-Hünermann 2915-2917. Pius IX, *Syllabus of errors of our age – III Indifferentism, Latitudinarianism*, 15-17)

An impious idea to be removed from the minds of all: eternal salvation can be found in any religion

As Our Apostolic duty, we wish your Episcopal solicitude and vigilance to be aroused, so that you will strive as much as you can to drive from the mind of men that impious and equally fatal opinion, namely, that the way of eternal salvation can be found in any religion whatsoever. May you demonstrate with that skill and learning in which you excel, to the people entrusted to your care that the dogmas of the Catholic faith are in no wise opposed to divine mercy and justice. (Pius IX. *Allocution Singularis quadam*, December 9, 1854)

Pius XII

Those who do not belong to the visible Body of the Catholic Church cannot be sure of salvation

We have committed to the protection and guidance of heaven those who do not belong

to the visible Body of the Catholic Church [...] ask each and every one of them to correspond to the interior movements of grace, and to seek to withdraw from that state in which they cannot be sure of their salvation. For even though by an unconscious desire and longing they have a certain relationship with the Mystical Body of the Redeemer, they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 103, June 29, 1943)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Those that refuse to enter the Church cannot be saved

This Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5) and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved. (Vatican Council II. Dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, no. 14, November 21, 1964)

Constant vigilance is necessary so as not to be ordered to go into eternal fire

Since however we know not the day nor the hour, on Our Lord's advice we must be constantly vigilant so that, having finished the course of our earthly life (cf. Heb 9:27), we may merit to enter into the marriage feast with Him and to be numbered among the blessed (Cf. Mt 25:31-46) and that we may not be ordered to go into eternal fire (Mt 25:41) like the wicked and slothful servant (Cf. Mt 25:26), into the exterior darkness where 'there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth'

(Mt 22:13 and 25:30). (Vatican Council II. Dogmatic constitution *Lumen gentium*, no. 48, November 21, 1964)

JOHN PAUL II

Man is condemned to eternal damnation for the misuse of his liberty

God is the infinitely good and merciful Father. But man, called to respond to him freely, can unfortunately choose to reject his love and forgiveness once and for all, thus separating himself for ever from joyful communion with him. It is precisely this tragic situation that Christian doctrine explains when it speaks of eternal damnation or Hell. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, July 28, 1999)

The words of Christ are clear: there are those who will go to eternal punishment

The problem of Hell has always disturbed great thinkers in the Church [...] In point of fact, the ancient councils rejected the theory of the 'final apocatastasis,' according to which the world would be regenerated after destruction, and every creature would be saved; a theory which indirectly abolished hell. But the problem remains. Can God, who has loved man so much, permit the man who rejects Him to be condemned to eternal torment? And yet, the words of Christ are unequivocal. In Matthew's Gospel He speaks clearly of those who will go to eternal punishment (cf. Mt 25:46). (John Paul II. *Crossing the threshold of hope*, pg. 96)

BENEDICT XVI

'God will be kind to us all': a beautiful hope, but murderers cannot suddenly sit down at God's table together with their victims

As the great Marxist Adorno said, only the resurrection of the body, which he claimed as unreal, would be able to create justice. We believe in this resurrection of the body in which not all will be equal. Today people have become used to thinking: what is sin? God

is great, he knows us, so sin does not count; **in the end God will be kind to us all. It is a beautiful hope. But both justice and true guilt exist. Those who have destroyed man and the earth cannot suddenly sit down at God's table together with their victims.** God creates justice. (Benedict XVI. *Meeting with the parish priests and the clergy of the Diocese of Rome*, February 7, 2008)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

To die in mortal sin is to separate oneself from God forever by free choice

We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. **But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him**, against our neighbor or against ourselves: 'He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him' (1Jn 3:14-15). Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren (Mt 25:31-46). **To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from him forever by our own free choice.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1033)

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The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone for eternity

There are some uncomfortable truths that we would like to forget...to make things easier. Though there is certainly no benefit derived from this mentality, some people persist in it, thinking that by insistently denying the truth, it will just cease to exist.

A few months ago, certain newspapers, of dubious religiosity, published articles with headlines such as: 'Pope Francis reviews the theology of Hell,' 'Does an eternal hell exist? Pope Francis is open to reviewing this idea' or 'Pope Francis reviews the dogma of the eternal chastisement in hell'. To defend such an outlandish theory, the articles – devoid of true intellectual integrity – were based on an affirmation of Pope Francis in the Mass with the cardinals created at the last Consistory.

Since such truths are what real pastors should make the most efforts to preach about – if, in fact, we wish to work for the salvation of souls – it is opportune to ask ourselves certain questions: By any chance may the Pope change a revealed truth? Perhaps the Church cannot eternally condemn, but what about God? Should preaching about hell cease? After death cannot one still repent? Does God, who is good, really chastise eternally?

FRANCIS

The way of the Church is **not to condemn anyone for eternity**. (*Homily at Mass with the new Cardinals, February 15, 2015*)

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Saint Irenaeus of Lyons

♦ They are themselves the cause of their inhabiting eternal darkness

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Eternal condemnation in the words of Christ

The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all who cause others to sin and all evildoers. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. (Mt 13: 41-42)

'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'. (Mt 25: 41)

SYNOD OF CONSTANTINOPLE

The punishment of the demons and of impious men is eternal

If anyone says or holds that the punishment of the demons and of impious men is temporary, and that it will have an end at some time, that is to say, there will be a complete restoration of the demons or of impious men, let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 411. Synod of Constantinople, confirmed by Pope Vigilius, *Canons against Origen*, 543)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Unquenchable fire is reserved for those who refuse to believe and be converted

Jesus often speaks of 'Gehenna' of 'the unquenchable fire' reserved for those who to the end of their lives refuse to believe and be converted, where both soul and body can be lost (cf. Mt 5:22, 29; 10:28; 13:42, 50; Mk 9:43-48). Jesus solemnly proclaims that he 'will send his angels, and they will gather . . . all evil doers, and throw them into the furnace of fire' (Mt 13:41-42), and that he will pronounce the condemnation: 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire!' (Mt 25:41). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1034)

The souls of those who die in a state of

mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer eternally

The teaching of the Church affirms the existence of hell and its eternity. Immediately after death the souls of those who die in a state of mortal sin descend into hell, where they suffer the punishments of hell, 'eternal fire' (DS 76; 409; 411; 801; 858; 1002; 1351; 1575; Paul VI, *Credo of the People God* #12). The chief punishment of hell is eternal separation from God, in whom alone man can possess the life and happiness for which he was created and for which he longs. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1035)

COMPENDIUM OF THE CATECHISM

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In what does hell consist?

Hell consists in the eternal damnation of those who die in mortal sin through their own free choice. The principal suffering of hell is eternal separation from God in whom alone we can have the life and happiness for which we were created and for which we long. Christ proclaimed this reality with the words, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire' (Mt 25:41). (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 212)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

The damned are tormented with unclean spirits in eternal and inextinguishable fire

These abodes are not all of the same nature, for among them is that most loathsome and dark prison in which the souls of the damned are tormented with the unclean spirits in eternal and inextinguishable fire. This place is called gehenna, the bottomless pit, and is hell strictly so called. (Catechism of Trent, 1050)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

At the end of the world, those who have done evil will come forth unto resurrection of judgment

We strive therefore to please God in all things

(2Cor 5:9) and we put on the armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil and resist in the evil day (Eph 6:11-13). Since however we know not the day nor the hour, on Our Lord's advice we **must be constantly vigilant so that, having finished the course of our earthly life**, (Heb 9:27) we may merit to enter into the marriage feast with Him and to be numbered among the blessed (Mt 25:31-46) and **that we may not be ordered to go into eternal fire** (Mt 25:41) like the wicked and slothful servant (Mt 25:26), **into the exterior darkness where 'there will be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth'** (Mt 22:13; 25:30). For before we reign with Christ in glory, all of us will be made manifest 'before the tribunal of Christ, so that each one may receive what he has won through the body, according to his works, whether good or evil' (2Cor 5:10) and **at the end of the world 'they who have done good shall come forth unto resurrection of life; but those who have done evil unto resurrection of judgment'** (Jn 5:29; Mt 25:46). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 48, November 21, 1964)

JOHN PAUL II

Hell and eternal damnation: the state of those who definitively reject the Father's mercy

God is the infinitely good and merciful Father. But man, called to respond to him freely, can unfortunately choose to reject his love and forgiveness once and for all, thus separating himself for ever from joyful communion with him. It is precisely this tragic situation that Christian doctrine explains when it speaks of eternal damnation or hell. [...] In a theological sense however, hell is something else: it is the ultimate consequence of sin itself, which turns against the person who committed it. It is the state of those who definitively reject the Father's mercy, even at the last moment of their life. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, July 28, 1999)

PIUS XI

Jesus declared to the Jews that the Father

bestowed judicial power on Him – to impose punishments which no one can escape

Jesus Himself declared to the Jews, who accused Him of violating the quiet of Sabbath by the wonderful healing of the sick man, **that the Father had bestowed judicial power on Him**: 'For neither doth the Father judge any man, but hath given all judgment to the Son' (Jn 5:22); by which this also is understood – **since the fact cannot be separated from the judgment – that by His own right He confers rewards and punishments upon men while still living. And furthermore that power which is called executive is to be attributed to Christ, since it is necessary that all obey His power, and since no one can escape what has been imposed upon the contumacious in the imposing of punishment.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 3677. Pius XI, *Encyclical Quas primas*, December 11, 1925)

PIUS XII

The greatest disgrace is grave sin, by which one becomes worthy of eternal chastisement

Once restored by the waters of baptism, [the soul] is clothed in luminous whiteness, but with evil actions, it separates from the right path and is stained again. **If the fault is grave, the grace of God is lost and one becomes worthy of eternal chastisement. Is there a greater disgrace than this? It is of capital importance for the Christian not to offend God, not to sin, and to keep the soul always in the state of grace.** (Pius XII. *Letter to Bishop José Clemente Maurer*, Archbishop of Sucre, August 13, 1954)

Before God and men, the Church has the sacred duty to preach about hell and to teach it without any mitigation

The preaching of the first truths of the faith and the final ends of man have not only not lost any of their appropriateness in our times, but have also become more necessary and urgent than ever. This includes preaching about hell. There is no doubt that this subject must be spoken of with dignity and wisdom. But, as far as the real substance of this truth goes, **the Church has, before God and**

before men, the sacred duty to proclaim it, to teach it without any mitigation, as Christ has revealed it, and there is no condition of time that might diminish the rigor of this obligation... It is true that the desire for heaven is of itself a more perfect motive than the fear of eternal damnation; but this does not mean that it is for all men also the most efficacious motive, to keep them far from sin and to convert them to God. (Pius XII. *Address to priests and Lenten preachers*, March 23, 1949)

SYNOD OF VALENCE

Wrath and indignation eternally: for those who do not obey the truth

As apostolic doctrine holds: 'To them indeed, who according to patience in good works, seek glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life; but to them that are contentious, and who obey not the truth, but give credit to iniquity, **wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man doing evil**' (Rom 2:7 ff). In the same sense, this same one says elsewhere: 'In the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of His power, in a flame of fire, giving vengeance to them **who do not know God, and who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall suffer eternal punishment in destruction...** when He shall come to be glorified in His Saints, and to be made wonderful in all them who have believed' (2Thess 1:7 ff). (Denzinger-Hünemann 626. *Synod of Valence*, On predestination)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The Church believes that the definitive state of damnation awaits those who die burdened with grave sin

The Church believes that the definitive state of damnation awaits those who die burdened with grave sin (cf. LG 48). It is categorically important to avoid any too close assimilation of the purificatory process which precedes our meeting with God with the process of damnation, as if all that lay between them was the opposition of eternal and temporal: **the postmortem purification is 'straightforwardly other than the pain of damnation'** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Recentiores*

episcoporum Synodi, 7, p. 942.). (International Theological Commission. *Some current questions in eschatology*, no. 8.2, 1990)

PELAGIUS I

The wicked are given to eternal and inextinguishable fire, that they may burn without end

For I confess that **all men from Adam, even to the consummation of the world**, having been born and having died with Adam himself and his wife, who were not born of other parents, but were created, the one from the earth, the other, however, from the rib of the man (cf. Gen 2:7), **will then rise again and stand before the Judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he has done, whether it be good or bad** (Rom 14:10, 2Cor 5:10); and indeed by the very bountiful grace of God he will present the just, as vessels of mercy prepared beforehand for glory (Rom 9:23), with the rewards of eternal life; namely, they will live without end in the society of the angels without any fear now of their own fall; **the wicked, however, remaining by choice of their own with vessels of wrath fit for destruction** (Rom 9:22), who either did not know the way of the Lord, or knowing it left it when seized by various transgressions, **He will give over by a very just judgment to the punishment of eternal and inextinguishable fire, that they may burn without end.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 443. Pelagius I, *Letter Humani generis to Childebert I*, April, 557)

SAINT ROBERT BELLARMINE

After death there is no place for repentance, and out of hell there is no redemption

And every reader of history, or observer of what takes place around him, cannot but know that **the rule is for men to end a wicked life by a miserable death, whilst it is the exception for the sinner to die happily**; and, on the other hand, it seldom happens that those who live well and holily come to a sad and miserable end, but many good and pious people enter, after their death, into the possession of eternal

joys. Those persons are too presumptuous and fool-hardy who, in a matter of such import as eternal felicity or eternal torment, dare to remain in a state of mortal sin even for a day, seeing that they may be surprised by death at any moment, and after death there is no place for repentance, and out of hell there is no redemption. (Saint Robert Bellarmine. *The seven words on the Cross*, Ch. VI)

SAINT ALPHONSUS DE LIGUORI

Rash confidence in the mercy of God sends more souls to hell than his justice

A learned author says, that the mercy of God sends more souls to hell than his justice; for sinners are induced, by a rash confidence in the divine mercy, to continue in sin, and thus are lost. God is merciful. Who denies it? But great as is his mercy, how many does he send to hell every day? God is merciful: but he is also just; and therefore he is obliged to punish those who offend him. He shows mercy; but to whom? To them who fear him. He hath strengthened His mercy toward them that fear Him. As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him (Ps 102:11, 13). (Saint Alphonsus de Liguori. *Preparation for death*, part III, consideration 23, no. 2)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The condemnation of the reprobates is bitter, just and everlasting

The saying 'in flaming fire', deals with both chastising the evil and rewarding the good; but in the chastisement of the evil shows to be bitter, just and everlasting. Then it says, 'inflicting vengeance', that is, judging the reprobates with flaming fire, reducing to ashes the face of the earth, consuming the damned and casting them down forever. [...] This chastisement is everlasting, for they shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction [...] from which it is said that they will be so to say always dying: 'Death shall be their shepherd' (Ps 48:15). 'Their worm shall not die' (Is 66:24); 'nor their fire be extinguished.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Second Letter to the Thessalonians*, lect. 2, 2Thess 1: 6-12 – Spanish)

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

What makes hell intolerable is the fact that suffering can never have an end: an eternal night which gives birth to eternal despair

Like those in this city [a city of gloom, a city of burning pitch and brimstone, a city whose inhabitants can never escape], the damned are in the depths of hell, suffering unspeakable torments in every sense and member. Having used their life to sin, they suffer pain befitting their sin. [...] Yet greater than all these torments is the loss of the glory and the Presence of God, being deprived of it forever. If Absalom found the suffering of never seeing his father's face greater than that of banishment, how much greater our suffering at being excluded forever from the Face of God! Consider that what makes hell intolerable is the fact that our suffering can never have an end. If a ache in the tooth or a slight fever makes the night seem endless, then how terrible that eternal night when afflicted with so many sufferings! An eternal night which gives birth to eternal despair and frenzied blasphemies without end. (Saint Francis de Sales. *Introduction to devote life*, Book I, no. 15, meditation 7)

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

If he does not amend his life, he will be eternally condemned with great reprimand and reproach

[Our Lord Jesus Christ] O dearest daughter! I have placed you on the bridge of the doctrine of my truth so that he might serve you, o pilgrims, and administer you the sacraments of the holy Church, but he [a priest] stays in the miserable river below the bridge immersed in the pleasures and miseries of the world. There he exercises his ministry, without noticing the wave that drags him to death and he goes with the devils, his masters, whom he has served and by whom he has been openly guided, along the river. If he does not amend his life, he will be eternally condemned with great reprimand and reproach, that your tongue would be incapable of referring. And he, due to his priestly office, much more than any other lay person. For this reason the same sin is punished

more in him than in one who would have stayed in the world. **At the moment of death his enemies will accuse him more terribly, as I have told you.** (Saint Catherine of Siena. *Dialogue*, no. 130)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

They are themselves the cause of their inhabiting eternal darkness

But God, foreknowing all things, prepared fit habitations for both, kindly conferring that light which they desire on those who seek after the light of incorruption, and resort to it; but for the despisers and mockers who avoid and turn themselves away from this light, and who do, as it were, blind themselves, He has prepared darkness suitable to persons who oppose the light, and He has inflicted an appropriate punishment upon those who try to avoid being subject to Him. Submission to God is eternal rest, so that they who shun the light have a place worthy of their flight; and those who fly from eternal rest, have a

habitation in accordance with their fleeing. Now, since all good things are with God, **they who by their own determination fly from God, do defraud themselves of all good things;** and having been [thus] defrauded of all good things with respect to God, they shall consequently fall under the just judgment of God. For those persons who shun rest shall justly incur punishment, and those who avoid the light shall justly dwell in darkness. For as in the case of this temporal light, those who shun it do deliver themselves over to darkness, **so that they do themselves become the cause to themselves that they are destitute of light, and do inhabit darkness;** and, as I have already observed, the light is not the cause of such an [unhappy] condition of existence to them; so **those who fly from the eternal light of God, which contains in itself all good things, are themselves the cause to themselves of their inhabiting eternal darkness, destitute of all good things, having become to themselves the cause of [their consignment to] an abode of that nature.** (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *IV*, 39, 4)

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A reinterpretation of the Creed: at the Final Judgment, Jesus Christ will be our advocate and not our judge

The contemplation of the imposing drama of the Last Judgment has always been of immense benefit to the faithful; even in our days, it's an efficacious element for awakening consciences and calling to conversion. A subject that appears with clarity and frequency in the Sacred Scriptures, the Last Judgment holds great pastoral value and is easily understandable by all. The Church condenses this truth of the faith in the definitive and simple words that Catholics pray daily in the Creed: Christ will come 'to judge the living and the dead.' But... will Christ really come as just judge? Or as something else? How will His judgment be? Full of tender goodness or resolute justice? Will he chastise anyone, or just embrace all, full of love?

In a word, does the Church want us to think of the Final Judgment only with 'expectation and deep joy' or also with reverential fear that should help to keep us from sin and thus guarantee our eternal salvation?

FRANCIS

Whenever we think of Christ's return and of his final judgment, which will manifest to its ultimate consequences the good that each person has done or failed to do during his earthly life, we seem to find ourselves before a mystery which towers above us, which we fail even to imagine. A mystery which almost instinctively arouses a sense of fear in us, and perhaps even one of trepidation. If, however, we reflect well on this reality, it cannot but expand the heart of a Christian and come to constitute a cause of consolation and of trust. [...] In that case, it is the Church as bride who, on behalf of all humanity and as its first fruits, addresses herself to Christ her Bridegroom, looking forward to be enfolded in his embrace: **Jesus' embrace, which is the fullness of life and the fullness of love. This is how Jesus embraces us. If we think of judgment in this perspective, all fear and hesitation fade and make room for expectation and deep joy:** it will be the very moment when we will be judged finally ready to be clothed in Christ's glory, as with a nuptial garment, to be led into the banquet, the image of full and definitive communion with God. **A second reason for confidence is offered to us by the observation that, at the moment of judgement, we will not be left alone.** In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus himself foretells how, at the end of time, those who have followed him will take their place in glory, and judge with him (cf. Mt 19:28). The Apostle Paul then, writing to the community of Corinth, states: 'Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?... How much more, matters pertaining to this life!' (1Cor 6:2-3). **How beautiful it is to know that at that juncture, in addition to Christ, our Paraclete, our Advocate with the Father (cf. 1Jn 2:1), we will be able to count on the intercession and goodness of so many of our elder brothers and sisters who have gone before us on the journey of faith, who have offered their lives for us and who continue to love us ineffably! The saints already live in the sight of God, in the splendour of his glory praying for us who still live on earth. What consolation this certainty arouses in our hearts! The Church is truly a mother and, as a mother, she seeks her children's good, especially of those who are furthest away and are afflicted, until she finds its fullness in the glorious body of Christ with all its members.**

A further suggestion is offered to us by the Gospel of John, where it explicitly states that ‘God sent his Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God’ (Jn 3:17-18). This means, then, that this final judgement is already in progress, it begins now over the course of our lives. Thus judgement is pronounced at every moment of life, as it sums up our faith in the salvation which is present and active in Christ, or of our unbelief, whereby we close in upon ourselves. But if we close ourselves to the love of Jesus, we condemn ourselves. **Salvation is to open oneself to Jesus, it is he who saves us. If we are sinners — and we all are — we ask him for forgiveness and if we go to him with the desire to be good, the Lord forgives us. But for this we must open ourselves to Jesus’ love, which is stronger than all else. Jesus’ love is great, Jesus’ love is merciful, Jesus’ love forgives.** (*General audience*, December 11, 2013)

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SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The season for mercy is followed by the season of judgment – God's goodness must lead to repentance

There is therefore a season for mercy, when the long-suffering of God calleth sinners to repentance. Hear the Apostle distinguishing each season, and do thou also distinguish it... 'Thinkest thou,' he saith, 'O man, that judgest them that do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?' And as if we were to reply, **Why do I commit such sins daily, and no evil occurreth unto me?** He goeth on to show to him the season of mercy: 'Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering?' And he did indeed despise them; but the Apostle hath made him anxious. 'Not knowing,' he saith, 'that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?' Behold the season of mercy. **But that he might not think this would last forever, how did he in the next verse raise his fears?** Now hear the season of judgment; thou hast heard the season of mercy, on which account, 'mercy and judgment will I sing unto Thee, O Lord:' 'But thou,' saith the Apostle, 'after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the

righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds'. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on Psalm 101* (100), no. 1-2)

He who was unjustly judged by the unjust, shall come manifestly to judge

For He shall come manifestly to judge justly the just and the unjust, who before came hiddenly to be unjustly judged by the unjust. He, I say, shall come manifestly, and shall not keep silence, that is, shall make Himself known by His voice of judgment. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *The City of God*, XX, XXIV, 2)

Among the ungodly are counted not only those who refuse to believe in Christ, but also those who believed in Him to no purpose and without fruit

For He will come in the glory of His power, who of old condescended to come in the lowliness of humanity; and He will separate all the godly from the ungodly, not only from those who have utterly refused to believe in Him at all, but also from those who have believed in Him to no purpose and without fruit. To the one class He will give an eternal kingdom

together with Himself, while to the other He will award eternal punishment together with the devil. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On the Catechising of the Uninstructed*, II, 24, 45)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

During this life, Jesus Christ is our advocate before the Father: reason for greatest joy

He also ascended into heaven, according to the Apostle, that he may appear in the presence of God for us, and discharge for us the office of advocate with the Father. My little children, says Saint John, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. **But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just: and he is the propitiation for our sins. There is nothing from which the faithful should derive greater joy and gladness of soul than from the reflection that Jesus Christ is constituted our advocate and the mediator of our salvation with the Eternal Father, with whom His influence and authority are supreme.** (Catechism of Trent, no. 1050, Article VI of the Creed)

But, the second coming of the Son of God will be as a judge

The Sacred Scriptures inform us that there are two comings of the Son of God: the one when He assumed human flesh for our salvation in the womb of a virgin; the other when He shall come at the end of the world to judge all mankind. This latter coming is called in Scripture the day of the Lord. 'The day of the Lord,' says the Apostle, 'shall come, as a thief in the night; and our Lord Himself says: Of that day and hour no one knoweth.' [...] And if, from the beginning of the world that day of the Lord, on which He was clothed with our flesh, was sighed for by all as the foundation of their hope of deliverance; so also, after the death and Ascension of the Son of God, we should make that other day of the Lord the object of our most earnest desires, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God.' (Catechism of Trent, no. 1070, Article VII of the Creed)

The power of judging is attributed to the Son

In explaining this subject the pastor should distinguish two different occasions on which everyone must appear in the presence of the Lord to render an account of all his thoughts, words and actions, and to receive immediate sentence from his Judge. [...] The second occurs when on the same day and in the same place all men shall stand together before the tribunal of their Judge, that in the presence and hearing of all human beings of all times each may know his final doom and sentence. The announcement of this judgment will constitute no small part of the pain and punishment of the wicked; whereas the good and just will derive great reward and consolation from the fact that it will then appear what each one was in life. [...] Although the power of judging is common to all the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, yet it is specially attributed to the Son, because to Him also in a special manner is ascribed wisdom. (Catechism of Trent, no. 1070, article VII of the Creed)

BENEDICT XVI

The Judge will return: we must not live as if good and evil were the same

The Judge who returns at the same time as Judge and Saviour has left us the duty to live in this world in accordance with his way of living. [...] Since God can only be merciful we do not live as if good and evil were the same thing. This would be a deception. In reality, we live with a great responsibility. We have talents, and our responsibility is to work so that this world may be open to Christ, that it be renewed. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, November 12, 2008)

God is justice and creates justice: grace does not cancel out justice such that whatever one has done ends up being of equal value

The image of the Last Judgment is not primarily an image of terror, but an image of hope; for us it may even be the decisive image of hope. Is it not also a frightening image? I would say: it is an image that evokes responsibility, an image, therefore, of that fear of which

Saint Hilary spoke when he said that all our fear has its place in love (cf. *Tractatus super Psalmos*, Ps 127:1-3). God is justice and creates justice. This is our consolation and our hope. And in his justice there is also grace. This we know by turning our gaze to the crucified and risen Christ. Both these things – justice and grace – must be seen in their correct inner relationship. Grace does not cancel out justice. It does not make wrong into right. It is not a sponge which wipes everything away, so that whatever someone has done on earth ends up being of equal value. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spe salvi*, no. 44, November 30, 2007)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

He who now remits our sins, will then appear again to judge all

Let us ever bear in mind this tribunal, that we may thus be enabled at all times to continue in virtue; [...] For He who now hath remitted our sins, will then sit in judgment; He who hath died for our sake will then appear again to judge all mankind. 'Unto them that look for Him,' saith the Apostle, 'shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation' (Heb 9:28). (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 39*, On the Gospel of John)

JOHN PAUL II

The judgment of Christ is a definitive salvific act

The divine power of judging has been linked to the mission of Christ as Savior, as Redeemer of the world. And the same judging pertains to the work of salvation; to the order of salvation: it is a definitive salvific act. In effect, the purpose of judgment is the full participation in the divine Life as the last gift granted to man: the definitive fulfillment of his eternal vocation. At the same time the power to judge is linked with the exterior revelation of the glory of the Father in his Son as the Redeemer of man. (John Paul II. *General audience*, September 30, 1987)

Christ will put an end to a universe corrupted by falsehood

The Lord will appear in clouds, clothed in power and glory. He is the same Son of man, merciful and compassionate, whom the disciples knew during his earthly journey. When the moment comes for his manifestation in glory, he will come to give human history its definitive fulfillment. Through the symbolism of cosmological upheavals, the Evangelist Mark recalls that God will pronounce his last judgment on human events in the Son, putting an end to a universe corrupted by falsehood and torn by violence and injustice. (John Paul II. *Homily, Jubilee of the armed forces and police*, no. 1, November 19, 2000)

LATERN COUNCIL IV (ECUMENICAL XII)

God is to judge the living and the dead

[Firmly we believe and we confess simply that the true God ...] is to come at the end of time, to judge the living and the dead, and to render to each according to his works, to the wicked as well as to the elect, all of whom will rise with their bodies which they now bear, that they may receive according to their works, whether these works have been good or evil, the latter everlasting punishment with the devil, and the former everlasting glory with Christ. (Denzinger-Hünermann 801. Lateran Council IV, *Definition against the Albigensians*, Ch.1, *The Catholic Faith*, November 11-30, 1215)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing will be condemned

Jesus announced the judgment of the Last Day in his preaching. Then will the conduct of each one (cf. Mk 12:38-40) and the secrets of hearts be brought to light (Lk 12:1-3; Jn 3:20-21; Rom 2:16; 1Cor 4:5). Then will the culpable unbelief that counted the offer of God's grace as nothing be condemned (Mt 11:20-24; 12:41-42). Our attitude to our neighbour will disclose acceptance or refusal of grace and divine love (Mt 5:22; 7:1-5). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 678)

Judgment Day will be the definitive triumph of good over evil

On Judgement Day at the end of the world, Christ will come in glory to achieve the definitive triumph of good over evil which, like the wheat and the tares, have grown up together in the course of history. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 681)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

The same Judge will send the good and evil both into a fitting place

The same Father is manifestly declared (in this passage), 'making peace and creating evil things,' preparing fit things for both; as also there is one Judge sending both into a fit place, as the Lord sets forth in the parable of the tares and the wheat, where He says, 'As therefore the tares are gathered together, and burned in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather from His kingdom everything that offendeth, and those who work iniquity, and shall send them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth'. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against heresies*, IV, 40, 2)

BENEDICT XII

Everyone will receive according to the good or evil practiced

Moreover, we declare that according to the common arrangement of God, the souls of those who depart in actual mortal sin immediately after their death descend to hell where they are tortured by infernal punishments, and that nevertheless on the day of judgment all men with their bodies will make themselves ready to render an account of their own deeds before the tribunal of Christ, 'so that everyone may receive the proper things of the body according as he has done whether it be good or evil' (2Cor 5:10). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1002. Benedict XII, *Constitution Benedictus Deus*, January 29, 1336)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

All human affairs are included in Christ's judiciary power

For, to whomsoever the substance is entrusted, the accessory is likewise committed. Now all human affairs are ordered for the end of beatitude, which is everlasting salvation, to which men are admitted, or from which they are excluded by Christ's judgment, as is evident from Mt 25:31, 40. Consequently, it is manifest that all human affairs are included in Christ's judiciary power. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 59, a. 4)

PAUL VI

Truths of the Christian doctrine may not be innovated according to arbitrary conjectures

We know well, in doing this, the problems that some modern ambiances are agitated regarding the faith. They did not escape the influence of a world that is undergoing a profound transformation, in which so many truths are either contested or put up for debate. Furthermore: we even see that some Catholics are captivated by a sort of passion for changes and innovations. Without doubt, the Church has always the obligation to penetrate more and more, and to offer them in more fitting way to men of each generation, into the profound mysteries of God, from which the fruits of salvation flow forth for all. **But**, at the same time, **great care must be taken so that**, while undertaking this necessary duty of investigation, **truths of the Christian doctrine are not damaged**. Because that would mean – and we have observed sadly that today this in reality takes place – general perturbation and perplexity in many faithful souls. For this reason, it is of great importance to warn that, besides that which is observable and that which is discovered by scientific means, **the intelligence**, which was given to us God, may arrive at reality, that which is, not only to the subjective expressions of structures and of the evolution of conscience; and that on the other hand, that what pertains to interpretation or hermeneutic is to seek to comprehend and discern, with respect to the word pronounced, the meaning of

which a given text is an expression, but not to innovate, in any manner, this meaning, according to arbitrary conjectures. (Paul VI. *Homily*, Conclusion of the 'Year of Faith', June 30, 1968)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

It is not right to be silent with respect to the final judgment

Catechesis on the subject of the last things: should, on the one hand, be taught under the aspect of consolation, of hope, and of salutary fear (cf. 1Thess. 4:18) of which modern men have such great need; on the other hand, it should be imparted in such a way that the whole truth can be seen. **It is not right to minimize the grave responsibility which everyone has regarding his future destiny.** Catechesis cannot pass over in silence the judgement after death of each man, or the expiatory punishments of Purgatory, or the sad and lamentable reality of eternal death, or the final judgement. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Catechetical Directory*, no. 69, April 1, 1971)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Christ will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne, and **all the nations will be assembled before him.** And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep on his right and the goats

on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'. [...] Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels'. (Mt 25:31-34, 41)

The Father has given all judgment to his Son

Nor does **the Father judge anyone, but he has given all judgment to his Son,** Amen, amen, I say to you, the hour is coming and is now here when **the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live.** For just as the Father has life in himself, so also he gave to his Son the possession of life in himself. And he gave him power to exercise judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not be amazed at this, because the hour is coming in which all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and will come out, those who have done good deeds to the resurrection of life, but those who have done wicked deeds to the resurrection of condemnation. (Jn 5: 22.25-29)

The just judgment of God will repay everyone according to his works

By your stubbornness and impenitent heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself for the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God, who will repay everyone according to his works: eternal life to those who seek glory, honor, and immortality through perseverance in good works, but wrath and fury to those who selfishly disobey the truth and obey wickedness. (Rom 2:5-11)

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Egoists self-condemn themselves; their souls are not chastised but annihilated

What will happen to us after death? Where will we all go? This is one of the great questions of all human beings, whether Christian or not. Throughout history, the answer to these questions has often been sought in a manner that doesn't demand a rigorous morality that is coherent with the belief in an eternal life and an infinite God who rewards and chastises...

The eschatological teaching of the Church, based on Revelation, and expounded upon throughout the centuries by the Magisterium, addresses these questions with authority and wisdom. And, as Guardian of truth, the Church has a missionary purpose that is derived from Christ's mandate to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples and to seek to attract all to perennial truth. But...what is the real truth on this topic?

FRANCIS

If egoism overcomes and smothers his love for others, it darkens the divine flame in his interior and he condemns himself. What happens to this lifeless soul? Will it be chastised? How? Francis' response is exact and clear: there is no chastisement, rather, this soul is annihilated. All the others will participate in the joy of living in the presence of the Father. The annihilated souls will not participate in this banquet; with the death of the body, their journey ceases, and this is the motivation of the missionary Church: to save lost souls. (*Article-Interview by Eugenio Scalfari, La Repubblica, March 15, 2015*)¹

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¹ **Note:** The present declarations are found in the cited article-interview of Eugenio Scalfari, attributed (without quotation marks) to Pope Francis. However, as these words have not been the object of any official disclaimer – causing confusion among Catholics – we include them here, together with the customary array of magisterial teachings.

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I – THE HUMAN SOUL IS IMMORTAL AND CANNOT BE ANNIHILATED

V LATERAN COUNCIL (ECUMENICAL XVIII)

Among the pernicious errors that weaken the Catholic faith is the assertion that the intellectual soul is mortal

Since in our days (and we painfully bring this up) the sower of cockle, ancient enemy of the human race, has dared to disseminate and advance in the field of the Lord a number of pernicious errors, always rejected by the faithful, especially concerning the nature of the rational soul, namely, that it is mortal, or one in all men, and some rashly philosophizing affirmed that this is true at least according to philosophy, in our desire to offer suitable remedies against a plague of this kind, with the approval of this holy Council, we condemn and reject all who assert that the intellectual soul is mortal, or is one in all men, and those who cast doubt on these truths, since it [the soul] is not only truly in itself and essentially the form of the human body, as was defined in the canon of Pope Clement V our predecessor of happy memory published in the (general) Council of Vienne [no. 481] but it is also multiple according to the multitude of bodies into which

it is infused, multiplied, and to be multiplied... And since truth never contradicts truth, we declare [no. 1797] every assertion contrary to the truth of illumined faith to be altogether false; and, that it may not be permitted to dogmatize otherwise, we strictly forbid it, and we decree that all who adhere to errors of this kind are to be shunned and to be punished as detestable and abominable infidels who disseminate most damnable heresies and who weaken the Catholic faith. (Denzinger-Hünermann 1440-1441. V Lateran Council V, Bull Apostolici regiminis, Session VIII, December 19, 1513)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The soul separated from the body is a part of the human species...

The soul is a part of the human species; and so, although it may exist in a separate state, yet since it ever retains its nature of unibility, it cannot be called an individual substance, which is the hypostasis or first substance. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 29, q. 1, ad. 5)

It is immortal and everlasting...

Because that alone in our soul which belongs

to the intellect in act is separate and uses no organ; I mean that part of the soul whereby we understand actually and which includes the possible and agent intellect. And that is why Aristotle goes on to say that **this part of the soul alone is immortal and everlasting**, as being independent of the body in virtue of its separateness. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, II, 78, 12)

The soul must once again be united to the body

For we showed in Book II that **the souls of men are immortal. They persist, then, after their bodies, released from their bodies.** It is also clear from what was said in Book II that the soul is naturally united to the body, for in its essence it is the form of the body. It is then, contrary to the nature of the soul to be without the body. But nothing which is contrary to nature can be perpetual. Perpetually, then, the soul will not be without the body. Since, then, it persists perpetually, it must once again be united to the body; and this is to rise again. **Therefore, the immortality of souls seems to demand a future resurrection of bodies.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, IV, 79, 10)

The soul is subsistent and caused through creation by God

Again, since the intellectual soul has an operation independent of the body, it is subsistent, as proved above (Question 75, Article 2): therefore to be and to be made are proper to it. Moreover, since it is an immaterial substance **it cannot be caused through generation, but only through creation by God. Therefore to hold that the intellectual soul is caused by the begetter, is nothing else than to hold the soul to be non-subsistent and consequently to perish with the body.** It is therefore heretical to say that the intellectual soul is transmitted with the semen. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 118, a. 2)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

This journey of time ends with death, but then there is eternity

That in the meantime we die, we are passing over to immortality by death; nor can eternal

life follow, unless it should befall us to depart from this life. **That is not an ending, but a transit, and, this journey of time being traversed, a passage to eternity.** (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *Liber de Mortalitate*, no. 22)

PIUS XII

The soul is spiritual and immortal

The Apostle of the Gentiles later on makes himself the herald of this truth which associates men as brothers in one great family, when he proclaims to the Greek world that God 'hath made of one, all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times, and the limits of their habitation, that they should seek God' (Acts 17:26, 27). A marvelous vision, which makes us see the human race in the unity of one common origin in God 'one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in us all' (Eph 4:6); **in the unity of nature which in every man is equally composed of material body and spiritual, immortal soul;** in the unity of the immediate end and mission in the world; in the unity of dwelling place, the earth, of whose resources all men can by natural right avail themselves, to sustain and develop life; in the unity of the supernatural end, God Himself, to Whom all should tend; in the unity of means to secure that end. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no. 37-38, October 20, 1939)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Recognizing a spiritual and immortal soul, one plunges into the depths of reality

Now, man is not wrong when he regards himself as superior to bodily concerns, and as more than a speck of nature or a nameless constituent of the city of man. For by his interior qualities he outstrips the whole sum of mere things. **He plunges into the depths of reality whenever he enters into his own heart;** God, Who probes the heart (cf. 1Kings 16:7, Jer 17:10), awaits him there; there he discerns his proper destiny beneath the eyes of God. **Thus, when he recognizes in himself a spiritual and immortal soul, he is not being mocked by a fantasy born only of physical or social influences, but is rather laying hold of the proper truth of the matter.** (Vatican Council

II. *Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 14, December 7, 1965)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The soul subsists after death

The Sacred Congregation, whose task is to advance and protect the doctrine of the faith, here wishes to recall what the Church teaches in the name of Christ, especially concerning what happens between the death of the Christian and the general resurrection. [...] **The Church affirms that a spiritual element survives and subsists after death, an element endowed with consciousness and will, so that the 'human self' subsists. To designate this element, the Church uses the word 'soul',** the accepted term in the usage of Scripture and Tradition. Although not unaware that this term has various meanings in the Bible, the Church thinks that there is no valid reason for rejecting it; moreover, she considers that the use of some word as a vehicle is absolutely indispensable in order to support the faith of Christians. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter on certain questions containing eschatology*, May 17, 1979)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Every spiritual soul is created immediately by God

The Church teaches that every spiritual soul **is created immediately by God** - it is not 'produced' by the parents - and also that it is **immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death**, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection (cf. Pius XII. *Humani generis*; Paul VI, CPC no. 8; Lateran Council V). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 366)

Not only will the immortal soul live on after death, but even our mortal body will come to life again

The 'resurrection of the flesh' (the literal formulation of the Apostles' Creed) **means not only that the immortal soul will live on after death, but that even our 'mortal body' will come to life again** (Rom 8:11). Belief

in the resurrection of the dead has been an essential element of the Christian faith from its beginnings. 'The confidence of Christians is the resurrection of the dead; believing this we live' (Tertullian, *De res*, 1,1: PL 2, 841). How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep (1Cor 15:12-14). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 990-991)

BENEDICT XVI

A distinguishing mark of Christians: they know that their lives will not end in emptiness

You must not 'grieve as others do who have no hope' (1Thess 4:13). Here too we see as a **distinguishing mark of Christians the fact that they have a future**: it is not that they know the details of what awaits them, but **they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness**. Only when the future is certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live the present as well. So now we can say: Christianity was not only 'good news' — the communication of a hitherto unknown content. In our language we would say: the Christian message was not only 'informative' but 'performative'. That means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known — it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing. **The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spes salvi*, no. 2, November 30, 2007)

II – THE IMMORTAL SOUL RECEIVES ITS ETERNAL RETRIBUTION: REWARD OR PUNISHMENT

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The immortal soul awaits its reunion with the glorified body

What is 'rising'?

In death, the separation of the soul from the body, **the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body.** God, in his almighty power, will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the power of Jesus' Resurrection.

Who will rise?

All the dead will rise, 'those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment' (Jn 5:29; cf. Dan 12:2). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 997-998)

Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul

Death puts an end to human life as the time open to either accepting or rejecting the divine grace manifested in Christ (cf. 2Tim 1:9-10). **The New Testament** speaks of judgment primarily in its aspect of the final encounter with Christ in his second coming, but also **repeatedly affirms that each will be rewarded immediately after death in accordance with his works and faith.** The parable of the poor man Lazarus (cf. Lk 16:22) and the words of Christ on the cross to the good thief (Lk 23:43), as well as other New Testament texts (2Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23; Heb 9:27; 12:23) **speak of a final destiny of the soul - a destiny which can be different for some and for others (Mt 16:26). Each man receives his eternal retribution in his immortal soul at the very moment of his death, in a particular judgment that refers his life to Christ: either entrance into the blessedness of heaven - through a purification (cf. Council of Lyons II: DS 857-858; Council of Florence: DS 1304- 1306; Council of Trent (1563): DS 1820.) or immediately (cf. Benedict XII. *Benedictus Deus*: DS 1000-1001; John XXII, *Ne super his*: DS 990) - or immediate and everlasting damnation (cf. Benedict XII. *Benedictus Deus*: DS 1002).** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1021-1022)

THE FORMULA CALLED THE 'FAITH OF DAMASUS'

Either the reward of good merit or the penalty of eternal punishment for sins

We believe that cleansed in his death and in his blood we are to be raised up by him on the

last day in this body with which we now live; and we have hope that we shall obtain from him **either life eternal, the reward of good merit or the penalty of eternal punishment for sins.** Read these words, keep them, subject your soul to this faith. From Christ the Lord you will receive both life and reward. (Denzinger-Hünermann 72. *The formula called the 'Faith of Damasus'*, about 500)

XVI SYNOD OF TOLEDO

We will receive either the kingdom of eternal blessedness or the sentence of perpetual condemnation

Giving us an example with his resurrection, that we shall live as He, who after two days on the third resurrected living from among the dead, in this way we also at the end of this age believe that **we shall resurrect in all places, not with a ethereal figure, or among the shadows as an illusionary vision,** as the condemnable opinion of some affirmed [against the patriarch Eutiquio of Constantinople; cf. Gregory I the Great, *Moralia* XIV 56, no. 72], **but within the substance of true flesh, in which now we exist and live,** and at the hour of judgment presenting ourselves before Christ and his holy angels, each one will give an account (2Cor 5:10) of that which pertains to his own body - as he proceeded; well or badly - **to receive from Him either the kingdom of eternal bliss for his own actions or the sentence of perpetual condemnation for his crimes.** (Denzinger-Hünermann 574. *XVI Synod of Toledo, Profession of Faith, May, 693*)

BENEDICT XII

The souls of those who depart in mortal sin immediately after death descend to hell; on the Day of Judgment, with their bodies they will render an account of their deeds

By this edict which will prevail forever, with apostolic authority we declare: that according to the common arrangement of God, **souls of all the saints who departed from this world before the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ; also of the holy apostles, the martyrs, the confessors, virgins, and the other faithful who**

died after the holy baptism of Christ had been received by them, in whom nothing was to be purged, when they departed, nor will there be when they shall depart also in the future; or if then there was or there will be anything to be purged in these when after their death they have been purged; and the souls of children departing before the use of free will, reborn and baptized in that same baptism of Christ, when all have been baptized, immediately after their death and that aforesaid purgation in those who were in need of a purgation of this kind, even before the resumption of their bodies and the general judgment after the ascension of our Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, into heaven, **have been, are, and will be in heaven, in the kingdom of heaven and in celestial paradise with Christ**, united in the company of the holy angels, and after the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ have seen and see the divine essence by intuitive vision, and even face to face, with no mediating creature, serving in the capacity of an object seen, but divine essence immediately revealing itself plainly, clearly, and openly, to them, and seeing thus they enjoy the same divine essence, and also that from such vision and enjoyment their souls, which now have departed, are truly blessed and they have eternal life and rest; and also [the souls] of those who afterwards will depart, will see that same divine essence, and will enjoy it before the general judgment; and that such vision of the divine essence and its enjoyment makes void the acts of faith and hope in them, inasmuch as faith and hope are proper theological virtues; and that after there has begun or will be such intuitive and face-to-face vision and enjoyment in these, the same vision and enjoyment without any interruption [intermission] or departure of the aforesaid vision and enjoyment exist continuously and will continue even up to the last judgment and from then even unto eternity. Moreover, we declare that according to the common arrangement of God, **the souls of those who depart in actual mortal sin immediately after their death descend to hell where they are tortured by infernal punishments, and that nevertheless on the day of judgment all men with their bodies will make themselves ready to render an account of their own deeds before the tribunal of Christ, 'so that everyone may receive the proper things of the body according as he has done whether it be good or evil'** (2Cor

5:10). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1000-1002. *Benedict XII*, Constitution *Benedictus Deus*, January 29, 1336)

INNOCENT III

Those who have lived in this flesh will receive either punishment or rewards

We firmly believe and affirm also that **judgment by Jesus Christ will be individually for those who have lived in this flesh, and that they will receive either punishment or rewards.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 797. *From the letter Eius exemplo, to the Archbishop of Terraco*, December 18, 1208)

IV LATERAN COUNCIL (ECUMENICAL XII)

All receive according to their works, good or evil

And although He according to divinity is immortal and impassible, the very same according to humanity was made passible and mortal, who, for the salvation of the human race, having suffered on the wood of the Cross and died, descended into hell, arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. But He descended in soul, and He arose in the flesh, and He ascended equally in both, to come at the end of time, to judge the living and the dead, and **to render to each according to his works, to the wicked as well as to the elect, all of whom will rise with their bodies which they now bear, that they may receive according to their works, whether these works have been good or evil**, the latter everlasting punishment with the devil, and the former everlasting glory with Christ. (Denzinger-Hünemann 801. *IV Lateran Council, Against the Albigensians and other heretics*, November, 1215)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The Church believes in both the happiness of the just and in eternal punishment for the sinner

In fidelity to the New Testament and Tradition, the Church believes in the happiness of the just who will one day be with Christ. She believes that there will be

eternal punishment for the sinner, who will be deprived of the sight of God, and that this punishment will have a repercussion on the whole being of the sinner. [...] Christians must firmly hold the two following essential points: on the one hand they must believe in **the fundamental continuity**, thanks to the power of the Holy Spirit, **between our present life in Christ** and the future life (charity is the law of the Kingdom of God and our charity on earth will be the measure of our sharing in God's glory in heaven); on the other hand **they must be clearly aware of the radical break between the present life and the future one**, due to the fact that the economy of faith will be replaced by the economy of fullness of life: we shall be with Christ and 'we shall see God' (cf. 1Jn 3:2), and it is in these promises and marvellous mysteries that our hope essentially consists. **Our imagination may be incapable of reaching these heights, but our heart does so instinctively and completely.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter on certain questions concerning Eschatology*, May 17, 1979)

LEO XIII

Since the same end is established for all, each is to be judged individually according to the same law

From the records of the Gospels the equality of men consists in this, that all have received the same nature, and are called to the same highest dignity of the sons of God; and at the same time that, **since the same end is established for all, each is to be judged individually according to the same law, to obtain punishments or rewards according to merit.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 3130. Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod apostolici muneris*, December 28, 1878)

PAUL VI

Christ will come again to judge

Éscatos, in fact, means 'last'. This word (or more frequently, what it means) does not only appear in many passages of the conciliar documents, but it also **penetrates the entire idea of Christian life**, of the history, time and human destiny beyond death (man's 'four last things', according to the language of catechism

and preaching, that is, death, judgment, hell and heaven); principally, what prevails is the **idea of the plan of God with relation to humanity, the world and the glorious and eternal final epilogue of the mission of Christ.** This notion brings to mind a Church on its way to another life; not established definitively on this earth, but rather provisionally, engaged within a messianism that is extended beyond time. [...] It is true that we accept the words of the Lord, which infuse us with the certainty that with His coming to the world, 'the kingdom of God is already in our midst' (cf. Lk 17:21); we already possess - within the Church animated by the Holy Spirit - immense riches of a new life. But, after, **with the prophetic emanation that permeates the entire Gospel, Christ shows us that his historic coming, which we know from the Gospel, is not the final one.** (Paul VI. *General audience*, September 8, 1971)

JOHN PAUL II

Man is responsible for his actions and subject to the judgment of God

Consequently the moral life has an essential 'teleological' character, since it consists in the deliberate ordering of human acts to God, [...] but this ordering to one's ultimate end is not something subjective, dependent solely upon one's intention. It presupposes that such acts are in themselves capable of being ordered to this end, insofar as they are in conformity with the authentic moral good of man, safeguarded by the commandments. This is what Jesus himself points out in his reply to the young man: 'If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments' (Mt 19:17). **Clearly such an ordering must be rational and free, conscious and deliberate, by virtue of which man is 'responsible' for his actions and subject to the judgment of God.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 73, August 6, 1993)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God's great patience will make His sentence more just and more merited the chastisement

For great wrath ought to be preceded by great

forbearance, that the sentence of God may be made more just, and the death of the sinners more merited. God does not know sinners because they are not worthy that they should be known of God; not that He altogether is ignorant concerning them, but because He knows them not for His own. For God knows all men according to nature, but He seems not to know them for that He loves them not, as they seem not to know God who do not serve Him worthily.[...] For death separates the soul from the body, but changes not the purpose of the heart. (Pseudo-Chrysostom cited by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*, Mt 7:21-23)

LEO I, THE GREAT

The question is for what a man dies or lives: for the devil or for God

For when a man is changed by some process from one thing into another, not to be what he was is to him an ending, and to be what he was not is a beginning. **But the question is, to what a man either dies or lives: because there is a death, which is the cause of living, and there is a life, which is the cause of dying.** And nowhere else but in this transitory world are both sought after, so that upon the character of our temporal actions depend the differences of the eternal retributions. **We must die, therefore, to the devil and live to God: we must perish to iniquity that we may rise to righteousness.** (Leo I. *Sermon LXXI*, On the Lord's Resurrection, I, 1)

III – THE CHURCH SHOULD LABOR SO THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW ITS SAVIOR AND JUDGE

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

God wills the salvation of everyone

“Having been divinely sent to the nations that she might be ‘the universal sacrament of salvation’, the Church, in obedience to the command of her founder and because it is demanded by her own essential universality, strives to preach the Gospel to all men” (Ad Gentes 1): ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I

have commanded you; and Lo, I am with you always, until the close of the age’ (Mt 28:19-20). [...] Missionary motivation. It is from God’s love for all men that the Church in every age receives both the obligation and the vigor of her missionary dynamism, ‘for the love of Christ urges us on’ (2Cor 5:14; cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem* 6; *Redemptoris missio* 11). Indeed, God ‘desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth’; (1Tim 2:4) that is, **God wills the salvation of everyone through the knowledge of the truth.** Salvation is found in the truth. Those who obey the prompting of the Spirit of truth are already on the way of salvation. **But the Church, to whom this truth has been entrusted, must go out to meet their desire, so as to bring them the truth.** Because she believes in God’s universal plan of salvation, the Church must be missionary. [...] By her very mission, ‘the Church . . . travels the same journey as all humanity and shares the same earthly lot with the world: she is to be a leaven and, as it were, the soul of human society in its renewal by Christ and transformation into the family of God’ (*Gaudium et spes* 40 # 2). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 849; 851; 854)

BENEDICT XVI

The Judge has entrusted talents to us - now we must work so that the world may be open to Christ

The Judge who returns at the same time as Judge and Saviour has left us the duty to live in this world in accordance with his way of living. **He has entrusted his talents to us.** Our third conviction, therefore, is responsibility before Christ for the world, for our brethren and at the same time also for the certainty of his mercy. Both these things are important. **Since God can only be merciful we do not live as if good and evil were the same thing. This would be a deception.** In reality, we live with a great responsibility. **We have talents, and our responsibility is to work so that this world may be open to Christ, that it be renewed.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, November 12, 2008)

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God is in every person's life: my dogmatic certainty

Saint Paul teaches that anguish, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or the sword are not sufficient to separate us from God (cf. Rom 8:35). However, could we say the same of vices, drugs or anything else without making any distinctions? Do these things not eradicate the presence of God from our interior?

A similar query arises when this is affirmed as though it were a dogmatic certainty... then the questions start to multiply. It is left unclear if God inhabits the soul of a good Christian who practices the commandments — in spite of difficulties, sufferings and perhaps even failings — in the same way as that of a sinner, who does not seek God and even despises Him, living in a scandalous way.

The truth is that this is a very complex topic, and should never be taken lightly. A dogmatic certainty clearly does not allow for ambiguities and lapses when explained to others. Thank God, Catholic doctrine sheds light on what the presence of God in our lives really means...

FRANCIS

I have a dogmatic certainty: God is in every person's life. God is in everyone's life. **Even if the life of a person has been a disaster**, even if it is destroyed by vices, drugs or anything else — **God is in this person's life.** You can, you must try to seek God in every human life. Although the life of a person is a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God. (*Interview with Antonio Spadaro, August 19, 2013*)

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- ◆ No one can be united with God without freely choosing to love Him

Benedict XVI

- ♦ There are people who have totally destroyed their possibility of being with God

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God is present in all, but not in the same way

God is said to be in a thing in two ways; in one way after the manner of an efficient cause; and thus He is in all things created by Him; in another way he is in things as the object of operation is in the operator; and this is proper to the operations of the soul, according as the thing known is in the one who knows; and the thing desired in the one desiring. **In this second way God is especially in the rational creature which knows and loves Him actually or habitually.** And because the rational creature possesses this prerogative by grace, as will be shown later (q.43 a.3). **He is said to be thus in the saints by grace.** But how He is in other things created by Him, may be considered from human affairs. A king, for example, is said to be in the whole kingdom by his power, although he is not everywhere present. Again a thing is said to be by its presence in other things which are subject to its inspection; as things in a house are said to be present to anyone, who nevertheless may not be in substance in every part of the house. Lastly, a thing is said to be by way of substance or essence in that place in which its substance may be. [...] Therefore, **God is in all things by His power, inasmuch as all things are subject to His power; He is by His presence in all things, as all things are bare and open to His eyes; He is in all things by His essence, inasmuch as He is present to all as the cause of their being.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 8, a. 3)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Although God is entirely in every place, he does not inhabit in all men

But what causes great amazement is the fact that **God, although he is entirely in every place, does not inhabit in all men.** In fact, my above-mentioned citation of the Apostle, or this one: 'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in

you?' (1Cor 3:16) may not in fact be applied to all. That is why, on the other hand, the same Apostle said regarding others: 'Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him' (Rom 8:9). Furthermore, who would dare to think, except one who is entirely ignorant of the indivisibility of the Trinity, that the Father and the Son can inhabit someone in whom in the Holy Spirit does not dwell? Or that the Holy Spirit may live in someone in whom Father and the Son do not? **In this way, one must admit that God is in all places by the presence of the divinity, but not in all places by the grace with which He inhabits souls.** (Saint Augustine. *Epistle 187: Treatise on the presence of God*, no. 16)

God does not inhabit all; by sin, the sinner himself departs from God

Well then, **God who is in every place, does not, however, inhabit all;** nor does He live in the same manner in all of those He inhabits. [...] **Then it must be said that those are far from Him, who due to sin have become totally different from Him;** and that those are close to Him, who with a holy life receive His similitude, in the same way that one justly says that eyes are so much farther from the light of the earth, as they are blinder. (Saint Augustine. *Epistle 187: Treatise on the presence of God*, no. 17)

COUNCIL OF TRENT

Who are the 'friends of God?'

Having, therefore, been thus justified and having been made the 'friends of God' and 'his domestics' (Jn 15:15, Eph 2:19), 'advancing from virtue to virtue' (Ps 83:8), 'they are renewed' (as the Apostle says) 'from day to day' (2Cor 4:16), that is, by mortifying the members of their flesh (Col 3:5), and by 'presenting them as instruments of justice' (Rom 6:13,19), unto sanctification through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1535. Council of Trent, *Session VI, Decree on Justification*, January 13, 1547)

God has friends and enemies

Justification itself follows this disposition or

preparation, which is not merely remission of sins [can. 11], but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man through the voluntary reception of the grace and gifts, **whereby an unjust man becomes a just man, and from being an enemy becomes a friend**, that he may be 'an heir according to hope of life everlasting' (Titus 3:7). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1528. Council of Trent, *Session VI, Decree on Justification*, January 13, 1547)

He who loves God keeps His word and His Commandments

For they who are the sons of God, love Christ: 'but they who love him, (as He Himself testifies) **keep his words**' (Jn 14:23), which indeed with the divine help they can do. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1536. Council of Trent, *Session VI, Decree on Justification*, January 13, 1547)

Sinners are 'children of wrath' and 'enemies of God'

All mortal sins, even those of thought, make men children of wrath (Eph 2:3) and enemies of God. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1680. Council of Trent, *Session XIV, Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance*, November 25, 1551)

JOHN XXIII

Friends of God by supernatural grace

When, furthermore, we consider man's personal dignity from the standpoint of divine revelation, inevitably our estimate of it is incomparably increased. **Men have been ransomed by the**

blood of Jesus Christ. Grace has made them sons and friends of God, and heirs to eternal glory. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Pacem in terris*, no. 10, April 10, 1963)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

No one can be united with God without freely choosing to love Him

We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves: **'He who does not love remains in death.** Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him' (Jn 3:14-15). Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren (Mt 25:31-46). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1033)

BENEDICT XVI

There are people who have totally destroyed their possibility of being with God

There can be people who have totally destroyed their desire for truth and readiness to love, people for whom **everything has become a lie**, people who have lived for **hatred and have suppressed all love within themselves.** This is a terrifying thought, but **alarming profiles of this type can be seen in certain figures of our own history.** In such people all would be beyond remedy and the **destruction of good would be irrevocable:** this is what we mean by the word Hell. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spe salvi*, no. 45, November 30, 2007)

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**The privileged place for the encounter with Jesus Christ is our sins.
If a Christian is not capable of recognizing himself as a sinner saved by the
Cross of Christ then he is a half-way Christian, a lukewarm Christian**

When a tiny drop of poison is added to a pitcher of water, no one would claim it to be suitable to drink. This is true also of our spiritual life, for it is not justifiable to choose the path of mediocrity, establishing a compromise between the pure water of virtue and the poison of sin. Sanctity is a gift from God, and impossible to obtain without his assistance. However, it is also true that to achieve it, the cooperation of our will is necessary, just as Saint Augustine had aptly explained: ‘He who formed you without your aid, will not justify you without you – what He made without its own knowledge, He will justify with its desire’ (Sermon 169, 11). So, it’s not enough to just believe and recognize oneself a sinner, it’s also necessary to make all possible efforts to enter through the narrow gate (cf. Mt 7:13).

FRANCIS

In this encounter between Christ and my sins is salvation. So, the privileged place for the encounter with Jesus Christ is our own sins. If a Christian is not capable of feeling himself as a sinner and saved by the blood of Christ – and Christ crucified – then he is a half-way Christian, is a lukewarm Christian. (Homily *Domus Sanctae Marthae*, September 4, 2014 – English summary)

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**I – SIN AND GRACE DO NOT COEXIST
IN THE SAME SOUL**

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Sin is opposed to grace

Sin and grace may in no way coexist in the soul. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2200)

LEO XIII

The difference between truth and error

It is contrary to reason that error and truth should have equal rights. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Liberatas praestantissimum*, no. 34, June 20, 1888)

JOHN PAUL II

Grace is incompatible with grave sin

In fact, the remission of serious sin consists in the infusion of the sanctifying grace which has been lost, and **grace is incompatible with any and every serious sin**. (John Paul II. *Message to the participants in the Course on the Internal Forum organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary*, no. 3, March 20, 1998)

The true path of the Church is fidelity to Christ

The true path of the Church is fidelity to Christ. That is why the Church should persevere in 'its truth' and guard its 'deposit' in the spirit of love and for the love in which God fully reveals himself, for 'God is love' (Jn 4:8). **It is not honestly possible to have this fidelity coexist while following other paths that distance oneself progressively from Christ and from the Church, disputing fixed points of doctrine and discipline**, that, as such, have been confided to the Church and to its mandate, with the guarantee of fidelity assured by the Holy Spirit. (John Paul II. *Address to the members of the Sacred College and the Roman Curia*, no. 18, June 28, 1980)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Faith cannot co-exist even with sin

But the faith through which we are cleansed from sin is not 'lifeless faith,' which can exist even with sin, but 'faith living' through charity; that thus Christ's Passion may be applied to us, **not only as to our minds, but also as to our hearts**. And even in this way sins are forgiven through the power of the Passion of Christ. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica III*, q. 49, a. 1, ad 5)

Vice is directly contrary to virtue, even as sin to virtuous act

Vice is directly contrary to virtue, even as sin to virtuous act: vice excludes virtue, just as sin excludes acts of virtue. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q. 71, a. 4)

Mortal sin excludes altogether the habit of grace

Venial sin does not preclude every act of grace whereby all venial sins can be removed; **whereas mortal sin excludes altogether the habit of grace**. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica III*, q. 87, a. 4)

Charity and wisdom are incompatible with mortal sin

The wisdom which is a gift of the Holy Ghost, as stated above (a 1), enables us to judge aright of Divine things, or of other things according to Divine rules, by reason of a certain connaturalness or union with Divine things, which is the effect of charity, as stated above (a 2; q 23, a 5). Hence the wisdom of which we are speaking presupposes charity. **Now charity is incompatible with mortal sin**, as shown above (q 24, a 12). Therefore it follows that **the wisdom of which we are speaking cannot be together with mortal sin**. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 45, a. 4)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

It is not possible to do penance and live in luxury

For this surely is the time of confession both for

the uninitiated and for the baptized; for the one, that upon their repentance they may partake of the sacred mysteries; for the others, that having washed away their stain after baptism, they may approach the table with a clean conscience. **Let us then forsake this soft and effeminate way of living.** For it is not, it is not possible at once both to do penance and to live in luxury. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily X*, On the Gospel of Matthew, no. 10)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Those unwilling to change an evil and shameful life should not be admitted to the Sacraments

To some it seems right to admit all men, without distinction, to the laver of regeneration in Christ Jesus our Lord, even though they refuse to change their evil and shameful life, noteworthy by wickedness and evidently dishonorable actions, and even declare openly that they wish to persevere in these. If someone, for instance, is linked to a harlot, he should not be first ordered to leave her and only then permitted to approach baptism, but he should be admitted and baptized even, as he professes publicly, he continues to be with her and means to so continue; that he be not hindered in becoming a member of Christ, even though he persist in being a member of the harlot (1Cor 6). Only afterwards should he be taught how great this evil, and, already baptized, he be instructed on the way to change his customs for the better. **For they think it strange and contrary to good order, that the Christian should live and then be baptized:** in their opinion the Sacrament of Baptism should precede, so that the teaching on good conduct may follow. And if the baptized be willing to accept this and to observe it, it will be for his interest; but if he be unwilling, as long as still retaining the Christian Faith, without which he would perish forever, in no matter what sin or impurity he may continue, he will be saved equally, as if through fire, in the same way as one who, upon the foundation which is Christ, had built not with gold, silver and precious stones, but wood, hay and straw; that is, not with righteous and pure ways of life, but unrighteous and opposed to shame. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Faith and Works*, I, 1)

That there are good and bad in the Church does not mean an attenuation or suppression of severe discipline

No one should take those texts of Scripture, which imply, either as to the present or presage of the future, the mingling of the good and evil in the bosom of the Church, as if they suggest an attenuation or even a suppression of the severity of discipline or of watching, because they should consider themselves deceived by their own opinion and not instructed by these texts. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Faith and Works*, II, 3)

II – A TRUE CHRISTIAN SHOULD ADAPT HIS LIFE TO THE FAITH HE PROFESSES

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Faith without works is of no avail; the correct interpretation of Saint Paul's affirmation about justification through faith without works

When therefore the Apostle says that he judges that a man is justified through faith without the works of the law; he does not uphold this because the works of justice may be neglected once the faith has been received and professed, but so that each one may know that he may be justified by means of faith, even without having first accomplished the works of the law. [...] Further, even Paul, defines as salvific and truly evangelical not any faith by which one may believe in God, but that [faith] which is preceded by the works of charity, saying: *faith, which worketh through love* (Gal 5:6). From which it is affirmed that the faith, which to some is sufficient for salvation, is of no avail, such that he says: *If I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing* (1Cor 13:2). But where charity inspired by faith works, without doubt one lives well, because: *the fulfillment of the law is love* (Rom 13:10) (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Faith and Works*, XIV, 21)

Deception of those who promise themselves salvation based on a dead faith: the same profession of Christ's

divinity was praised in Peter and rebuked in the devils

James is so opposed to those who think that faith without works is useful to obtain salvation, that he compares them even with the devils. He says: **Thou believest that there is One God; thou doest well: the devils also believe and tremble** (Jas 2:19). What could be said that is more true and in a way that is more concise and incisive? Even in the Gospel, we read this confession when the **devils proclaim Christ as the Son of God and were rebuked by Him** (Mk 1:24-25), when [what they said] was **praised in Peter** at the profession of his faith. What will it profit, asks James, my brethren, if a man say that he hath faith, and have not works? Will faith be able to save him? (Jas 2:14). And also: **faith without works is dead** (Jas 2:20). **How long then are they to go on being deceived, who promise themselves life everlasting on the basis of a dead faith?** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Faith and Works*, XIV, 23)

The Lord said: If thou wilt come unto life, keep the Commandments

I do not see why the Lord would have said: **If thou wilt come unto life, keep the Commandments; and recalled those which pertain to good customs** (Mt 19:17-19), if it is possible to attain eternal life even without observing them, through faith alone, which **without works is dead**. Besides, how can it be true what He will say to them who He will set on his left hand: *Go ye into everlasting fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels?* He does not rebuke them for not having believed in Him, but because they have not done good works. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Faith and Works*, XV, 25)

PIUS XII

Dangerous error: a certain quietism that pretends to neglect our collaboration in spiritual life, attributing all to God's action

No less far from the truth is the dangerous error of those who endeavor to deduce from the mysterious union of us all with Christ a certain unhealthy quietism. They would

attribute the whole spiritual life of Christians and their progress in virtue exclusively to the action of the Divine Spirit, setting aside and neglecting the collaboration which is due from us. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3817. Pius XII, *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 87, June 29, 1943)

The Spirit does not will to act unless men contribute

No one, of course, can deny that the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ is the one source of whatever supernatural powers enters into the Church and its members. For 'The Lord will give grace and glory' as the Psalmist says. But that men should persevere constantly in their good works, that they should advance eagerly in grace and virtue, that they should strive earnestly to reach the heights of Christian perfection and at the same time to the best of their power should stimulate others to attain the same goal, – **all this the heavenly Spirit does not will to effect unless they contribute their daily share of zealous activity**. 'For divine favors are conferred not on those who sleep, but on those who watch,' as Saint Ambrose says. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3817. Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 87, June 29, 1943)

Illusion: to believe that the efficacy of the Eucharist dispenses from cooperation in the acquisition of salvation

The Church in posterior centuries has always followed the same path, and even today it does not proceed differently. Who does not know as our predecessor Pius X, of holy memory, amply opened to the faithful and especially to children, the doors to the Eucharistic fountains of grace? **But it would be a fatal illusion to believe that the efficacy of the Holy Supper – the *opus operatum* – dispenses the soul from cooperation in seeking its salvation**. One of the effects of the Holy Eucharist, '*tamquam antidotum, liberemur quo en culpīs quotidianis, et in peccatis mortalibus praeservemur*' (Conc. Trent, sess.13, ch.2), consists exactly in giving strength to fight against sin. The life of a Christian, which follows the example of Christ, is a life of combat against the devil, the world and the flesh. (Pius XII. *Address to the pastors and Lenten preachers of Rome*, February 23, 1944)

PAUL VI

The Gospel is not a code that is easily fulfilled, it demands effort and fidelity

The Gospel is absolutely not a code that is easily fulfilled: it demands effort and fidelity. Here one may analyze the moral systems that renounce personal effort to obtain salvation, in the **erroneous conviction that it is only by faith and only by grace that we have the fortune of being saved, without a positive and systematic moral discipline**; as if faith and grace, gifts of God and true causes of salvation, do not demand a response, coherence, free and responsible cooperation on our part, either as a condition of cooperating in the saving work of God in us, or also as a consequence of the rebirth brought about by his merciful supernatural action. (Paul VI. *General audience*, July 7, 1971)

LEO X

Condemnation of Martin Luther, for preaching that sacramental absolution is unnecessary, and that faith alone makes one pure and worthy

[Lutheran proposition condemned by Leo X]
Great is the error of those who approach the sacrament of the Eucharist relying on this, that they have confessed, that they are not conscious of any mortal sin, that they have sent their prayers on ahead and made preparations; all these eat and drink judgment to themselves. But if they believe and trust that they will attain grace, then this faith alone makes them pure and worthy. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1465. Leo X, *Bull Exurge Domine*, June 15, 1520)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

No one should flatter himself because of faith alone, when he suffer not with Christ

And so **no one should flatter himself because of faith alone** [can. 9, 19, 20], thinking that by faith alone he is made an heir and will obtain the inheritance, **even though he suffer not with Christ 'that he may be also glorified'** (Rom

8:17). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1538. Council of Trent, *Session VI, Decree on justification*, January 13, 1547)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

The love of God: we may reach this prize for ourselves by striving after it

So run, that ye may obtain. Every one also who engages in the contest is temperate in all things: now these men that they may obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. But I so run, not as uncertainty; I fight, not as One beating the air; but I make my body livid, and bring it into subjection, lest by any means, when preaching to others, I may myself be rendered a castaway. [...] **And the harder we strive, so much is it the more valuable; while so much the more valuable it is, so much the more should we esteem it. And indeed those things are not esteemed so highly which come spontaneously, as those which are reached by much anxious care. Since, then, this power has been conferred upon us, both the Lord has taught and the apostle has enjoined us the more to love God, that we may reach this (prize) for ourselves by striving after it.** For otherwise, no doubt, this our good would be (virtually) irrational, because not the result of trial. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*, IV, 37, 7)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

There is need of righteousness, that one may deserve well of God the Judge; the Lord says 'I know you not' to those who work iniquity

For both to prophesy and to cast out devils, and to do great acts upon the earth is certainly a sublime and an admirable thing; **but one does not attain the kingdom** of heaven although he is found in all these things, **unless he walks in the observance of the right and just way.** The Lord denounces, and says, *Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.* **There is need of righteousness, that one may**

deserve well of God the Judge; we must obey His precepts and warnings, that our merits may receive their reward. (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *The Unity of the Church*, 15)

SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA

Faith without works of justice is not sufficient for salvation

Paul, joining righteousness to faith and weaving them together, constructs of them the breastplates for the infantrymen, armoring the soldier properly and safely on both sides. A soldier cannot be considered safely armored when either shield is disjoined the other. **For faith without works of justice is not sufficient for salvation, neither however, is righteous living secure in itself of salvation, if it is disjoined from faith.** (Saint Gregory of Nyssa. *Homilies on Ecclesiastes*, no. 8)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Believing is not sufficient for your salvation

For, ‘think not,’ saith he [St. Paul], ‘because ye have believed, that this is sufficient for your salvation: ‘since if to me neither preaching nor teaching nor bringing over innumerable persons, is enough for salvation unless I exhibit my own conduct also unblameable, much less to you.’ (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homilies on First Corinthians*, 1Cor 9: 24)

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

Besides renunciation of sin the fruits of penance are also necessary

The mere renunciation of sin is not sufficient for the salvation of the penitents, but also the worthy fruits of penance, which is also required of them. (Saint Basil the Great. *Moralia*, I, 3)

III – NO ONE MAY APPROACH THE EUCHARIST WITHOUT BEING WELL PREPARED

SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

Jesus Christ leaves Himself inclusively in the hands of His enemy

Once, when I was going to Communion, I saw with the eyes of the soul, more distinctly than with those of the body, two devils of most hideous shape; **their horns seemed to encompass the throat of the poor priest;** and I beheld my Lord, in that great majesty of which I have spoken, held in the hands of that priest, in the Host he was about to give me. It was plain that those hands were those of a sinner, **and I felt that the soul of that priest was in mortal sin.** What must it be, O my Lord, to look upon Thy beauty amid shapes so hideous! **Our Lord Himself told me to pray for that priest; that He had allowed this in order that I might understand the power of the words of consecration, and how God failed not to be present, however wicked the priest might be who uttered them; and that I might see His great goodness in that He left Himself in the very hands of His enemy, for my good and for the good of all. I understood clearly how the priests are under greater obligations to be holy than other persons; and what a horrible thing it is to receive this most Holy Sacrament unworthily, and how great is the devil’s dominion over a soul in mortal sin.** (Saint Teresa of Jesus. *The Life of Saint Teresa of Jesus*, Ch. 38, no. 29-30)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

Jesus Christ chastises and the Apostles persecute the sacrilegious with holy anger

We eat the body of Christ, so that we may participate in eternal life. Because what promises us a recompense and dignity, is not merely eating and drinking, but rather communion in the grace and the celestial life; and it is not the twelve thrones that were created to receive us, **but it is Christ himself, who, through his identification with the divinity, judges it unnecessary to question the conduct of anyone, due to the knowledge**

that he has of hearts, to reward virtue and chastise the impious, and also the apostles, who received a special spiritual formation to judge, recompensing the faith and banishing false beliefs, **reprehending error with vigor and persecuting the sacrilegious with holy anger.** (Saint Ambrose of Milan. Treatise on the Gospel of Saint Luke, X, 49)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sacrilege is especially grave when committed against the Eucharist

Sacrilege is a grave sin especially when committed against the Eucharist, for in this sacrament the true Body of Christ is made substantially present for us. (cf. CIC, cann. 1367; 1376.) (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2120)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The gifts of God come to those who receive with faith, even through the hands of Judas

What hath Christ done to you? Who with such exceeding patience endured His betrayer, as to give to him, as to the other Apostles, the first Eucharist consecrated with His own hands, and blessed with His own mouth. What hath Christ done to you? Who sent this same betrayer, whom He called a devil, who before betraying the Lord could not show good faith even to the Lord's purse, with the other disciples to preach the kingdom of heaven; that He might show that **the gifts of God come to those that with faith receive them, though he, through whom they receive them, be such as Judas was.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on the Book of Psalms*, Psalm XI, 6)

The sacrilegious defile the temple of God within themselves

All who even within the Church profess that they know God, but deny Him in their deeds, such as are the covetous and envious, and those who, because they hate their brethren, are pronounced to be murderers, not on my testimony, but on that of the holy Apostle John, (1Jn 3:15) – all these are both devoid

of hope, because they have a bad conscience; and are faithless, because they do not do what they have vowed to God; and liars, because they make false professions; and possessed of devils, because they give place in their heart to the devil and his angels; and their words work corruption, since they corrupt good manners by evil communications; and they are infidels, because they laugh at the threats which God utters against such men; and accursed, because they live wickedly; and **antichrists, because their lives are opposed to Christ;** and cursed of God, since holy Scripture everywhere calls down curses on such men; and **dead, because they are without the life of righteousness;** and **unpeaceful, because by their contrary deeds they are at variance with God's behests;** and **blasphemous, because by their abandoned acts despite is done to the name of Christian;** and **profane, because they are spiritually shut out from that inner sanctuary of God;** and **sacrilegious, because by their evil life they defile the temple of God within themselves;** and **servants of the devil, because they do service to fraud and covetousness, which is idolatry.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Baptism*, VI, 8, 12)

SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA

He who eats unworthily, eats damnation to himself

Unhappy he, who comes in to this banquet without the wedding garment (cf. Mt 22:11) of charity or penitence, because 'he who eats unworthily, eats damnation to himself' (cf. 1Cor 11:29). What fellowship has light with darkness? (cf. 2Cor 6:14-15); Judas the traitor with the Savior? 'The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table' (Lk22:21). It is written in Exodus: 'Every beast,' and therefore the man also who has made himself similar to the beasts, 'that should touch the mountain,' that is the body of Christ, 'should be stoned,' that is damned (cf. Heb 12:20; cf. Ex 19:12-13). (Saint Anthony of Padua. *Sermon on the Lord's Supper: Allegorical Sermon*, 6 – English)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

He who approaches to receive the

Eucharist in sin is worse than one possessed by the devil

Shall I say something more fearful. It is not so grievous a thing for the energumens to be within, as for such as these, whom Paul affirms to trample Christ under foot, and to ‘account the blood of the covenant unclean, and to do despite to the grace of the Spirit.’ For he that hath fallen into sin and draws nigh, is worse than one possessed with a devil. For they, because they are possessed are not punished, but those, when they draw nigh unworthily, are delivered over to undying punishment. Let us not therefore drive away these only, but all without exception, whomsoever we may see coming unworthily. Let no one communicate who is not of the disciples. Let no Judas receive, lest he suffer the fate of Judas. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 82, On the Gospel of Matthew*, no. 6)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

For anyone who eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment on himself

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1Cor 11:26-29)

Blasphemies come from the heart

But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, unchastity, theft, false witness, blasphemy. These are what defile a person. (Mt 15:18-20)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

There are two ways of receiving the Eucharist: one to life, the other to death

The answer is that there are two ways of

receiving this sacrament, namely, **spiritually and sacramentally**. Therefore, some receive sacramentally and spiritually, namely, those who receive this sacrament in such a way that they also share in the reality [res] of the sacrament, namely, charity through which ecclesial unity exists. To such the Lord’s words apply: ‘He that eats me will live because of me.’ But some receive only sacramentally, namely, those who receive this sacrament in such a way that they do not have the [res] reality of the sacrament, i.e., charity. To these are applied the words spoken here: ‘He that eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment upon himself.’ Besides these two ways by which the sacrament is taken, there is a third way, by which one eats *per accidens*, namely, when it is taken not as a sacrament. This can happen in three ways: in one way, as **when a believer receives the consecrated host**, which he does not believe is consecrated: such a one has the habit of receiving this sacrament, but he does not use it actually as a sacrament. In another way, as **when an unbeliever receives the consecrated host**, but he has no faith about this sacrament. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary of the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, lec. 7: 1Cor 11:27-34)

IV – TO TRULY ‘RECOGNIZE ONESELF AS A SINNER’ IS ABOVE ALL TO REPENT

JOHN PAUL II

Recognize oneself a sinner so that God manifest his power

To recognize oneself a sinner before all, is above all to beseech God to manifest his power and his love, capable of working marvels in he who repents. (John Paul II. *Homily on the Solemnity of Pentecost*, Cathedral of Brussels, no. 3, July 4, 1995)

To acknowledge one’s sin is the essential first step in returning to God

To acknowledge one’s sin, indeed – penetrating still more deeply into the consideration of one’s own personhood – to recognize oneself as being a sinner, capable of sin and inclined to commit sin, is the essential first step in returning to God. [...] In effect, to

become reconciled with God presupposes and includes detaching oneself consciously and with determination from the sin into which one has fallen. It presupposes and includes, therefore, doing penance in the fullest sense of the term: repenting, showing this repentance, adopting a real attitude of repentance – which is the attitude of the person who starts out on the road of return to the Father. This is a general law and one which each individual must follow in his or her particular situation. For it is not possible to deal with sin and conversion only in abstract terms. [...] **The first conviction is that for a Christian the sacrament of penance is the primary way of obtaining forgiveness and the remission of serious sin committed after baptism.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 13, 31, December 2, 1984)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The two conversions: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance

Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. **This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church** who, 'clasping sinners to her bosom, (is) at once holy and always in need of purification, (and) follows constantly the path of penance and renewal' (LG 8,3). This endeavor of conversion is not just a human work. It is the movement of a 'contrite heart,' drawn and moved by grace to respond to the merciful love of God who loved us first (Ps 51:17; cf. Jn 6:44; 12:32; 1Jn 4:10). [...] Saint Ambrose says of the two conversions that, **in the Church, 'there are water and tears: the water of Baptism and the tears of repentance'** (Saint Ambrose, *ep.* 41, 12). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1428; 1429)

Conversion entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation with the Church, which are accomplished by the sacrament of Penance

Sin is before all else an offense against God, a rupture of communion with him. At the same time it damages communion with the Church. For this reason **conversion entails both God's forgiveness and reconciliation**

with the Church, which are expressed and accomplished liturgically by the sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation (Cf. LG 11). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1440)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Contrition demands a detestation of sin with a determination of not sinning in the future

Contrition, which has the first place among the aforementioned acts of the penitent, is a **sorrow of the soul and a detestation of sin committed, with a determination of not sinning in the future.** This feeling of contrition is, moreover, necessary at all times to obtain the forgiveness of sins, and thus for a person who has fallen after baptism it especially prepares for the remission of sins, if it is united with trust in divine mercy and with the desire of performing the other things required to receive this sacrament correctly. **The holy Synod, therefore, declares that this contrition includes not only cessation from sin and a resolution and a beginning of a new life, but also hatred of the old,** according to this statement: 'Cast away from you all your transgressions, by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit' (Ez 18:31). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1676. Council of Trent, *Session XIV, Doctrine on the sacrament of penance*, November 25, 1551)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

It behooves you to hate your own work and to love the work of God in you

For many loved their sins; many confessed their sins; and he who confesses his sins, and accuses them, does now work with God. **God accuses your sins: and if you also accuse, you are united to God.** There are, as it were, two things, man and sinner. That you are called man, is God's doing; that you are called sinner, is man's own doing. **Blot out what you have done, that God may save what He has done. It behooves you to hate your own work in you, and to love the work of God in you.** And when your own deeds will begin to displease you, from that time your good works begin, as you find fault with your evil works. The confession of evil works is

the beginning of good works. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Tractate 12*, On the Gospel of Saint John, no. 13)

Sin is chastised either by man when he repents or by God when he judges

This is what your God says to you: ‘Sin should be chastised either by you or by me.’ Sin is chastised either by man when he repents or by God when he judges. You are thus chastised either by yourself without yourself, or with God together with yourself. For, **what is penance, if not anger against oneself? He who repents becomes angry with himself.** And even the striking of the breast, if done sincerely, from where does it proceed? Why do you strike yourself if you are not angered? In this way, **when you strike your breast, you are angered with your heart, and wish to satisfy your Lord.** In this way also can be understood the passage of Scripture: ‘Be angered and do not sin’ (Ps 4:5). Be angered for having sinned, and chastising yourself, sin no more. ‘Awaken your heart with repentance, and it will be a sacrifice to God’ (Ps 50:19). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 19*, no. 2)

Let us feel displeasure with ourselves when we sin, for God is displeased with sins

Let us feel displeasure with ourselves when we sin, for God is displeased with sins. And since we are not free from sin, let us be similar to God at least in feeling displeasure

in that which displeases him. [...] God is your maker; you therefore look toward yourself and destroy in your interior that which did not come from his workshop. For – as it is written – God created man upright. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 19*, no. 4)

PIUS XII

To ensure progress in virtue the practice of frequent confession is important

The same result follows from the opinions of those who assert that little importance should be given to the frequent confession of venial sins. Far more important, they say, is that general confession which the Spouse of Christ, surrounded by her children in the Lord, makes each day by the mouth of the priest as he approaches the altar of God. As you well know, Venerable Brethren, **it is true that venial sins may be expiated in many ways which are to be highly commended. But to ensure more rapid progress day by day in the path of virtue, We will that the pious practice of frequent confession, which was introduced into the Church by the inspiration of the Holy spirit, should be earnestly advocated.** By it genuine self-knowledge is increased, Christian humility grows, bad habits are corrected, spiritual neglect and tepidity are resisted, the conscience is purified, the will strengthened, a salutary self-control is attained, and grace is increased in virtue of the Sacrament itself. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 88, June 29, 1943)

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Atheists can also do good

Do good and avoid evil...without doubt, that is everyone's responsibility – no one is able to stifle the inner voice that constantly indicates this obligation in the depths of the heart. However, is everyone able to respond to this call in the same manner, with equal clarity and equivalent effects?

This is a complex topic, with nuances that can't be dealt with lightly; and yet it must be understood with absolute clarity, lest we confuse issues that are of capital importance for our salvation...for Christ did say, 'without me you can do nothing' (Jn 15:5).

As always, Catholic doctrine sheds abundant light on such questions, for which we are more than grateful, amidst the prevalent darkness...

FRANCIS

Instead each and every one not only can but must do good, whatever faith they profess, for 'they have within them the commandment to do good', since they are 'created in the image of God'. This was the essence of Pope Francis' reflection on Wednesday morning, 22 May, for those who took part in the early Mass which he celebrated in the Chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae. The Gospel passage proclaimed at the Mass (Mk 9:38-40) refers to the disciples' complaint about a person who was doing good but who did not belong to their group. 'Jesus reprimands them. 'Do not prevent him, let him do good.' **The disciples, without thinking, were fixed on an idea: we alone can do good, because we alone possess the truth. And none of those who do not possess the truth can do good**', the Pope specified further. **However this is an erroneous attitude and Jesus corrected them. Is it licit 'for us to ask ourselves who can do good and why? What do Jesus' words 'do not prevent him' mean? What lies behind them?' In this case 'the disciples were somewhat intolerant', but "Jesus broadened their horizons and we may imagine that he said: 'if this person can do good, we can all do good. So can anyone who is not one of us'". 'The Lord created us in his image', and if 'he does good, let all of us keep this commandment in our heart: do good and do not do evil. Everyone.'** The idea that we cannot all do good is a form of closedness, 'a barrier', the Pope emphasized, 'that leads us to war', and 'to killing in God's name. We cannot kill in God's name'. Indeed, even 'saying that one can kill in God's name is blasphemy.' **The Lord redeemed everyone with Christ's blood, 'Everyone, not only Catholics. Everyone.' And atheists? 'They too. It is this blood that makes us children of God.'** (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae*, May 22, 2013)

But [asks Scalfari] what happens to those who don't have faith? The response [of Francis] is that if one has loved others at least as much as oneself (possibly a little more than oneself) **the Father will welcome him. Faith helps, but it is not the element of he who judges** – it is life. Sin is part of life and repentance too is part of it. Remorse, the sense of guilt, the desire of liberation, the abandoning of egoism... (Interview with Eugenio Scalfari published in *La Repubblica*, March 15, 2015)¹

¹ **Note:** The declarations cited above are found in the article-interview of Eugenio Scalfari and are attributed, without quotation marks, to Pope Francis. However, since these words have never received any official retraction, we include them here along with the habitual array of teachings).

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SACRED SCRIPTURE

No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit

Jesus answered, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.' (Jn 3:5)

Through baptism we too might live in newness of life

We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. (Rom 6:4)

JOHN PAUL II

The idea of a universal truth, knowable by human reason, is necessary to correctly determine the criteria of good and evil

Certain currents of modern thought have gone so far as to exalt freedom to such an extent that it becomes an absolute, which would then be the source of values. This is the direction taken by doctrines which have lost the sense of the transcendent or which are explicitly atheist. The individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgment which hands down categorical and infallible decisions about good and evil. To the affirmation that one has a duty to follow one's conscience is unduly added the affirmation that one's moral judgment is true merely by the fact that it has its origin in the conscience. But in this way the inescapable claims of truth disappear, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and 'being at peace with oneself', so much so that some have come to adopt a radically subjectivistic conception of moral judgment. As is immediately evident, the crisis of truth is not unconnected with this development. Once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason, is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes. Conscience is no longer considered in its primordial reality as an act of a person's intelligence [...] Instead, there is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining

the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 32, August 6, 1993)

The fundamental dependence of freedom upon truth

Although each individual has a right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth, there exists a prior moral obligation, and a grave one at that, to seek the truth and to adhere to it once it is known. [...] Certain tendencies in contemporary moral theology, under the influence of the currents of subjectivism and individualism just mentioned, involve novel interpretations of the relationship of freedom to the moral law, human nature and conscience, and propose novel criteria for the moral evaluation of acts. Despite their variety, these tendencies are at one in lessening or even denying the dependence of freedom on truth. [...] in the light of the fundamental dependence of freedom upon truth, a dependence which has found its clearest and most authoritative expression in the words of Christ: 'You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (Jn 8:32). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 34, August 6, 1993)

BENEDICT XVI

Charity needs to be practiced in the light of truth, else it be misconstrued and emptied of meaning

I am aware of the ways in which charity has been and continues to be misconstrued and emptied of meaning, [...] Hence the need to link charity with truth not only in the sequence, pointed out by Saint Paul, of *veritas in caritate* (Eph 4:15), but also in the inverse and complementary sequence of *caritas in veritate*. Truth needs to be sought, found and expressed within the 'economy' of charity, but charity in its turn needs to be understood, confirmed and practised in the light of truth. In this way, not only do we do a service to charity enlightened by truth, but we also help give credibility to truth, demonstrating its persuasive and authenticating power in the practical setting of social living. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 2, June 29, 2009)

Without truth, charity is without value and degenerates into sentimentality

Through this close link with truth, charity can be recognized as an authentic expression of humanity and as an element of fundamental importance in human relations, including those of a public nature. **Only in truth does charity shine forth**, only in truth can charity be authentically lived. **Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity.** That light is both the light of reason and the light of faith, through which the intellect attains to the natural and supernatural truth of charity: it grasps its meaning as gift, acceptance, and communion. **Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality.** Love becomes an empty shell, to be filled in an arbitrary way. [...] A Christianity of charity without truth would be more or less interchangeable with a pool of good sentiments, helpful for social cohesion, but of little relevance. In other words, there would no longer be any real place for God in the world. **Without truth, charity is confined to a narrow field devoid of relations.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 3-4, June 29, 2009)

Atheism is one of the chief obstacles to human development

Without God man neither knows which way to go, nor even understands who he is. In the face of the enormous problems surrounding the development of peoples, which almost make us yield to discouragement, **we find solace in the sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ, who teaches us: 'Apart from me you can do nothing'** (Jn 15:5) [...] Openness to God makes us open towards our brothers and sisters and towards an understanding of life as a joyful task to be accomplished in a spirit of solidarity. **On the other hand**, ideological rejection of God and an atheism of indifference, oblivious to the Creator and at risk of becoming equally oblivious to human values, **constitute some of the chief obstacles to development today.** A humanism which excludes God is an inhuman humanism. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 78, June 29, 2009)

urging to do good and avoid evil: to love God and neighbor

By his reason, man recognizes the voice of God which urges him 'to do what is good and avoid what is evil' (GS 16). Everyone is obliged to follow this law, which makes itself heard in conscience and is fulfilled in the love of God and of neighbor. Living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of the person. [...] By his Passion, Christ delivered us from Satan and from sin. He merited for us the new life in the Holy Spirit. **His grace restores what sin had damaged in us.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1706, 1708)

What makes us adopted sons of God is Baptism

Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature' (2Cor 5:17), an adopted son of God (Gal 4:5-7), who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature' (2Pet 1:4), member of Christ (1Cor 6:15; 12:27) and coheir with him (Rom 8:17), and a temple of the Holy Spirit (1Cor 6:19). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1265)

God gives us his grace to become children of God

Our justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God (Jn 1:12-18), adoptive sons (Rom 8:14-17), partakers of the divine nature (2Pet 1:3-4) and of eternal life (Jn 17:3). **Grace is a participation in the life of God.** It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: **by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body.** As an 'adopted son' he can henceforth call God 'Father,' in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1996-1997)

Divine adoption alone makes us capable of following Christ's example

He who believes in Christ becomes a son of God. This filial adoption transforms him by giving him the ability to follow the example of

Christ. It makes him capable of acting rightly and doing good. In union with his Savior, the disciple attains the perfection of charity which is holiness. Having matured in grace, the moral life blossoms into eternal life in the glory of heaven. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1709)

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Salvation is not brought about without one's own willing or participation – one must accept supernatural life

The expression 'for many,' while remaining open to the inclusion of each human person, is reflective also of the fact that this salvation is not brought about in some mechanistic way, without one's own willing or participation; rather, the believer is invited to accept in faith the gift that is being offered and to receive the supernatural life that is given to those who participate in this mystery, living it out in their lives as well so as to be numbered among the 'many' to whom the text refers. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *Letter from Cardinal Francis Arinze on the translation of Pro Multis*, October 17, 2006)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Christ died for all, but not all receive the benefit of His death – only to whom the merit of His passion is communicated

But although Christ died for all (2Cor 5:15), yet not all receive the benefit of His death, but those only to whom the merit of His passion is communicated. For, as indeed [...] unless they were born again in Christ, they never would be justified [can. 2 and 10], since in that new birth through the merit of His passion, the grace, whereby they are made just, is bestowed upon them. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1523. Council of Trent, *Session VI, Decree on Justification*, January 13, 1547)

Anathema: whoever says that man can live justly and merit eternal life without grace

Can. 2: **If anyone shall say that divine grace through Christ Jesus is given for this only, that man may more easily be able to live justly and merit eternal life, as if by free will without grace he were able to do both, though with difficulty and hardship: let him be anathema** [cf. n. 795, 809]. [...]

Can. 10: **If anyone shall say that men are justified without the justice of Christ by which He merited for us, or that by that justice itself they are formally just: let him be anathema** [cf. n. 798, 799]. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1552, 1560. Council of Trent, *Session VI, Decree on Justification*, Canons, January 13, 1547)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Man cannot do good unless aided by the gratuitous grace of God

Nor can a man will any good thing unless he is aided by Him who cannot will evil – that is, by the grace of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. For 'everything which is not of faith is sin' (Rom 14:23). And thus the good will which withdraws itself from sin is faithful, because 'the just lives by faith' (Hab 2:4). **And it pertains to faith to believe in Christ.** 'And no man can believe in Christ— that is, come to Him— unless it be given to him' (Rom 1:17). **No man, therefore, can have a righteous will, unless, with no foregoing merits, he has received the true, that is, the gratuitous grace from above.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, I, 3, 7)

Without grace, man can do evil with the appearance of good

Nor let us be disturbed by what he wrote to the Philippians: 'Touching the righteousness which is in the law, one who is without blame.' For he could be within in evil affections a transgressor of the law, and yet fulfil the open works of the law, either by the fear of men or of God Himself; but by terror of punishment, not by love and delight in righteousness. **For it is one thing to do good with the will of doing good, and another thing to be so inclined by the will to do evil, that one would actually do it if it could be allowed without punishment.** For thus assuredly he is sinning within his will itself, who abstains from sin not by will

but by fear. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Against Two Letters of the Pelagians*, I, 9, 15)

II SYNOD OF ORANGE

Anyone who asserts that without grace we can labor well contradicts the Apostle

Can. 6. If anyone asserts that, without the grace of God, mercy is divinely given to us when we believe, will, desire, try, labor, pray, watch, study, seek, ask, urge, but does not confess that through the infusion and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in us, it is brought about that we believe, wish, or are able to do all these things as we ought, and does not join either to human humility or obedience the help of grace, nor agree that it is the gift of His grace that we are obedient and humble, opposes the Apostle who says: What have you, that you have not received? (1Cor 4:7); and: By the grace of God I am that, which I am (1Cor 15:10 cf. St. Augustine, *De dono pers.* 23, 64 and Saint Prosper of Aquitaine, *Contra Coll* 2, 6). (Denzinger-Hünemann 376. II Synod of Orange, *On Original Sin, Grace and Predestination, confirmed by Boniface II*, 529)

Deceived by a heretical spirit: to affirm that through the strength of nature, and without the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, eternal life can be attained

Can. 7. If anyone affirms that without the illumination and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all sweetness in consenting to and believing in the truth, through the strength of nature he can think anything good which pertains to the salvation of eternal life, as he should, or choose, or consent to salvation, that is to the evangelical proclamation, he is deceived by the heretical spirit, not understanding the voice of God speaking in the Gospel: 'Without me you can do nothing' (Jn 15:5); and that of the Apostle: 'Not that we are fit to think everything by

ourselves as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is, from God' (2Cor 3:5; cf. Saint Augustine *De gratia Christi* 25, 26). (Denzinger-Hünemann 377. II Synod of Orange, *On Original Sin, Grace and Predestination, confirmed by Boniface II*, 529)

Without God man can do no good

Can. 20. 'That without God man can do no good. God does many good things in man, which man does not do; indeed man can do no good that God does not expect that man do'. (Denzinger-Hünemann 390. II Synod of Orange, *On Original Sin, Grace and Predestination, confirmed by Boniface II*, 529)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Sin is overcome only by the aid of God's grace

Man achieves such dignity when, emancipating himself from all captivity to passion, he pursues his goal in a spontaneous choice of what is good, and procures for himself through effective and skilful action, apt helps to that end. Since man's freedom has been damaged by sin, only by the aid of God's grace can he bring such a relationship with God into full flower. Before the judgement seat of God each man must render an account of his own life, whether he has done good or evil. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 17, December 7, 1965)

When God is forgotten, the atheist himself is unintelligible

For without the Creator the creature would disappear. For their part, however, all believers of whatever religion always hear His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures. When God is forgotten, however, the creature itself grows unintelligible. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 36, December 7, 1965)

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All are Children of God – Including Atheists or Those of Any Religion

When one hears about a recent birth, it is not unusual to hear that another child of God has been born. However, this common expression, though not intentionally erroneous, is nonetheless profoundly imprecise. Who can someone truly call their child? Can this title be given to the son or daughter of one's neighbor? Or to one's dog? Or even to a picture that one has painted? In reality, to truly be someone's son or daughter, it is necessary to have received the parents' nature. That's why we call those who have transmitted human life to us our mother and our father. Now, there also is an unsurpassable Father, the Heavenly Father, who wishes to transmit to us a much more elevated and invaluable life – the divine life, for He wants to be able to truly call us His children. This magnificent gift is granted to us by sanctifying grace. Consequently, at birth we cannot yet say that we are children of God. As Jesus said to Nicodemus: we must be born again! Nothing more excusable than this common theological imprecision... Excusable, that is, for those who do not have the mission *ex officio* to teach the Truth...

FRANCIS

The Son of God became incarnate in order to instill the feeling of brotherhood in the souls of men. **All are brothers and all children of God.** Abba, as he called the Father. I will show you the way, he said. Follow me and you will find the Father and you will all be his children and he will take delight in you. **Agape, the love of each one of us for the other, from the closest to the furthest, is in fact the only way that Jesus has given us to find the way of salvation and of the Beatitudes.** (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari*, October 1, 2013)¹

In our daily prayers let us say to Jesus: 'Lord, look at this brother, look at this sister who is suffering so much, suffering atrociously!' They experience the limit, the very limit between life and death. And there are consequences for us: this experience must spur us to **promote religious freedom for everyone, everyone! Every man and every woman must be free in his or her profession of religion, whatever it may be. Why? Because that man and that woman are children of God.** (*Vigil of Pentecost with the Ecclesial Movements*, May 18, 2013)

Since many of you are not members of the Catholic Church, and others are not believers, I cordially give this blessing silently, to each of you, respecting the conscience of each, but **in the knowledge that each of you is a child of God.** May God bless you! (*Audience to Representatives of the Communications Media*, March 16, 2013)

¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine should be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

In this 'stepping out' it is important to be ready for encounter. For me this word is very important. Encounter with others. Why? Because **faith is an encounter with Jesus, and we must do what Jesus does: encounter others.** We live in a culture of conflict, a culture of fragmentation, a culture in which I throw away what is of no use to me, a culture of waste. Yet on this point, I ask you to think – and it is part of the crisis of the elderly, who are the wisdom of a people, think of the children... the culture of waste! However, we must go out to meet them, and with our faith we must create a 'culture of encounter', a culture of friendship, a culture in which we find brothers and sisters, in which we can also speak with those who think differently, **as well as those who hold other beliefs, who do not have the same faith. They all have something in common with us: they are images of God, they are children of God.** Going out to meet everyone, without losing sight of our own position. (*Vigil of Pentecost with the Ecclesial Movements*, May 18, 2013)

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SACRED SCRIPTURE

Unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.' Jesus answered him, '**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' Jesus answered, '**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.**' (Jn 3:1-5)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Divine adoption cannot be achieved without Baptism

But though He died for all, yet all do not receive the benefit of His death, but those only to whom the merit of His passion is communicated [...] In which words is given a brief description of the justification of the sinner, as being a translation from that state in which man is born a child of the first Adam, to the state of grace and of the adoption of the sons of God through the second Adam, Jesus Christ, our Savior. This translation however cannot, since promulgation of the Gospel, be effected except through the laver of regeneration or its desire, as it is written: Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (Council of Trent. Session VI, Decree concerning justification. ch. 3-4, January 13, 1547)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

All are obliged to receive Baptism

Men are bound to that without which they cannot obtain salvation. Now it is manifest that no one can obtain salvation but through Christ; wherefore the Apostle says (Rom 5:18): 'As by the offense of one unto all men unto condemnation; so also by the justice of one, unto all men unto justification of life'. But for this end is **Baptism conferred on a man, that being regenerated there by, he may be incorporated in Christ, by becoming His member: wherefore it is written (Gal 3:27): 'As many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ'. Consequently it is manifest that all are bound to be baptized: and that without Baptism there is no salvation for men.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* III, q. 68, a. 1)

JOHN PAUL II

We become children of God in His only-begotten Son

With Baptism we become children of God in his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Rising from the waters of the Baptismal font, every Christian hears again the voice that was once heard on the banks of the Jordan River: 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased' (Lk 3:22). **From this comes the understanding that one has been brought into association with the beloved Son, becoming a child of adoption (cf. Gal 4:4-7) and a brother or sister of Christ.** In this way the eternal plan of the Father for each person is realized in history: **'For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be**

conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren' (Rom 8:29). (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Christifideles laici*, no.11, December 30, 1988)

Baptism produces unity among Christians

Regenerated as 'Children in the Son', the baptized are inseparably joined together as 'members of Christ and members of the body of the Church' as the Council of Florence teaches. Baptism symbolizes and brings about a mystical but real incorporation into the crucified and glorious body of Christ. [...] In the words of Saint Paul we find again the faithful echo of the teaching of Jesus himself, which reveals the mystical unity of Christ with his disciples and the disciples with each other, presenting it as an image and extension of that mystical communion that binds the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father in the bond of love, the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 17, 21). (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Christifideles Laici*, n.12, December 30, 1988)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Baptism and the Church are indispensable for salvation

This Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no.14, November 21, 1964)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

One must be born of the water and the Spirit in order to convert

Through Baptism the Christian is sacramentally assimilated to Jesus, who in his own baptism anticipates his death and resurrection. The Christian must enter into this mystery of humble self-abasement and repentance, go down into the water with Jesus in order to rise with him, be reborn of water and the Spirit so as to become the Father's beloved son in the Son and 'walk in newness of life' (Rom 6:4). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 537)

Baptism distinguishes us from all other religious groups

The People of God is marked by characteristics that clearly distinguish it from all other religious, ethnic, political, or cultural groups found in history: It is the People of God: God is not the property of any one people. But he acquired a people for himself from those who previously were not a people: 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.' (1Pet 2:9) One becomes a member of this people not by a physical birth, but by being 'born anew', 'a birth of water and the Spirit' (Jn 3:3-5) that is, by faith in Christ, and Baptism. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no.782)

GREGORY XVI

The death of the soul is worse than freedom of error

This shameful font of indifferentism gives rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone. It spreads ruin in sacred and civil affairs, though some repeat over and over again with the greatest impudence that some advantage accrues to religion from it. 'But the death of the soul is worse than freedom of error', as Augustine was wont to say. When all restraints are removed by which men are kept on the narrow path of truth, their nature, which is already inclined to evil, propels them to ruin. Then truly 'the bottomless pit' is open from which John saw smoke ascending which obscured the sun, and out of which locusts flew

forth to devastate the earth. **Thence comes transformation of minds, corruption of youths, contempt of sacred things and holy laws** – in other words, a pestilence more deadly to the state than any other. Experience shows, even from earliest times, **that cities renowned for wealth, dominion, and glory perished as a result of this single evil, namely immoderate freedom of opinion, license of free speech, and desire for novelty.** (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 14, August 15, 1832)

JOHN XXIII

It is a serious injustice to place the Catholic Church on a level with other religions

Some men, indeed do not attack the truth willfully, but work in heedless disregard of it. They act as though God had given us intellects for some purpose other than the pursuit and attainment of truth. This mistaken sort of action leads directly to **that absurd proposition: one religion is just as good as another, for there is no distinction here between truth and falsehood.** ‘This attitude’, to quote Pope Leo again, ‘is directed to the destruction of all religions, but particularly the Catholic faith, which cannot be placed on a level with other religions without serious injustice, since it alone is true’. Moreover, to contend that there is nothing to choose between contradictories and among contraries can lead only to this fatal conclusion: a reluctance to accept any religion either in theory or practice. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Ad Petri cathedram*, no.17, June 29, 1959)

PIUS IX

No one may be saved outside of the Catholic Church

And here, beloved Sons and Venerable Brothers, We should mention again and censure a very grave error in which some Catholics are unhappily engaged, who believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life. Indeed, this is certainly quite contrary to Catholic teaching. It is known to Us and to you that they who labor in invincible

ignorance of our most holy religion and who, zealously keeping the natural law and its precepts engraved in the hearts of all by God, and being ready to obey God, live an honest and upright life, can, by the operating power of divine light and grace. [...] But, the Catholic dogma that **no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church** is well-known; and also that **those who are obstinate toward the authority and definitions of the same Church**, and who persistently separate themselves from the unity of the Church, and from the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, to whom ‘the guardianship of the vine has been entrusted by the Savior’. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2865-2867. Pius IX, *Encyclical Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863)

Dangerous enemies of the Church

In these times of confusion and disorder, it is not unusual to see Christians, Catholics – even within the secular clergy and cloisters – **who constantly have a word of conformity, of conciliation and negotiation on their lips.** Very well! I do not hesitate to declare: **these men are in error, and do not consider them to be the lesser enemies of the Church.** We live in a corrupt and pestilent atmosphere and we must know how to preserve ourselves from it. Let us not allow ourselves to be contaminated by false doctrines, which lose all things under the pretext of saving all. (Pius IX. *Address in the Church of Aracoeli*, September 17, 1861)

PIUS XI

Meetings which Catholics may not approve

For since they hold it for certain that men destitute of all religious sense are very rarely to be found, they seem to have founded on that belief a hope that the nations, **although they differ among themselves in certain religious matters, will without much difficulty come to agree as brethren in professing certain doctrines,** which form as it were a common basis of the spiritual life. **For which reason conventions, meetings and addresses** are frequently arranged by these persons, at which a large number of listeners are present, and at which all without distinction are invited to join in the discussion, both infidels of every kind,

and Christians, even those who have unhappily fallen away from Christ or who with obstinacy and pertinacity deny His divine nature and mission. Certainly such attempts can nowise be approved by Catholics, founded as they are on that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy, since they all in different ways manifest and signify that sense which is inborn in us all, and by which we are led to God and to the obedient acknowledgment of His rule. **Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion they reject it, and little by little, turn aside to naturalism and atheism,** as it is called; from which it clearly follows that one who supports those who hold these theories and attempt to realize them, is altogether abandoning the divinely revealed religion. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 2, January 6, 1928)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Unbelievers should convert and do penance

Therefore the Church announces the good tidings of salvation to those who do not believe, so that all men may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and may be converted from their ways, doing penance. (Vatican Council II. *Constitution Sacrosanctum concilium*, n.9, December 4, 1963)

PIUS XII

A supplication to those who do not belong to the Catholic Church: seek to withdraw from this state

We have committed to the protection and guidance of heaven those who do not belong to the visible Body of the Catholic Church, solemnly declaring that after the example of the Good Shepherd We desire nothing more ardently than that they may have life and have it more abundantly. Imploring the prayers of the whole Church We wish to repeat this

solemn declaration in this Encyclical Letter in which We have proclaimed the praises of the 'great and glorious Body of Christ' and from a heart overflowing with love We ask each and every one of them to correspond to the interior movements of grace, **and to seek to withdraw from that state in which they cannot be sure of their salvation.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 103, June 29, 1943)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

'Indignation seizes me because of the wicked who forsake your law'

'Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am languishing; my eye wastes away because of grief.' If you suffer, why are you angry? Your anger is due to sins of others. Who would not be enraged, observing those who confess God but deny him through their conduct? Who would not be enraged seeing those who renounce the world with their words but not with their deeds? Who would not become angry observing how some betray their brothers, unfaithful to the kiss of peace they exchanged during the celebration of the divine Sacraments? **Who may number all of the causes of anger within the body of Christ, which interiorly lives of the Spirit of Christ, and which moans as the grain amid the straw.** Truly, it is difficult to find those who moan in this way, those who become angry with this anger, as it is difficult to see the grain while threshing the crops. He who doesn't know how much grain was sown, things that all is straw. Yet, from what he believes is all straw will follow the purification of a great number. These, precisely, who do not moan and grieve are the cause of the anger of the one who said in another place 'Zeal for your house has consumed me' (Ps 69:9). Seeing the number of those who practice evil works, another place says: 'Burning indignation seizes me because of the wicked, who forsake your law' (Ps 119:53). And further on: 'I look at the faithless with disgust, because they do not keep your commandments' (Ps 119:158). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition of Psalm 30*, Sermon 2, no.3)

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**Our Lady was human! Inside surely she wanted to say to the Angel:
'Liar! I was deceived.'**

Praying before the Cross, Christians are significantly comforted under the patronage of Our Lady of Sorrows. In her we contemplate the one who, as Scripture tells us, remained 'standing' at the foot of the Cross while the Apostles fled and betrayed Christ, as they were far from understanding the profundity of the mystery of Golgotha. This vital presence of Mary fully united to the Passion of her Son – consoling and adoring Him in an act of reparation for the offenses of those who had been unfaithful at this decisive moment – has moved truly Christian souls throughout the centuries.

These pious considerations have a theological foundation that justifies them: the Most Holy Virgin is intimately united to the work of Redemption in the plans of God. The sacrifice of Jesus and his salvific mission were, since the beginning, associated with Mary Immaculate, whom the Trinity gazed upon with singular predilection.

Consequently, to attribute to the Mother of Sorrows reactions incompatible with the perfection of her charity, offends Marian piety and, moreover, diverges from Catholic Doctrine – which should be the parameter used for all considerations on the incomparable figure of the Mother of God.

Therefore, a reminder about the Pontifical Magisterium and the doctrine of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church regarding this topic seems indispensable.

FRANCIS

The Pope said he thinks about 'how many times she remained quiet and how many times she did not say that which she felt in order to guard the mystery of her relationship with her Son,' up until the most raw silence "at the foot of the cross. The Gospel does not tell us anything: if she spoke a word or not... She was silent, but in her heart, how many things told the Lord! **'You, that day, this and the other that we read, you had told me that he would be great, you had told me that you would have given him the throne of David, his forefather, that he would have reigned forever and now I see him there!'** Our Lady was human! And perhaps she even had the desire to say: **'Lies! I was deceived!'** John Paul II would say this, speaking about Our Lady in that moment. But she, with her silence, hid the mystery that she did not understand and with this silence allowed for this mystery to grow and blossom in hope." (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae*, December 20, 2013)

I often think of Our Lady, **when they handed down to her the dead body of her Son**, covered with wounds, spat on, bloodied and soiled. **And what did Our Lady do?** 'Did she carry him away?' No, she embraced him, she caressed him. **Our Lady, too, did not understand. Because she, in that moment, remembered what the Angel had said to her: 'He will be King, he will be great, he will be a prophet...'; and inside, surely, with that wounded body lying in her arms, that body that suffered so before dying, inside surely she wanted to say to the Angel: 'Liar! I was deceived.'** She, too, had no answers. (*Meeting with a group of gravely ill children and their families*, May 29, 2015)

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Pius X

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Leo XIII

- ♦ Mary took part in the laborious expiation made by her Son

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ Before the cross Mary lovingly consented to the immolation of the Victim

John Paul II

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I – THE VIRGIN MARY: ENTIRELY UNITED TO THE WORK OF THE REDEEMER

JOHN PAUL II

Accepting the sacrifice of her Son, Mary is the dawn of the Redemption – She consented to the immolation of the Victim which She had brought forth

Mary precedes and accompanies us. The silent itinerary that she initiates with her Immaculate Conception – passing to the 'yes' of Nazareth which made her the Mother of God – finds in Calvary a particularly crucial moment. **There also, accepting and attending the sacrifice of her Son, Mary is the dawn of Redemption;**

and it is there that Her Son gives her to us as Mother. 'The Mother gazed with pity on the wounds of the Son, from whom she knew the redemption of the world would come' (Saint Ambrose, *De institutione virginis*, no. 49). Crucified spiritually with her crucified Son, she contemplated with heroic charity the death of her God, 'consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth' (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 58). She fulfilled the will of the Father in our favor and welcomed all as children, in virtue of the testament of Christ: 'Woman, behold your son' (Jn 19:26). (John Paul II. *Discourse in Guayaquil – Ecuador*, no. 5, January 31, 1985)

PAUL VI

The free and perfectly docile cooperation of Mary, marvelously associated to the divine plan of salvation

A great theological panorama now opens before us, proper to Catholic Doctrine, in which we see how the divine plan of salvation – offered to the world, by the only mediator, efficacious by virtue his own merit between God and men, Jesus Christ (cf. 1Tim 2:5; Heb 12: 24) – is brought about with human cooperation, marvellously associated to the divine work. **And what human cooperation has been chosen, in the history of our Christian destiny, as the first, due to its function, dignity, efficacy – not merely instrumental and physical, but also as a predestined factor, free and perfectly docile – than that of Mary?** (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 56). (Paul VI. *General audience*, May 30, 1973)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

At the death of Jesus, Mary united her will to that of her Son; so much so that both offered one and the same sacrifice

‘The wills of Christ and of Mary were then united, so that both offered the same holocaust; she thereby producing with Him the one effect, the salvation of the world,’ **At the death of Jesus, Mary united her will to that of her Son; so much so that both offered one and the same sacrifice;** and therefore the holy Abbot says that **both the Son and the Mother effected human redemption, and obtained salvation for men.** (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The Glories of Mary*, II, VI: On the purification of Mary)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Mary cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Savior

Predestined from eternity by that decree of divine providence which determined the incarnation of the Word to be the Mother of God, the Blessed Virgin was on this earth the virgin Mother of the Redeemer, and above all others and **in a singular way the generous**

associate and humble handmaid of the Lord. She conceived, brought forth and nourished Christ. She presented Him to the Father in the temple, **and was united with Him by compassion as He died on the Cross. In this singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of the Saviour in giving back supernatural life to souls.** Wherefore she is our mother in the order of grace. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 61, November 21, 1964)

A perfect example: the most Blessed Virgin Mary, who was always intimately united with her Son and in an entirely unique way cooperated in the Savior’s work

The perfect example of this type of spiritual and apostolic life is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, who while leading the life common to all here on earth, one filled with family concerns and labors, was **always intimately united with her Son and in an entirely unique way cooperated in the work of the Savior.** Having now been assumed into heaven, with her maternal charity she cares for these brothers of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage and remain involved in dangers and difficulties until they are led into the happy fatherland. (cf. Saint Pius X. *Allocution to Association of French Catholic Youth on piety, knowledge and action*, Sept. 25, 1904) (Vatican Council II. *Decree Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 4, November 18, 1865)

PIUS X

By this companionship in suffering between Mother and the Son, She is the supreme Minister of the distribution of graces

By this companionship in sorrow and suffering already mentioned between the Mother and the Son, it has been allowed to the august Virgin to be the most powerful Mediatrix and advocate of the whole world with her Divine Son. [...] Yet, since Mary carries it over all **in holiness and union with Jesus Christ,** and has been associated by Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, she merits for us *de congruo*, in

the language of theologians, what Jesus Christ merits for us *de condigno*, and she is the supreme Minister of the distribution of graces. (Pius X. *Encyclical Ad diem illum laetissimum*, no. 13-14, February 2, 1904)

JOHN PAUL II

St Bernard comments: 'For our reconciliation, offer the heavenly victim pleasing to God'

In the West **St Bernard**, who died in 1153, turns to **Mary** and comments on the presentation of **Jesus** in the temple: 'Offer your Son, sacrosanct **Virgin**, and present the fruit of your womb to the Lord. For our reconciliation with all, offer the heavenly victim pleasing to God' (Serm. 3 in Purif., 2: PL 183, 370). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, October 25, 1995)

PIUS IX

United with Christ, the Virgin was, with him and through him, eternally at enmity with the serpent and most completely triumphed over him

These ecclesiastical writers in quoting the words by which at the beginning of the world God announced his merciful remedies prepared for the regeneration of mankind – words by which he crushed the audacity of the deceitful serpent and wondrously raised up the hope of our race, saying, 'I will put enmities between you and the woman, between your seed and her seed' (Gen 3:15) – **taught that by this divine prophecy** the merciful Redeemer of mankind, **Jesus Christ**, the only begotten Son of God, was clearly foretold: **That his most Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary, was prophetically indicated; and, at the same time, the very enmity of both against the evil one was significantly expressed. Hence, just as Christ, the Mediator between God and man, assumed human nature, blotted the handwriting of the decree that stood against us, and fastened it triumphantly to the cross, so the most holy Virgin, united with him by a most intimate and indissoluble bond, was, with him and through him, eternally at enmity with the evil serpent, and most completely triumphed**

over him, and thus crushed his head with her immaculate foot. (Pius IX. *Apostolic constitution Ineffabilis Deus*, December 8, 1854)

LEO XIII

Due to her association with Him in man's salvation, Mary has power with her Son greater than any human or angelic creature

And truly the Immaculate Virgin, chosen to be the Mother of God and thereby associated with Him in the work of man's salvation, has a favour and power with her Son greater than any human or angelic creature has ever obtained, or ever can gain. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Supremi apostolatus*, no. 2, September 1883)

II – MARY'S ENTIRE CONFORMITY TO THE PLANS OF THE FATHER REGARDING THE SON

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

She looked not on the death of the Hostage, but on the salvation of the world

Mary, as became the mother of our Lord, stood before the cross, when the Apostles fled and with pitiful eyes beheld the wounds of her Son. For **she looked not on the death of the Hostage, but on the salvation of the world; and perhaps knowing that her Son's death would bring this salvation**, she who had been the habitation of the King, **thought that by her death she might add to that universal gift.** (Saint Ambrose of Milan quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*, in Jn 19: 25-27)

SAINT BONAVENTURE OF BAGNOREGIO

The Most Holy Virgin was present before the cross accepting and consenting to the divine plan

She paid the price [of redemption] as a strong and loving woman – especially when **Christ suffered on the cross to pay this price, with the intention of purifying, washing and redeeming us – the Most Holy Virgin was**

present, accepting and consenting to the **divine plan**. (Saint Bonaventure of Bagnoregio. *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, 6, 16)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

Mary consented to the death of her Son with her entire will that we might be saved

Our most loving Mother was always, and in all, united to the will of God. 'And therefore,' says Saint Bonaventure, 'when she saw the love of the Eternal Father towards men to be so great that, in order to save them, He willed the death of His Son; and on the other hand, seeing the love of the Son in wishing to die for us: in order to conform herself to this excessive love of both the Father and the Son towards the human race, she also with her entire will, offered, and consented to, the death of her Son, in order that we might be saved.' (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The Glories of Mary*, I, 1, II, 3: Hail Holy Queen)

SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA

United to Christ not only in prosperity, but also sorrows

Though these things are said of the Son, yet they have reference also to His mother, who takes each thing to herself, whether it be of danger or glory. He announces to her not only her prosperity, but her sorrows... (Saint Gregory of Nyssa quoted by St Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*, in Lk 2:33-35)

JOHN PAUL II

Mary's supreme 'yes' radiant with trusting hope began with the death of her crucified Son – Her hope contains a light stronger than the darkness

Mary's supreme 'yes' is radiant with trusting hope in the mysterious future, begun with the death of her crucified Son. The words in which Jesus taught the disciples on his way to Jerusalem 'that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and

the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again' re-echo in her heart at the dramatic hour of Calvary, awakening expectation of and yearning for the Resurrection. Mary's hope at the foot of the Cross contains a light stronger than the darkness that reigns in many hearts: in the presence of the redeeming Sacrifice, the hope of the Church and of humanity is born in Mary. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 4, April 2, 1997)

III – THE VIRGIN MARY GAVE HER COMPLETE CONSENT TO THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The symbols of our defeat are now the cause of our triumph: instead of Eve, Mary

A virgin, a tree and death were the symbols of our defeat...see then, now, how the same are the cause of our triumph...Instead of Eve, Mary; Instead of the tree of science of good and evil, the tree of the Cross; instead of the death of Adam, the death of the Savior. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Paschal Homily 22*)

PIUS XII

She offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father for all the children of Adam – her mother's rights and mother's love were included in the holocaust

...She [...] who 'in the name of the whole human race' gave her consent 'for a spiritual marriage between the Son of God and human nature.' (S Th., III, q. 30, a. 1, c.) [...] It was she, the second Eve, who, free from all sin, original or personal, and always more intimately united with her Son, offered Him on Golgotha to the Eternal Father for all the children of Adam, sin-stained by his unhappy fall, and her mother's rights and her mother's love were included in the holocaust. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici corporis Christi*, no. 110, June 29, 1943)

The work of salvation was accomplished by a kind of ‘recapitulation’: a virgin was instrumental in salvation, just as a virgin had been closely associated in death

...if Mary, in taking an active part in the work of salvation, was, by God’s design, associated with Jesus Christ, the source of salvation itself, in a manner comparable to that in which Eve was associated with Adam, the source of death, so that it may be stated that the work of our salvation was accomplished by a kind of ‘recapitulation,’ (S. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.*, V, 19, 1) in which a virgin was instrumental in the salvation of the human race, just as a virgin had been closely associated with its death; if, moreover, it can likewise be stated that this glorious Lady had been chosen Mother of Christ ‘in order that she might become a partner in the redemption of the human race’; (Pius XI, *Auspicatus profecto*) and if, in truth, ‘it was she who, free of the stain of actual and original sin, and ever most closely bound to her Son, on Golgotha offered that Son to the Eternal Father together with the complete sacrifice of her maternal rights and maternal love, like a new Eve, for all the sons of Adam, stained as they were by his lamentable fall,’ (Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis.*) then it may be legitimately concluded that as Christ, the new Adam, must be called a King not merely because He is Son of God, but also because He is our Redeemer, so, analogously, the Most Blessed Virgin is queen not only because she is Mother of God, but also because, as the new Eve, she was associated with the new Adam. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Ad caeli reginam*, no. 38, October 11, 1954)

PIUS X

Not merely occupied in contemplating the cruel spectacle, Mary rejoiced that her Only Son was offered for the salvation of mankind

Moreover it was not only the prerogative of the Most Holy Mother to have furnished the material of His flesh to the Only Son of God, Who was to be born with human members (S. Bede Ven. L. Iv. in Luc. xl.), of which material should be prepared the Victim for the salvation of men; but hers was also the office of tending and nourishing that Victim,

and at the appointed time presenting Him for the sacrifice. Hence that uninterrupted community of life and labors of the Son and the Mother, so that of both might have been uttered the words of the Psalmist ‘My life is consumed in sorrow and my years in groans’ (Ps 30:11). When the supreme hour of the Son came, beside the Cross of Jesus there stood Mary His Mother, not merely occupied in contemplating the cruel spectacle, but rejoicing that her Only Son was offered for the salvation of mankind, and so entirely participating in His Passion, that if it had been possible she would have gladly borne all the torments that her Son bore (S. Bonav. I Sent d. 48, ad Litt. dub. 4). (Pius X. *Encyclical Ad diem illum laetissimum*, no. 12, February 2, 1904)

LEO XIII

Mary took part in the laborious expiation made by her Son

When, at the foot of the altar, she offered up her whole self with her Child Jesus – then and thereafter she took her part in the laborious expiation made by her Son for the sins of the world. It is certain, therefore, that she suffered in the very depths of her soul with His most bitter sufferings and with His torments. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Iucunda semper*, no. 3, September 8, 1894)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Before the cross Mary lovingly consented to the immolation of the Victim

After this manner the Blessed Virgin advanced in her pilgrimage of faith, and faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan (cf. Jn 19:25), grieving exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 58, November 21, 1964)

JOHN PAUL II

In the Cross there are two altars: one in Mary's heart, the other in Christ's body

A disciple and friend of Saint Bernard, Arnold of Chartres, sheds light particularly on Mary's offering in the sacrifice of Calvary. He distinguished in the Cross 'two altars: one in Mary's heart, the other in Christ's body. Christ sacrificed his flesh, Mary her soul'. Mary sacrificed herself spiritually in deep communion with Christ, and implored the world's salvation: 'What the mother asks, the Son approves and the Father grants' (cf. *De septem verbis Domini in cruce*, 3: PL 189, 1694) (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, October 25, 1995)

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**I pray the Divine Office every day.
My prayer is Jewish, and I have the Eucharist**

One of the significant truths that we learn at primary catechism is that God himself is the Author of Sacred Scripture; and that with the coming of Christ, Holy Mother Church became the sacred depository of this incomparable treasure. Thus, just as a pen in the hand of a writer, the actual author of each one of the holy books – David, Moses or Luke, for example – are nothing other than mere instruments in the hand of the Divine writer, God, the only true Author of the Holy Bible. The Church uses portions from these divinely inspired books for the divine worship. This is particularly true of the Psalms, which constitute the Divine Office or the Liturgy of the Hours, within whose inspired verses the Church recognizes the voice of God himself, guiding us in a prayer that pleases Him.

FRANCIS

I pray the Divine Office every day with the Psalms of David. We do the 150 psalms in one week. **My prayer is Jewish, and I have the Eucharist**, which is Christian. (*Interview with La Vanguardia, June 12, 2014*)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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I – CHRIST CAME TO PERFECT THE OLD LAW

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Old things have passed away; new things have come

So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: **the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come.** (2Cor 5:17)

Christ declared that He came to fulfill the law and the prophets

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. **I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.** (Mt 5:17)

The Lord sang the Psalms after the Last Supper

Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mk 14: 26)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

We do not revere the ancient sacraments which the Apostle classifies as shadows

of things to come. With the shadows removed we are enjoying their uncovered light

First of all, however, this error of theirs must be refuted, that the Books of the Old Testament do not concern us at all, because we observe the new sacraments and no longer preserve the old. For they say to us: 'What is the reading of the Law and the Prophets doing among you who do not want to follow the precepts contained in them?' They base their complaint on the fact that we do not circumcise the foreskin of the male, and we eat the flesh of animals which the Law declares unclean, and we do not observe the Sabbath, new moons and their festival days in a purely human way, nor do we offer sacrifice to God with victims of cattle, nor do we celebrate the Pasch as they do with sheep and unleavened bread, nor do we revere the other ancient sacraments which the Apostle classifies under the general expression of shadows of things to come, since at their time they signified events to be revealed which we have accepted and recognized as already revealed, so that with the shadows removed we are enjoying their uncovered light. [...] Christ is our Pasch; our unleavened bread is sincerity of truth without the leaven of decay. If there are any other events over which there is no need for delay at this time, events which have been represented by those ancient

signs, they have come to an end in Him whose kingdom will be without end. **It was necessary, indeed, that all things be fulfilled in Him, who came to fulfill, not to destroy, the Law or the Prophets.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Treatise against the Jews*, II, 3)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The Old Law is like a pedagogue of children; the New Law is the law of perfection

As stated above (q. 90, a. 2; q. 91, a. 4), every law ordains human conduct to some end. [...] Accordingly then two laws may be distinguished from one another in two ways. First, through being altogether diverse, from the fact that they are ordained to diverse ends [...] Secondly, two laws may be distinguished from one another, through one of them being more closely connected with the end, and the other more remotely [...] We must therefore say that, according to the first way, the New Law is not distinct from the Old Law: because they both have the same end, namely, man's subjection to God; and **there is but one God of the New and of the Old Testament**, according to Romans 3:30: 'It is one God that justifieth circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.' **According to the second way, the New Law is distinct from the Old Law: because the Old Law is like a pedagogue of children**, as the Apostle says (Gal 3:24), **whereas the New Law is the law of perfection**, since it is the law of charity, of which the Apostle says (Col 3:14) that it is 'the bond of perfection.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 107, a. 1)

The New Law fulfils the Old by justifying men through the power of Christ's Passion, thus giving what the Old Law promised

Now everything perfect fulfils that which is lacking in the imperfect. And accordingly **the New Law fulfils the Old by supplying that which was lacking in the Old Law**. Now two things of every law is to make men righteous and virtuous, as was stated above (q. 92, q.1): and consequently the end of the Old Law was the justification of men. The Law, however,

could not accomplish this: but foreshadowed it by certain ceremonial actions, and promised it in words. And in this respect, **the New Law fulfils the Old by justifying men through the power of Christ's Passion**. This is what the Apostle says (Rom 8:3,4): 'What the Law could not do . . . God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . hath condemned sin in the flesh, that the justification of the Law might be fulfilled in us.' And in this respect, **the New Law gives what the Old Law promised**, according to 2Cor 1:20: 'Whatever are the promises of God, in Him,' i.e. in Christ, 'they are 'Yea'.' Again, in this respect, it also fulfils what the Old Law foreshadowed. Hence it is written (Col 2:17) concerning **the ceremonial precepts that they were 'a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ'**; in other words, **the reality is found in Christ**. Wherefore **the New Law is called the law of reality**; whereas **the Old Law is called the law of shadow or of figure**. Now Christ fulfilled the precepts of the Old Law both in His works and in His doctrine. [...] His doctrine He fulfilled the precepts of the Law in three ways. First, by **explaining the true sense of the Law**. [...] Secondly, **Our Lord fulfilled the precepts of the Law by prescribing the safest way of complying with the statutes of the Old Law**. [...] Thirdly, Our Lord fulfilled the precepts of the Law, by adding some counsels of perfection [...]. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 107, a. 2)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Why don't the Jews realize that they have remained stationary in useless antiquity? The spiritual meaning has dawned, the natural action has ceased

Psalm 79 is likewise entitled: 'For the things that shall be changed.' In this psalm among other things is written: 'look down from heaven, and see, and visit this vineyard: And perfect what your right hand has planted: and upon the son of man whom you have confirmed for yourself. This is the vineyard of which is said: 'you have brought a vineyard out of Egypt.' **Christ did not plant another; by His coming He changed that one into a better vineyard**. Accordingly, we find in the Gospel: **'He will utterly destroy those evil men, and will let out the vineyard to other vine-dressers.'** The Gospel does not

say: 'He will uproot, and will plant another,' but, 'this same vineyard He will let out to other vine-dressers.' [...] This change, certainly having been foretold, is not indicated through the titles of psalms for the understanding few; it is expressed in the unmistakable proclamation of the Prophet. Clearly, a new covenant is promised, not according to that covenant which was made with the people when they were led out of Egypt. Since, then, there are in the Old Testament precepts which we who belong to the New Testament are not compelled to observe, why do not the Jews realize that they have remained stationary in useless antiquity rather than hurl charges against us who hold fast to the new promises, because we do not observe the old? Just as it is written in the Canticle of Canticles: 'The day has broken, let the shadows retire,' the spiritual meaning has already dawned, the natural action has already ceased. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Treatise against the Jews*, VI, 7-8)

The sacrifice of the Christians is being offered everywhere

Open your eyes at last, at any time, and see, from the rising of the sun even to its setting- not in one place as established with you, but everywhere- the sacrifice of the Christians is being offered; not to any god at all, but to Him who foretold these events, to the God of Israel. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Treaty against the Jews*, IX, 13)

SAINT MELITO OF SARDIS

Those things which once had value are today without value: the Gospel became the fulfillment of the law, while the Church became the storehouse of truth

For even the Lord's salvation and his truth were prefigured in the people, and the teaching of the gospel was proclaimed in advance by the law. The people, therefore, became the model for the church, and the law a parabolic sketch. **But the Gospel became the explanation of the law and its fulfillment, while the Church became the storehouse of truth.** Therefore, the type had value prior to its realization, and the parable was wonderful prior to its interpretation. This is to say that **the people**

had value before the Church came on the scene, and the law was wonderful before the gospel was brought to light. But when the Church came on the scene, and the gospel was set forth, the type lost its value by surrendering its significance to the truth, and the law was fulfilled by surrendering its significance to the gospel. **Just as the type lost its significance by surrendering its image to that which is true by nature, and as the parable lost its significance by being illumined through the interpretation, So indeed also the law was fulfilled when the Gospel was brought to light, and the people lost their significance when the Church came on the scene, and the type was destroyed when the Lord appeared.** Therefore, **those things which once had value are today without value**, because the things which have true value have appeared. (Saint Melito of Sardis. *On the Passover, Relation Between Old Testament and New Testament*, 39-43)

II – MAY SACRED SCRIPTURE BE INTERPRETED DIFFERENTLY THAN THE CHURCH INTERPRETS IT?

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

The interpretation of Sacred Scripture should be ruled according to the one standard of the Church's belief

We said above, that it has always been the custom of Catholics, and still is, to prove the true faith in these two ways; first by the authority of the Divine Canon, and next by the tradition of the Catholic Church. Not that the Canon alone does not of itself suffice for every question, but seeing that the more part, **interpreting the divine words according to their own persuasion**, take up various erroneous opinions, it is therefore necessary **that the interpretation of divine Scripture should be ruled according to the one standard of the Church's belief**, especially in those articles on which the foundations of all Catholic doctrine rest. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1507. Council of Trent, *Session IV, Decree on the Vulgate edition of the Bible and on the manner of interpreting Sacred Scripture*, April 8, 1546)

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

Sacred Scripture is the rule of Christian faith

Sacred Scripture is in such a way the rule of our Christian faith, **that he who does not believe all that it contains, or believes something that in any way contradicts it, is considered an unbeliever.** [...] But I am wasting time; we are all in agreement about this, **and if someone was so irrational as to contradict us, not knowing how to support his own contradiction other than with the Scripture itself, he contradicts himself, before contradicting the Scriptures,** by using them at the same time as protesting that he does not wish to use them. (Saint Francis de Sales. *Meditations on the Church*, Part II, Ch. 1, a. 1 (BAC, 1985, p. 171)

PIUS XII

The Church has kept Sacred Scripture with all care and defends it from every perverse interpretation

Inspired by the Divine Spirit, the Sacred Writers composed those books, which God, in His paternal charity towards the human race, deigned to bestow on them in order 'to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice: that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work' (2Tim 3:16-17). **This heaven-sent treasure Holy Church considers as the most precious source of doctrine on faith and morals.** No wonder therefore that, as she received it intact from the hands of the Apostles, so she kept it with all care, defended it from every false and perverse interpretation and used it diligently as an instrument for securing the eternal salvation of souls, as almost countless documents in every age strikingly bear witness. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Divino afflante Spiritu*, no. 1, September 30, 1943)

SAINT VINCENT OF LERINS

The right understanding of the prophets should be framed in accordance with the standard of Catholic interpretation

But here someone perhaps will ask: Since the canon of Scripture is complete, and sufficient

of itself for everything, and more than sufficient, what need is there to join with it the authority of the Church's interpretation? For this reason – because, owing to the depth of Holy Scripture, all do not accept it in one and the same sense, but one understands its words in one way, another in another; so that it seems to be capable of as many interpretations as there are interpreters. [...] **Therefore, it is very necessary, on account of so great intricacies of such various error, that the rule for the right understanding of the prophets and apostles should be framed in accordance with the standard of Ecclesiastical and Catholic interpretation.** Moreover, in the Catholic Church itself, **all possible care must be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all.** For that is truly and in the strictest sense 'Catholic,' which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally. This rule we shall observe if we follow universality, antiquity, consent. We shall follow universality if we confess that one faith to be true, which the whole Church throughout the world confesses; antiquity, if we in no wise depart from those **interpretations which it is manifest were notoriously held by our holy ancestors and fathers;** consent, in like manner, if in antiquity itself we adhere to the consentient definitions and determinations of all, or at the least of almost all priests and doctors. (Saint Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitory*, ch. 2, no. 5-6)

A heretical tendency: to receive novelties of words contrary to the faith of the olden time

'Profane novelties of words.' What words are these? Such as have nothing sacred, nothing religious, **words utterly remote from the inmost sanctuary of the Church** which is the temple of God. **Profane novelties of words,** that is, of doctrines, subjects, opinions, such as **are contrary to antiquity and the faith of the olden time.** Which if they be received, it follows necessarily that the faith of the blessed fathers is violated either in whole, or at all events in great part; it follows necessarily that all the faithful of all ages, all the saints, the chaste, the continent, the virgins, all the clergy, Deacons and Priests, so many thousands of Confessors, so vast an army of martyrs, such multitudes of cities and of peoples, so many islands, provinces, kings, tribes, kingdoms,

nations, in a word, almost the whole earth, incorporated in Christ the Head, through the Catholic faith, have been ignorant for so long a tract of time, have been mistaken, have blasphemed, have not known what to believe, what to confess. ‘Shun profane novelties of words,’ which to receive and follow was never the part of Catholics; of heretics always was. (Saint Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitory*, ch. 24, no. 61-62)

The words of Scripture are appealed to by the devil and his disciples – one must interpret the sacred Canon according to the traditions of the Universal Church

But it will be said, if the words, the sentiments, the promises of Scripture, are appealed to by the Devil and his disciples, of whom some are false apostles, some false prophets and false teachers, and all without exception heretics, what are Catholics and the sons of Mother Church to do? How are they to distinguish truth from falsehood in the sacred Scriptures? They must be very careful to pursue that course which, in the beginning of this *Commonitory*, we said that holy and learned men had commended to us, that is to say, **they must interpret the sacred Canon according to the traditions of the Universal Church and in keeping with the rules of Catholic doctrine, in which Catholic and Universal Church, moreover, they must follow universality, antiquity, consent. And if at any time a part opposes itself to the whole, novelty to antiquity, the dissent of one or a few who are in error to the consent of all or at all events of the great majority of Catholics, then they must prefer the soundness of the whole to the corruption of a part; in which same whole they must prefer the religion of antiquity to the profaneness of novelty; and in antiquity itself in like manner, to the temerity of one or of a very few they must prefer, first of all, the general decrees, if such there be, of a Universal Council, or if there be no such, then, what is next best, they must follow the consentient belief of many and great masters. Which rule having been faithfully, soberly, and scrupulously observed, we shall with little difficulty detect the noxious errors of heretics as they arise.** (Saint Vincent of Lerins. *Commonitory*, ch. 27, no. 70)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Opposition to the faith is also unbelief – it arises from the pride of not willing to subject to the sound interpretation of the Fathers

Unbelief may be taken in two ways: first, by way of pure negation, so that a man be called an unbeliever, merely because he has not the faith. Secondly, unbelief may be taken by way of opposition to the faith; in which sense a man refuses to hear the faith, or despises it, according to Is 53:1 – ‘Who hath believed our report?’ It is this that completes the notion of unbelief, and it is in this sense that unbelief is a sin. [...] Unbelief, in so far as it is a sin, arises from pride, through which man is unwilling to subject his intellect to the rules of faith, and to the sound interpretation of the Fathers. Hence Gregory says (*Moral.* xxxi, 45) that ‘presumptuous innovations arise from vainglory.’ (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 10, a. 1)

III – THE PSALMS WERE TRULY INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

JOHN PAUL II

The Christian tradition is not limited to perpetuating Jewish practice – it innovated, using the Psalms in function of Christ’s paschal mystery

The Christian tradition is not limited to perpetuating Jewish practice but made certain innovations which end by giving a different character to the entire prayer experience lived by Jesus’ disciples. In fact, in addition to reciting the Our Father in the morning and evening, the Christians freely chose the Psalms with which to celebrate their daily prayer. Down through history, this process suggested the use of specific Psalms for certain particularly significant moments of faith. [...] Christian prayer is born, nourished and develops around the event of faith par excellence: **Christ’s paschal mystery.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 4-5, April 4, 2001)

Harmony between the Spirit present in Scripture and the Spirit dwelling in the baptized

Before beginning the commentary on the individual Psalms and Songs of Praise, let us complete today the introductory reflection which we began in the last catechesis. We will do so by starting with one aspect that is prized by our spiritual tradition: in singing the Psalms, the Christian feels a sort of harmony between the Spirit present in the Scriptures and the Spirit who dwells within him through the grace of Baptism. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, April 4, 2001)

LEO XIII

To understand and explain the Psalms: the Holy Spirit's presence is required

'Take heed to thyself and to doctrine; be earnest in them. For in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee' (1Tim 4:16). For the saving and for the perfection of ourselves and of others there is at hand the very best of help in the Holy Scriptures, as the Book of Psalms, among others, so constantly insists; but those only will find it who bring to this divine reading not only docility and attention, but also piety and an innocent life. For the Sacred Scripture is not like other books. Dictated by the Holy Ghost, it contains things of the deepest importance, which in many instances are most difficult and obscure. To understand and explain such things there is always required the 'coming' (S. Jer. in Mic. I, 10.) of the same Holy Spirit; that is to say, His light and His grace; and these, as the Royal Psalmist so frequently insists, are to be sought by humble prayer and guarded by holiness of life. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Providentissimus Deus*, no. 5, November 18, 1893)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

The Psalms illustrate the divine-human character of Sacred Scripture.

Though deeply important for the entire Church, the Liturgy of the Hours has particular significance in the consecrated life. The Liturgy of the Hours is particularly adapted in a formation to prayer, primarily because the Psalms best

illustrate the divine-human character of Sacred Scripture. The Psalms are the school of prayer, where the person who sings or recites them learns to hear, interiorize and interpret the Word of God. In addition to receiving the Word of God in personal and communal prayer, all Christians have the unavoidable responsibility to receive it in liturgical prayer. This requires a new outlook towards Sacred Scripture. (Synod of Bishops. *XII Ordinary General Assembly, Instrumentum laboris*, no. 34, May 11, 2008)

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Christ is present when the Church supplicates and sings the Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours

The work of the redemption of mankind and the perfect glorification of God is undertaken by Christ in the Holy Spirit through his Church, not only in the celebration of the Eucharist and administration of the Sacraments, but also with preference to other manners, when the Liturgy of the Hours unfolds. In it Christ is present within the congregated assembly, in the Word of God that is proclaimed and 'when the Church supplicates and sings Psalms.' (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *The Liturgy of the Hours or Divine Office*, no. 13, November 1, 1970)

IV – THE CATHOLIC PRAYER PAR EXCELLENCE

PIUS XII

Pray with the same intention as the Redeemer

Consequently, the priest ought to pray [the Divine Office] with the same intention as the Redeemer. (Pius XII. *Apostolic exhortation Mentis nostrae*, no. 41, September 23, 1950)

The Divine Office is the prayer of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, the hymn

that the Divine Word introduced into this earthly exile

The Divine Office is the prayer of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, offered to God in the name and on behalf of all Christians [...] By assuming human nature, the Divine Word introduced into this earthly exile a hymn which is sung in heaven for all eternity. He unites to Himself the whole human race and with it sings this hymn to the praise of God. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 142, 144, November 20, 1947)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

The Psalms are the voice of the Church

What is more agreeable than the Psalms? [...] In fact, the Psalms are a blessing of the people, a praise to God, a eulogy of the faithful, applause of the entire world, universal language, voice of the Church, harmonious profession of faith, expression of entire devotion, joy of liberty, clamor of overflowing happiness. [The Psalms] calm our anger, exclude our worries, and console us in our sadness. At night they are weapons; during the day, a teaching. (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Commentary on Psalm 1*, no. 9)

OFFICE FOR THE LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS

OF THE SUPREME PONTIFF

The Liturgy of the Hours: Christocentric and profoundly ecclesial prayer – the Psalms are interpreted by texts of the Fathers, Doctors and Councils

The Liturgy of the Hours, being essentially Christo-centric, is profoundly ecclesial. This implies that, in as much as public worship of the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours is removed from the will of the individual and is regulated by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Moreover, it represents an ecclesial reading of Sacred Scripture, because the Psalms and the biblical readings are interpreted by texts of the Fathers, of the Doctors and of the Councils, as well as by the liturgical prayers composed by the Church herself (cf. CCC, 1177). [...] Singing the praises of God, the earthly Church joins

herself to the heavenly and prepares to reach her. (Office for the Liturgical Celebrations of the Supreme Pontiff. *When to Celebrate*, no. 4: The Liturgy of the Hours)

CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

The Liturgy of the Hours is the prayer of Christ, with his Body to the Father

In the Liturgy of the Hours, the Church, fulfilling the priestly function of Christ, her Head, offers to God, 'without interruption', the sacrifice of praise, that is to say, the first fruits of the lips that sing his name. This prayer is 'the voice of the Spouse that speaks to the Spouse; moreover, it is the prayer of Christ, with his Body to the Father.' 'Therefore, all of those who exercise this function, on one hand fulfil the obligation of the Church and on the other, participate in the most high honor of the Spouse of Christ; since while God is praised, they are before his throne in the name of Mother Church.' (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *The Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Office*, no. 15. November 1, 1979)

The Liturgy of the Hours: a prayer that belongs to the entire body of the Church

The Liturgy of the Hours, just as other liturgical acts, is not a private action, but rather as it belongs to the entire body of the Church, it manifests and influences in it. Its ecclesial celebration reaches the greatest splendor – and for the same reason is recommendable to a high degree – when with the bishop, surrounded by priests and ministers, it is carried out within a particular Church, in which the Church of Christ – which is One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic – is truly present and labors. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *The Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine*, no. 21. November 1, 1979)

The faith of all of those who participate is nourished, and minds are directed toward God

Not only when we read that it 'was written for

our instruction' (Rom 15:4), but also when the Church prays and sings, the faith of all of those who participate in it is nourished, and minds are directed toward God, presenting him the spiritual offering and receiving from him his grace with greater abundance. (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *The Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Office*, no. 14. November 1, 1979)

In the Hours, the Church sings uniting with the hymn of praise that perpetually resounds in the celestial dwellings

With the praise that God is offered in the Hours, the Church sings uniting with the hymn of praise that perpetually resounds in the celestial dwellings; already feeling the taste of that celestial praise that resounds continually before the throne of God and the Lamb, as John described in the Apocalypse. For the close union that occurs among us and the celestial Church, is accomplished when 'we celebrate together, with fraternal happiness, the praise of the Divine Majesty, and all of the redeemed by the blood of Christ of every tribe and tongue and people and nation (Rev 5: 9), congregated in the same Church, we glorify with the same song of praise, the Triune God.' (Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *The Liturgy of the Hours or the Divine Office*, no. 16, November 1, 1970)

JOHN XXIII

An atmosphere of Catholicism emanates from the Divine Office

It is a great happiness for every priest to feel, while reciting the Divine Office, pleasantly elevated by the atmosphere of Catholicism and universality that emanates from its pages, where everything shines and all sing. For along with the Psalms – which are a true joy, a wise counsel and a suave rest for the spirit – other passages from the Old Testament are combined, as well as the fertile doctrine of

the four Gospels, the incomparable sublimity of the Pauline letters and other writings of the New Testament. All of this is contained in the Breviary, inexhaustible and unlimited font of light and grace. (John XXIII. *Apostolic exhortation Sacrae Laudis*, January 6, 1962)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

If the Office was recited as it should: the Church wouldn't be reduced to the present miserable state; sinners would be delivered from slavery to the devil

If priests and religious did all recite the Office as it ought to be recited, the Church would not behold herself in the miserable state to which she is reduced. How many sinners would be delivered from the slavery of the devil, and how many souls would love God with much greater fervor! And how would priests themselves not find themselves ever the same, imperfect, irritable, jealous, attached to their own interests, and led away by vanities! (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The complete ascetical works of Saint Alphonsus*, Vol. XIII, ch. II, p. 448)

And how comes it that a priest offering up many prayers is yet never heard?

And how comes it that a priest offering up so many prayers in a day, were it only in the Office which he recites, is yet never heard? He is Always the same, as weak and prone as ever to fall not only into slight sins (to which he is habitated, and takes neither pains nor care to correct himself of them), but into grievous sins against charity justice, or chastity; hence when he recites the Office he pronounces sentence of condemnation against himself, in these words: They are cursed who decline from Thy commandments. And what is still worse, he feels little remorse, excusing himself as being of the same flesh and blood as other men, and not able to restrain himself. (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The complete ascetical works of Saint Alphonsus*, Vol. XIII. ch. II, p. 449)

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ECUMENISM

JUDAISM

PROTESTANTISM

A healthy pluralism – one which genuinely respects differences and values them

Recently, it has become common to hear affirmations regarding the right to religious liberty. However, this ends up confusing diverse concepts, to such a point that it appears to insinuate an almost obligatory religious pluralism that intends to put all religions – Christian or non-Christian – on the same level. For some Catholics, this tendency brings up real doubts, and for others, a just indignation. How could this be possible? If God has chosen only one Church, do all religions deserve the same consideration? Is the worship within other religions – clearly different than that which Christ founded – acceptable? Since Christ founded his Church with the characteristics of unity and sanctity, would he permit his Mystical Spouse to be disfigured, appearing in the eyes of the world as an adulteress, promiscuously mingling with different beliefs and forms of worship? What are the evils and dangers to which the so-called ‘healthy pluralism’ may expose the Holy Church? Is it licit for a Catholic to frequent synagogues and non-Catholic places of worship without compromising his Christian dignity? From the resulting confusion, these and so many other disquieting questions are brought up by those who honestly search for the Truth. Let us see what the Fathers of the Church and former Popes have to say about this matter.

FRANCIS

The Synod Fathers spoke of the importance of respect for religious freedom, viewed as a fundamental human right. This includes **‘the freedom to choose the religion which one judges to be true and to manifest one’s beliefs in public’** (Benedict XVI. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Medio Oriente*, 26). **A healthy pluralism, one which genuinely respects differences and values them as such, does not entail privatizing religions in an attempt to reduce them to the quiet obscurity of the individual’s conscience** or to relegate them to the enclosed precincts of churches, synagogues or mosques. This would represent, in effect, a new form of discrimination and authoritarianism. The respect due to the agnostic or non-believing minority should not be arbitrarily imposed in a way that silences the convictions of the believing majority or ignores the wealth of religious traditions. In the long run, this would feed resentment rather than tolerance and peace. (*Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 255)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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SACRED SCRIPTURES

One Lord, one faith, one baptism

One body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; **one Lord, one faith, one baptism**; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Eph 4:4-6)

You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons

No, I mean that what they sacrifice, (they sacrifice) to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to become participants with demons. **You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons.** Or are we provoking the Lord to jealous anger? Are we stronger than he? (1Cor 10:20-22)

Do not be yoked with unbelievers

Do not be yoked with those who are different, with unbelievers. **For what partnership do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What accord has Christ with Beliar?** Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said: 'I will live with them and move among them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people. **Therefore, come forth from them and be separate,**' says the Lord, 'and touch nothing unclean; then I will receive you and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty'. Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of flesh and spirit, making holiness perfect in the fear of God. (2Cor 6:14-18, 7:1)

PIUS XI

There can be no true religion other than that which is founded on the revealed word of God

In the course of time, namely from the beginnings of the human race until the coming and preaching of Jesus Christ, He Himself taught man the duties which a rational creature owes to its Creator [...] From which it follows that **there can be no true religion other than that which is founded on the revealed word of God:** which revelation, begun from the beginning and continued under the Old Law, Christ Jesus Himself under the New Law perfected. Now, **if God has spoken** (and it is historically certain that He has truly spoken), **all must see that it is man's duty to believe absolutely God's revelation and to obey implicitly His commands; that we might rightly do both,** for the glory of God and our own salvation, **the Only-begotten Son of God founded His Church on earth.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 6, January 6, 1928)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The only Church of Christ is the Catholic Church

The Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: **he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him** (cf. Jn 15:1 ff.; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:15-16; Acts 9:5). [...] **The Catholic faithful are required to profess that there is an historical continuity** — rooted in the apostolic succession — **between the Church founded by Christ and the Catholic Church: 'This is the single Church of Christ... which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care** (cf. Jn 21:17), commissioning him and the other Apostles to extend and rule her (cf. Mt 28:18ff.), erected for all ages as 'the pillar and mainstay of the truth' (1Tim 3:15). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no.16, August 6, 2000)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

Let no one corrupt the truth of the faith by perfidious prevarication

Moreover the blessed Apostle Paul teaches the same thing, and sets forth the sacrament of unity, saying, 'There is one body and one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, **one faith, one baptism, one God?**' **And this unity we ought firmly to hold and assert,** especially those of us that are bishops who preside in the Church, that we may also prove the episcopate itself to be one and undivided. Let no one deceive the brotherhood by a falsehood: **let no one corrupt the truth of the faith by perfidious prevarication.** [...] **Thus also the Church, Shone over with the light of the Lord, Sheds forth her rays over the whole world, yet it is one light which is everywhere diffused,** nor is the unity of the body separated. Her fruitful abundance spreads her branches over the whole world. She broadly expands her rivers, liberally flowing, yet her head is one, her source one; and she is one mother, plentiful in the results of fruitfulness: from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are animated. (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *De unitate Ecclesiae*, I, 4-5)

The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous

The spouse of Christ cannot be adulterous; she is uncorrupted and pure. She knows one

home; she guards with chaste modesty the sanctity of one couch. She keeps us for God. She appoints the sons whom she has born for the kingdom. **Whoever is separated from the Church and is joined to an adulteress, is separated from the promises of the Church; nor can he who forsakes the Church of Christ attain to the rewards of Christ. He is a stranger; he is profane; he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother.** If any one could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the Church. The Lord warns, saying, 'He who is not with me is against me, and he who gathereth not with me scattereth.' **He who breaks the peace and the concord of Christ, does so in opposition to Christ.** (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *De unitate Ecclesiae*, I, 6)

Pius XI

That all Christians should be as 'one': continually repeated by 'pan-Christians'

But some are more easily deceived by the outward appearance of good when there is question of fostering unity among all Christians. Is it not right, it is often repeated, indeed, even consonant with duty, that all who invoke the name of Christ should abstain from mutual reproaches and at long last be united in mutual charity? **Who would dare to say that he loved Christ, unless he worked with all his might to carry out the desires of Him, Who asked His Father that His disciples might be 'one'** (Jn 17: 21). And did not the same Christ will that His disciples should be marked out and distinguished from others by this characteristic, namely that they loved one another: 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another' (Jn 8:35)? **All Christians, they add, should be as 'one': for then they would be much more powerful in driving out the pest of irreligion, which like a serpent daily creeps further and becomes more widely spread, and prepares to rob the Gospel of its strength. These things and others that class of men who are known as pan-Christians continually repeat and amplify.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 3-4, January 6, 1928)

JOHN XXIII

Either men anchor themselves on Christ and His Church or they deliberately exclude themselves from the Church

Certain it is that the critical issues, the thorny problems that wait upon men's solution, have remained the same for almost twenty centuries. And why? Because the whole of history and of life hinges on the person of Jesus Christ. **Either men anchor themselves on Him and His Church, and thus enjoy the blessings of light and joy, right order and peace; or they live their lives apart from Him; many positively oppose Him, and deliberately exclude themselves from the Church.** The result can only be confusion in their lives, bitterness in their relations with one another, **and the savage threat of war.** (John XXIII. *Address on the occasion of the solemn opening of Vatican Council II*, October 11, 1962)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

He who drinks the chalice of the demons becomes one with them

He [Saint Paul] shows that the first motive for which they should be careful to abstain from eating the offerings immolated to the idols: Holy Communion; whereby what he is going to say he submits to their judgment, he shows, in the second place what it means to make ourselves one with Christ by means of Eucharistic Communion; and thirdly, he proves that this is so, that effectively we are one in his mystical body. [...] He reasoning is, then, of this nature: **just as he who drinks the chalice of the Lord becomes one with him, in the same way, he who drinks the chalice of the demons becomes one with them. But if there is something that above all should be fled from, it is union with the demons.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians 10*, 1Cor 10:14-17, lec. 4)

SAINT JUSTIN OF ROME

There are men confessing themselves to be Christians yet do not teach Christ's doctrines, but those of the spirits of error

There are such men confessing themselves to be Christians, and admitting the crucified Jesus to be both Lord and Christ, yet not teaching His doctrines, but those of the spirits of error, [...] There are, therefore, and there were many, my friends, who, coming forward in the name of Jesus, taught both to speak and act impious and blasphemous things; [...] with whom we have nothing in common, since we know them to be atheists, impious, unrighteous, and sinful, and confessors of Jesus in name only, instead of worshippers of Him. Yet they style themselves Christians, just as certain among the Gentiles inscribe the name of God upon the works of their own hands, and partake in nefarious and impious rites. (Saint Justin of Rome. *Dialogue of Justin with Trypho*, 35)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

No one is to be compelled to embrace the faith against his will; but it is common for treachery to be chastised

No one is indeed to be compelled to embrace the faith against his will; but by the severity, or one might rather say, by the mercy of God, it is common for treachery to be chastised with the scourge of tribulation. Is it the case, because the best morals are chosen by freedom of will, that therefore the worst morals are not punished by integrity of law? But yet discipline to punish an evil manner of living is out of the question, except where principles of good living which had been learned have come to be despised. If any laws, therefore, have been enacted against you, you are not thereby forced to do well, but are only prevented from doing ill. For no one can do well unless he has deliberately chosen, and unless he has loved what is in free will; but the fear of punishment, even if it does not share in the pleasures of a good conscience, at any rate keeps the evil desire from escaping beyond the bounds of thought. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Answer to Petilian the Donatist*, II, 184)

LEO XIII

‘Liberty of worship’: opposed to the virtue of religion and a degradation of liberty

First, let us examine that liberty in individuals which is so opposed to the virtue of religion, namely, the liberty of worship, as it is called. This is based on the principle that every man is free to profess as he may choose any religion or none. [...] And if it be asked which of the many conflicting religions it is necessary to adopt, reason and the natural law unhesitatingly tell us to practice that one which God enjoins, and which men can easily recognize by certain exterior notes, whereby Divine Providence has willed that it should be distinguished, because, in a matter of such moment, the most terrible loss would be the consequence of error. Wherefore, when a liberty such as We have described is offered to man, the power is given him to pervert or abandon with impunity the most sacred of duties, and to exchange the unchangeable good for evil; which, as We have said, is no liberty, but its degradation, and the abject submission of the soul to sin. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Libertas praestantissimum*, no. 19-20, June 20, 1888)

PIUS IX

No distinction between the true religion and false ones: liberty of perdition

For you well know, venerable brethren, that at this time men are found not a few who, applying to civil society the impious and absurd principle of ‘naturalism,’ as they call it, dare to teach that ‘the best constitution of public society and (also) civil progress altogether require that human society be conducted and governed without regard being had to religion any more than if it did not exist; or, at least, without any distinction being made between the true religion and false ones.’ And, against the doctrine of Scripture, of the Church, and of the Holy Fathers, they do not hesitate to assert that [...] ‘liberty of conscience and worship is each man’s personal right, which ought to be legally proclaimed and asserted in every rightly constituted society; and that a right resides in the citizens to an absolute liberty, which should be restrained by no authority whether ecclesiastical or civil, whereby they may be able openly and publicly to manifest and declare any of their ideas whatever, either by word of mouth, by the press, or in any other way.’ But, while

they rashly affirm this, they do not think and consider that they are preaching 'liberty of perdition'; (Saint Augustine, epistle 105, 166) and that 'if human arguments are always allowed free room for discussion, there will never be wanting men who will dare to resist truth, and to trust in the flowing speech of human wisdom; whereas we know, from the very teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ, how carefully Christian faith and wisdom should avoid this most injurious babbling. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Quanta cura*, no. 3, December 8, 1864)

Liberty of every cult leads to the spread of indifferentism

For it is false that the civil liberty of every cult, and likewise, the full power granted to all of manifesting openly and publicly any kind of opinions and ideas, more easily leads to the corruption of the morals and minds of the people, and to the spread of the evil of indifferentism. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2979. *Pius IX*, Syllabus of Errors: Errors which are related to Modern Liberalism)

LEO XIII

To think that all religions are alike is to ruin the Catholic religion

As all who offer themselves are received whatever may be their form of religion, they thereby teach the great error of this age—that a regard for religion should be held as an indifferent matter, and that all religions are alike. This manner of reasoning is calculated to bring about the ruin of all forms of religion, and especially of the Catholic religion, which, as it is the only one that is true, cannot, without

great injustice, be regarded as merely equal to other religions. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Humanum genus*, no. 16, April 20, 1884)

LEO I, THE GREAT

Flee from heretics as from a deadly poison

Therefore, dear ones, from those [heretics of] which we are speaking, **flee from them as a deadly poison, condemn them, withdraw from them and, if adverted by you, they don't wish to correct themselves, avoid conversation with them** because as it is written. '...their talk will eat its way like gangrene' (2Tim 2:17). (Leo I. *Homily* 96, *Sive tractatus contra heresim Eutythis*, 3)

JOHN XXIII

All men must love the truth sincerely if they are to attain peace

Once we have attained the truth in its fullness, integrity, and purity, unity should pervade our minds, hearts, and actions. For there is only one cause of discord, disagreement, and dissension: ignorance of the truth, or what is worse, rejection of the truth once it has been sought and found. It may be that the truth is rejected because of the practical advantages which are expected to result from false views; it may be that it is rejected as a result of that perverted blindness which seeks easy and indulgent excuses for vice and immoral behavior. **All men, therefore, private citizens as well as government officials, must love the truth sincerely if they are to attain that peace** and harmony on which depends all real prosperity, public and private. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Ad Petri cathedram*, no. 20-21, June 29, 1959)

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Ecumenism of Blood is a Priceless Contribution toward Christian Unity

From our most basic notions of Catechism we know that 'Baptism of blood' incorporates into the Holy Church those who have died for their faith in Christ, even though they have not yet received sacramental Baptism. Francis, in turn, speaks of an 'ecumenism of blood', which would unite all of those who suffer persecution; Catholics, Orthodox, Copts and Lutherans, at times even including Muslims and ministers of other religions on the list. Consequently, many questions arise...

FRANCIS

Today we are witnessing the persecution of Christians and... I was just in Albania... They told me that they didn't ask if you were Catholic or Orthodox... Are you Christian? Boom! Currently in the Middle East, in Africa, in many places, how many Christians have died! **They don't ask them if they are Pentecostal, Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican, Catholic, Orthodox... Are they Christians? They kill them because they believe in Christ. This is the ecumenism of blood.**

I remember: once I was in Hamburg, around 1986 or 87, and I met a priest. And the priest was working on the cause of beatification for a Catholic priest who had been guillotined by the Nazis because he taught the catechism to the young people. But in studying he had seen the list of those condemned to death that day, and right behind him there was a Lutheran pastor who was sentenced for the same thing. So **the blood of the priest was mingled with that of the pastor.** The priest went to the bishop and said to him: **'Either I'm moving the two causes forward together, or I'm not doing anything.'** **Ecumenism of blood.** (*Address to the leaders of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches, July 28, 2014*)

[Andrea Torielli]: Is Christian unity a priority for you?

[Francis]: Yes, for me ecumenism is a priority. **Today there is an ecumenism of blood. In some countries they kill Christians for wearing a cross or having a Bible and before they kill them they do not ask them whether they are Anglican, Lutheran, Catholic or Orthodox. Their blood is mixed. To those who kill we are Christians.** We are united in blood, even though we have not yet managed to take necessary steps towards unity between us and perhaps the time has not yet come. Unity is a gift that we need to ask for. I knew a parish priest in Hamburg who was dealing **with the beatification cause of a Catholic priest guillotined by the Nazis** for teaching children the catechism. **After him, in the list of condemned individuals, was a Lutheran pastor who was killed for the same reason. Their blood was mixed. The parish priest told me he had gone to the bishop and said to him: 'I will continue to deal with the cause, but both of their causes, not just the Catholic priest's'.** **This is what ecumenism of blood is.** It still exists today; you just need to read the newspapers. Those who kill Christians don't ask for your identity card to see which Church you were baptized in. We need to take these facts into consideration. (*Interview with Andrea Torielli, December 14, 2013*)

The sufferings endured by Christians in these last decades have made a unique and invaluable contribution to the unity of Christ's disciples. As in the ancient Church, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of new Christians. So too in our time **the blood**

of innumerable Christians has become a seed of unity. The ecumenism of suffering and of the martyrdom of blood are a powerful summons to walk the long path of reconciliation between the Churches, by courageously and decisively abandoning ourselves to the working of the Holy Spirit. **We feel the duty to follow this fraternal path also out of the debt of gratitude we owe to the suffering so many of our brothers and sisters, which is salvific because it is united to the Passion of Christ.** (*Speech to Patriarch Karekin II, May 8, 2014*)

For persecutors, we are not divided; we are not Lutherans, Orthodox, Evangelicals, Catholics...No! We are one in their eyes! For persecutors we are Christians! They are not interested in anything else. This is the ecumenism of blood that we experience today. Remember: seek the unity which is the work of the Holy Spirit and do not be afraid of diversity. The breathing of Christians draws in the new air of the Holy Spirit and then exhales it upon the world: it is the prayer of praise and missionary outreach. Share baptism in the Holy Spirit with everyone in the Church. **Spiritual ecumenism and the ecumenism of blood.** The unity of the Body of Christ. Prepare the Bride for the Bridegroom who comes! One Bride only! All. (Rev 22:17). (*To members of the 'Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships,' October 31, 2014*)

Just as the blood of martyrs was a seed of strength and fertility for the Church, so too the sharing of daily sufferings can become an effective instrument of unity. The terrible situation of Christians and all those who are suffering in the Middle East calls not only for our constant prayer, but also for an appropriate response on the part of the international community. (*Joint declaration: Francis and the Patriarch of Constantinople, November 30, 2014*)

In this moment of prayer for unity, I would also like to **remember our martyrs, the martyrs of today. They are witnesses to Jesus Christ, and they are persecuted and killed because they are Christians. Those who persecute them make no distinction between the religious communities to which they belong. They are Christians and for that they are persecuted. This, brothers and sisters, is the ecumenism of blood.** (*Homily on the Solemnity of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle, January 25, 2015*)

Allow me to use my mother tongue to express a profound and sad sentiment. Today I have read about the execution of those twenty-one or twenty-two Coptic Christians. They said only: 'Jesus, help me'. They were assassinated for the mere fact of being Christians. You, Brother, in your discourse, referred to what is happening in Jesus' land. **The blood of our Christian brothers is a testimony that calls to us. Regardless of whether they are Catholic, Orthodox, Coptic, Lutherans – this does not matter, they are Christians. And blood is the same. Their blood confesses Christ.** In remembrance of these brothers of ours who have died for the mere fact of confessing Christ, I ask that we encourage each other to go ahead with this ecumenism, that is giving us strength, this ecumenism of blood. **The martyrs are all Christians. Let us all pray for each other.** (*Audience with the representatives of the Church of Scotland (Reformed), February 16, 2015*)

We offer this Mass for our twenty-one Coptic brothers, slaughtered for the sole reason that they were Christians. Let us pray for them, that the Lord welcome them as martyrs, for their families, for my brother Tawadros, who is suffering greatly. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae, February 17, 2015*)

With great distress and sadness I learn of the further shocking violence perpetrated

against innocent Christians in Libya. I know that Your Holiness is suffering deeply in heart and mind at the sight of your faithful children being **killed for the sole reason that they are followers of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [...]** It makes no difference whether the victims are Catholic, Copt, Orthodox or Protestant. Their blood is one and the same in their confession of Christ! The blood of our Christian brothers and sisters is a testimony which cries out to be heard by everyone who can still distinguish between good and evil. (*Message to the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox Church, April 21, 2015*)

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COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

Salvation does not exist outside of the Church even for those who have shed their blood for Christ

It firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart 'into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt 25:41), unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock; and that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is so strong that only to those remaining in it are the sacraments of the Church of benefit for salvation, and do fasting, almsgiving, and other functions of piety and exercises of Christian service produce eternal reward, and that no one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1351. Council of Florence, *Decree in behalf of the Jacobites*, February 4, 1442)

SYNOD OF LAODICEA

The 'Martyrs' of the heretics are aliens from God

The members of the Church are not allowed to meet in the cemeteries, nor attend the so-called martyrs of any of the heretics, for prayer or service. [...] No Christian shall forsake the martyrs of Christ, and turn to false martyrs, for they are aliens from God. Let those, therefore, who go after them, be anathema. (Synod of Laodicea. *Canons* 9. 34)

SAINT FULGENTIUS OF RUSPE

Non-members of the Catholic Church cannot be saved, even if they shed their blood for the name of Christ

Believe strongly and without a doubt, that any heretic or schismatic, baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, absolutely cannot be saved if he is not a member of the Catholic Church, however

generous his alms may be, and even if he sheds his blood for the name of Christ. For all those who do not remain in unity with the Church cannot attain salvation, despite being baptized, and despite their almsgiving, abundant though it may be, and even despite their suffering death for the name of Christ, if they persists in the error, whether heretical or schismatic, which leads to death. (Saint Fulgentius of Ruspe. *Letter to Peter on the Faith*, 39, 80)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

The blood shed by a schismatic does not wash away the stain of sin

Do they deem that they have Christ with them when they are collected together, who are gathered together outside the Church of Christ? Even if such men were slain in confession of the Name, that stain is not even washed away by blood: the inexpressible and grave fault of discord is not even purged by suffering. He cannot be a martyr who is not in the Church; he cannot attain unto the kingdom who forsakes that which shall reign there. Christ gave us peace; He bade us be in agreement, and of one mind. He charged the bonds of love and charity to be kept uncorrupted and inviolate; he cannot show himself a martyr who has not maintained brotherly love. (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *On the Unity of the Church*, I, 13-14)

The torments suffered by a schismatic do not serve as a crown, but rather a chastisement for his perfidy

They cannot dwell with God who would not be of one mind in God's Church. Although they burn, given up to flames and fires, or lay down their lives, thrown to the wild beasts, that will not be the crown of faith, but the punishment of perfidy; nor will it be the glorious ending of religious valor, but the destruction of despair. Such a one may be slain; crowned he cannot be. He professes himself to be a Christian in such a way as the devil often feigns himself to be Christ, as the Lord Himself forewarns us, and says, 'Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many' (Mk 13:16). As he is not Christ, although he deceives in respect of the name; so neither can he appear as a Christian

who does not abide in the truth of His Gospel and of faith. (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *On the Unity of the Church*, II, 14)

The Baptism of Blood is Useless to a Heretic

Can the power of baptism be greater or of more avail than confession, than suffering, when one confesses Christ before men and is baptized in his own blood? **And yet even this baptism does not benefit a heretic, although he has confessed Christ, and been put to death outside the Church, unless the patrons and advocates of heretics declare that the heretics who are slain in a false confession of Christ are martyrs, and assign to them the glory and the crown of martyrdom contrary to the testimony of the apostle, who says that it will profit them nothing although they were burnt and slain.** (1Cor 13:3) (Saint Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle LXXII, To Jubaianus concerning the Baptism of Heretics, no. 21 – CSEL III/1, 794)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Those who, as schismatics, do not lead a Christian life, do not die as martyrs

I have proved countless times, both by debate and by writing, that they cannot have the death of martyrs because they have not the life of Christians, since it is not the pain but the purpose that makes a martyr. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Letter 204: to Dulcinius*, no. 1)

Those who rebel against the body of Christ cannot presume to be persecuted for his sake

With good reason you might say these things, seeking the glory of the martyrs, if you had the cause of the martyrs. The Lord did not call happy those who suffer such things, but rather happy those who suffer them for the sake of the Son of Man, who is Jesus Christ. **However, you did not suffer for him, but against him.** You suffer, it is true, but because you do not believe in him, and so you suffer for your disbelief. How, then, do you presume to have the faith that Jesus Christ left to the apostles? Do you wish,

by chance, that men were so blind and so deaf as to not read or hear the Gospel, in which they discover **that which Christ left for his apostles to believe regarding his Church? And if you divide and separate yourselves from it, you actually rebel against the words of the head and the body, and nonetheless you presume to suffer persecution for the Son of Man and for the faith that he left to the Apostles.** [...] This is, then, the faith regarding the Holy Church that he left to the disciples. **It is this faith, Donatists, that you oppose with your resistance. And you insist that you suffer persecution for the faith that Christ the Lord left to his Apostles!** With surprising insolence and blindness you contradict **this Son of Man**, who recommended his Church which was in its beginnings in Jerusalem, and producing fruit and spreading to all peoples, and you proclaim that you are suffering calamities for the sake of the Son of Man. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Contra Gaudentium Donatistarum Episcopum*, I, 20, 22)

If a schismatic dies guilty of sacrilege how may he be baptized by his blood?

In the next place, if all who are killed are baptized in their own blood, then all robbers, all unrighteous, impious, accursed men, who are put to death by the sentence of the law, are to be considered martyrs, because they are baptized in their own blood. But if only those are baptized in their own blood who are put to death for righteousness' sake, since theirs is the kingdom of heaven, (Mt 5:10) you have already seen that the first question is why you suffer, and only afterwards should we ask what you suffer. Why therefore do you puff out your cheeks before you have shown the righteousness of your deeds? Why, does your tongue resound before your character is approved? **If you have made a schism, you are impious; if you are impious, you die as one guilty of sacrilege, when you are punished for impiety; if you die as one guilty of sacrilege, how are you baptized in your blood?** Or do you say, I have not made a schism? Let us then inquire into this. Why do you make an outcry before you prove your case? (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Answer to Petilian the Donatist*, II, 23, 52)

It is the Cause and not the Sufferings that Makes Martyrs

But since there are many that suffer this, be it due to their own sins, or due to their crimes, one must be attentive in distinguishing not so much the hardship suffered, but the cause. A criminal could receive a chastisement similar to that of a martyr, but the cause is different. Three were crucified: one was the Savior, the second was saved, and the third, condemned. The suffering was the same for all three, but the cause was far different. [...] Suffering is the same for the good and the evil. That is why what makes martyrs is not the suffering, but the cause. If it were merely suffering that made martyrs, all mines would be full of martyrs, all chains would bind martyrs, all of those wounded by the sword would be crowned. **Therefore, let us carefully discern the cause.** May no one say: I am just, for I suffer. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Ennaratio in Psalmum 34*, 1,13)

Those who suffer due to their iniquities and with the intent of dividing Christian unity are not martyrs

But true martyrs are such as those of whom the Lord says, 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' (Mt 5:1). **It is not, therefore, those who suffer persecution for their unrighteousness, and for the divisions which they impiously introduce into Christian unity,** but those who suffer for righteousness' sake. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Letter 185*, II, no. 9)

The same furnace which purifies the martyrs, reduces heretics to ashes

Adulterers, bandits, assailants, murderers, and all criminals suffer many torments; I, your martyr, also suffer countless torments, but 'distinguish my cause from the nation that is not holy' (Ps 42: 1). They may suffer what I suffer, but they do not have the same cause. **In the furnace, I am purified, they are reduced to ashes. The heretics also suffer such things, many times through their own doing, wishing to be taken as martyrs.** But against them have we sung: Defend my cause against all ungodly people. **It is not the suffering which makes the martyr, but the cause.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 327*, 1)

SAINT DIONYSIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

Exhortation to save the soul of a schismatic about to be sacrificed

And martyrdom to avoid schism is no less glorious than martyrdom to avoid idolatry. Nay, it is to my mind greater. In one case a man is a martyr for his own single soul's sake. But this is for the whole Church. Even now wast thou to **persuade or constrain the brethren to come to one mind,** thy true deed were greater than thy fall. This will not be reckoned to thee, the other will be lauded. **And if thou shouldst be powerless to sway disobedient spirits, save, save thine own soul.** (Saint Dionysius of Alexandria. *Letter To Novatian in: Eusebius of Cesarea*, Church History, III, 45)

[Note: *Novatian was killed during the reign of the emperor Valerian I (253-260) – and never considered a martyr by the Church*].

SAINT PACIAN OF BARCELONA

An assassinated schismatic did not possess the necessary association with Holy Mother Church to be considered a martyr

But, moreover, **although Novatian did endure some suffering, yet was he not also slain. And although he was slain, yet was he not crowned. Why not? He was without the peace of the Church, without the bounds of concord, without the pale of that mother, of whom he ought to be a part who is a Martyr.** Hear the Apostle, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, **and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.** But Cyprian suffered, in concord with all, in the common peace of all, amid a company of Confessors; and, having often been a Confessor in reiterated persecutions, and harassed with many a torment, had at last given him to drink of the cup of salvation. This was to be crowned! Wherefore let Novatian have his Epistles to himself, to himself his haughtiness, to himself his pride, by which, whilst he is lifted up on high, he is dashed down to pieces, whilst he spares no one, he is himself cast out. (Saint Pacian of Barcelona. *Epistola II ad Simpronianum*, 15)

BENEDICT XIV

Even if a heretic dies for one article of the true faith, he may not be considered a martyr

The Marcionites and other heretics gloried in the multitude of their martyrs, as Sulpicius Severus of the Priscillianists wrote (*Sacr. Histor. lib. II, c.51, no. 7*). The heretics of our days imitate them. [...] Even if we admitted that there exists schism without heresy, one who dies in schism may not be numbered among the martyrs, for he who is separated from the Catholic Church has no life. [...] Consequently, among the schismatics, no martyrs exist. [...] **A heretic dies either due to his heresy, or due to an article of the Catholic Faith. In the first case he may not be considered a martyr**, for, in dying, he is a sure testimony of his own diabolical persistence in error. [...] **The same we may say of a heretic who dies for one article of the true Faith; even though we admit that he died for one truth, he did not accept death for all of the truths proposed within the Faith, since he himself lacks faith. The theologians, led by Saint Thomas (SummaTheologica II-IIae, q. 5, a.3), teach that he who merely dies for one article of truth may not be considered a martyr, since he lacks both living as well as lifeless faith. However, when it is a heretic *invincibiliter* [i.e. in invincible ignorance] and ready to believe in any proposal of legitimate authority, he may be considered a martyr before God (*coram Deo*), but not before the Church (*coram Ecclesia*).** (Benedict XIV. *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et Beatorum canonizatione (syn.)*, Book III, Ch. 20)

[Note: The norms of ‘*De Servorum Dei beatificatione...*’ were in use during almost two centuries within in the Sacred Congregation of Rites and were substantially passed on to the ‘Codex Iuris Canonici’ of 1917, according to the Apostolic Constitution ‘*Divinus Perfectionis Magister*’ of John Paul II]

IMPORTANT DOCTRINAL COMPLEMENT FOR UNDERSTANDING INVINCIBLE IGNORANCE

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The heretic who rejects even one article of the faith does not hold the practice of the faith

Neither living nor lifeless faith remains in a heretic who disbelieves one article of faith. [...] if, of the things taught by the Church, he holds what he chooses to hold, and rejects what he chooses to reject, he no longer adheres to the teaching of the Church as to an infallible rule, but to his own will. [...] **A heretic does not hold the other articles of faith, about which he does not err, in the same way as one of the faithful does, namely by adhering simply to the Divine Truth**, because in order to do so, a man needs the help of the habit of faith; **but he holds the things that are of faith, by his own will and judgment.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II, q. 5, a. 3*)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Those who diligently seek the truth, but are led astray by others, have invincible ignorance

The Apostle Paul has said: ‘A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject, knowing that he that is such is subverted and sins, being condemned of himself’ (Titus 3:10-11). **But though the doctrine which men hold be false and perverse, if they do not maintain it with passionate obstinacy, especially when they have not devised it by the rashness of their own presumption, but have accepted it from parents who had been misguided and had fallen into error, and if they are with anxiety seeking the truth, and are prepared to be set right when they have found it.** [...] On this ground I wrote even to some of the chief of the Donatists, not indeed letters of communion, which on account of their perversity they have long ceased to receive from the undivided Catholic Church which is spread throughout the world, but letters of a private kind, such as we may send even to pagans. These letters, however, though they

have sometimes read them, they have not been willing, or perhaps it is more probable, have not been able, to answer. In these cases, it seems to me that I have discharged the obligation laid on me by that love which the Holy Spirit teaches us to render, not only to our own, but to all. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Letter 43*, no.1)

PIUS IX

Despite invincible ignorance, it is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry

For, it must be held by faith that outside the Apostolic Roman Church, **no one can be saved; that this is the only ark of salvation; that he who shall not have entered therein will perish in the flood;** but, on the other hand, it is necessary to hold for certain that they **who labor in ignorance of the true religion, if this ignorance is invincible, are not stained by any guilt in this matter in the eyes of God.** Now, in truth, who would arrogate so much to himself as to mark the limits of such an ignorance, because of the nature and variety of peoples, regions, innate dispositions, and of so many other things? For, in truth, when released from these corporeal chains 'we shall see God as He is' (1Jn 3:2), we shall understand perfectly by how close and beautiful a bond divine mercy and justice are united; but, **as long as we are on earth,** weighed down by this mortal mass which blunts the soul, **let us hold most firmly that, in accordance with Catholic teaching, there is 'one God, one faith, one baptism' (Eph 4:5); it is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 2805. Pius IX, *Allocution Singulari quadem*, December 9, 1854)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church has the sacred right to evangelize those who do not know the Gospel

The Church Fathers [...] basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one **Christ** is the mediator and the way of salvation; **he is present to us in his body which is the Church.** He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. **Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it (LG 14).** This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church: **Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience – those too may achieve eternal salvation (LG 16).** 'Although in ways known to himself God can lead those who, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of the Gospel, to that faith without which it is impossible to please him, the Church still has the obligation and also the sacred right to evangelize all men' (AG 7). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 846-848)

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God's working in non-Christians tends to produce sacred expressions which in turn bring others to a communitarian experience of journeying towards God. As Christians, we can also benefit from these treasures

The delicate topic of interreligious dialogue certainly implies important nuances. A partially presented truth, or a truth presented in a somewhat distorted manner may easily lead to indifferentism, according to which all religions would be considered as paths leading to God, mutually complementing one another. Within this perspective, what necessity would we have of Jesus Christ and the Church for salvation? Is something lacking to the Spouse of Christ that she needs to receive from other religions? Let's take a look at what Francis and the Magisterium say about this.

FRANCIS

Non-Christians, by God's gracious initiative, when they are faithful to their own consciences, can live **'justified by the grace of God'**, (and thus be 'associated to the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ'). But due to the sacramental dimension of sanctifying grace, **God's working in them tends to produce signs and rites, sacred expressions which in turn bring others to a communitarian experience of journeying towards God.** While these lack the meaning and efficacy of the sacraments instituted by Christ, they can be channels which the Holy Spirit raises up in order to liberate non-Christians from atheistic immanentism or from purely individual religious experiences. The same Spirit everywhere brings forth various forms of practical wisdom which help people to bear suffering and to live in greater peace and harmony. **As Christians, we can also benefit from these treasures built up over many centuries, which can help us better to live our own beliefs.** (Apostolic exhortation. *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 254)

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IV Lateran Council (Ecumenical XII)

- ◆ Outside of the Church no one is saved

Council of Florence (Ecumenical XVII)

- ◆ Regardless of good deeds no one can be saved unless united to the Catholic Church

Saint Cyprian of Carthage

- ◆ He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother

Vatican Council I (Ecumenical XX)

- ◆ Not at all equal: those who adhere to the Catholic truth and those who follow a false religion

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

- ◆ Non-Christians are in a gravely deficient situation regarding salvation
- ◆ Men are not saved equally in every religion

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons

- ◆ The Church is where the Spirit of God is; and the Spirit of God is where the Church is

Saint John of the Cross

- ◆ To seek any vision or revelation foreign to Christ is an offence against God

SACRED SCRIPTURE

No one comes to the Father except through me. (Jn 14:6)

PIUS X

Modernists admit that all religions are true: what is to prevent religious experience from being met within every religion?

In the religious sentiment one must recognise a kind of intuition of the heart which puts man in immediate contact with the very reality of God [...]. It is this experience which, when a person acquires it, makes him properly and truly a believer. **How far off we are here from Catholic teaching** we have already seen in the decree of the Vatican Council. [...] Here it is well to note at once that, given **this doctrine of experience united with the other doctrine of symbolism, every religion, even that of paganism,** must be held to be true. What is to prevent such experiences from being met within every religion? In fact that they are to be found is asserted by not a few. **And with what right will Modernists deny the truth of an experience affirmed by a follower of Islam?** With what right can they claim true experiences for Catholics alone? Indeed Modernists do not deny but actually admit, some confusedly, others in the most open manner, that all religions are true. That they cannot feel otherwise is clear. For on what ground, **according to their theories, could falsity be predicated of any religion whatsoever?** (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, no. 14, September 8, 1907)

JOHN PAUL II

No one can enter into communion with God except through Christ

Christ is the one Savior of all, the only one able to reveal God and lead to God. [...] **No one, therefore, can enter into communion with God except through Christ,** by the working of the Holy Spirit. Christ's one, universal mediation, far from being an obstacle on the journey toward God, is the way established by God himself, a fact of which Christ is fully aware. Although **participated forms of mediation of**

different kinds and degrees are not excluded, they acquire meaning and value only from Christ's own mediation, and **they cannot be understood as parallel or complementary to his.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 5, December 7, 1990)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

We cannot accept 'revelations' that claim to surpass the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfilment

Christian faith cannot accept 'revelations' that claim to surpass or correct the Revelation of which Christ is the fulfilment, as is the case in certain non-Christian religions and also in certain recent sects which base themselves on such 'revelations'. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 67)

LEO XIII

To have God as Father, one must accept Christ Jesus as Brother

And with the same yearning Our soul goes out to those whom the foul breath of irreligion has not entirely corrupted, and who at least seek to have the true God, the Creator of Heaven and earth, as their Father. **Let such as these take counsel with themselves, and realize that they can in no wise be counted among the children of God, unless they take Christ Jesus as their Brother, and at the same time the Church as their mother.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 16, June 29, 1896)

Differing modes of divine worship cannot all be equally acceptable to God

To hold, therefore, that there is no difference in matters of religion between forms that are unlike each other, and even contrary to each other, most clearly leads in the end to the rejection of all religion in both theory and practice. And this is the same thing as atheism, however it may differ from it in name. Men who really believe in the existence of God must, in order to be consistent with themselves and to avoid absurd conclusions, **understand that differing modes of divine worship involving dissimilarity and conflict**

even on most important points cannot all be equally probable, equally good, and equally acceptable to God. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Immortale Dei*, no. 31, November 1, 1885)

PAUL VI

Other religions do not establish an authentic relationship with God

...the Church holds that these multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ (cf. Eph 3:8) - riches in which we believe that the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth. [...] In other words, our religion effectively establishes with God an authentic and living relationship which the other religions do not succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 53, December 8, 1975)

We cannot agree with various forms of religion nor be uncritical toward them

Obviously we cannot agree with these various forms of religion [Judaism, Moslem religion, or Afro-asiatic religion], nor can we adopt an indifferent or uncritical attitude toward them on the assumption that they are all to be regarded as on an equal footing, and that there is no need for those who profess them to enquire whether or not God has Himself revealed definitively and infallibly how He wishes to be known, loved, and served. Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that the Christian religion is the one and only true religion, and it is our hope that it will be acknowledged as such by all who look for God and worship Him. (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 40, August 6, 1964)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Theological faith must be differentiated from belief in the other religions

For this reason, the distinction between theological faith and belief in the other

religions, must be firmly held. [...] This distinction is not always borne in mind in current theological reflection. Thus, theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often identified with belief in other religions, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself. This is one of the reasons why the differences between Christianity and the other religions tend to be reduced at times to the point of disappearance. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Dominus Iesus*, no. 7, August 6, 2000)

Other rituals contain superstitions and errors -they constitute an obstacle to salvation

Indeed, some prayers and rituals of the other religions may assume a role of preparation for the Gospel, in that they are occasions or pedagogical helps in which the human heart is prompted to be open to the action of God (cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 843.) One cannot attribute to these, however, a divine origin or an *ex opere operato* salvific efficacy, which is proper to the Christian sacraments (cf. Council of Trent, *Decretum de sacramentis*, can. 8, *de sacramentis in genere*). Furthermore, it cannot be overlooked that other rituals, insofar as they depend on superstitions or other errors (cf. 1Cor 10:20-21), constitute an obstacle to salvation (cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris missio*, 55). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Dominus Iesus*, no. 21 August 6, 2000)

Relativistic theories deny the salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church

The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only *de facto* but also *de iure* (or in principle). As a consequence, it is held that certain truths have been superseded; for example, the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, [...] the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church,

[...] On the basis of such presuppositions, which may evince different nuances, certain theological proposals are developed — at times presented as assertions, and at times as hypotheses — in which **Christian revelation and the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church lose their character of absolute truth and salvific universality, or at least shadows of doubt and uncertainty are cast upon them.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Dominus Iesus*, no. 4, August 6, 2000)

PIUS IX

To accept religious indifference is to attempt an agreement between Christ and Belial

Also perverse is the shocking theory that it makes no difference to which religion one belongs, a theory which is greatly at variance even with reason. By means of this theory, **those crafty men remove all distinction between virtue and vice, truth and error, honorable and vile action. They pretend that men can gain eternal salvation by the practice of any religion, as if there could ever be any sharing between justice and iniquity, any collaboration between light and darkness, or any agreement between Christ and Belial.** (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 15 November 9, 1946)

Those separated from the true faith cannot obtain eternal salvation

We should mention again and censure a **very grave error in which some Catholics are unhappily engaged, who believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life** [see n. 1717]. Indeed, this is certainly quite contrary to Catholic teaching. It is known to Us and to you that they who labor in invincible ignorance of our most holy religion and who, zealously keeping the natural law and its precepts engraved in the hearts of all by God, and being ready to obey God, live an honest and upright life, can, by the operating power of divine light and grace [...] But, the Catholic dogma that **no one can be saved outside the Catholic Church is well-known; and also that those who are obstinate toward the authority and definitions of the**

same Church, and who persistently separate themselves from the unity of the Church, and from the Roman Pontiff, the successor of Peter, to whom 'the guardianship of the vine has been entrusted by the Savior,' cannot obtain eternal salvation. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2865-2867. *Pius IX*, Encyclical *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863)

JOHN PAUL II

There is no way of salvation in a religion other than that founded in the faith in Christ

There are no lack of those who wish to interpret the missionary action [of the Church] as an attempt to impose on others one's own convictions and options, in contrast with a certain modern spirit, which boasts, as though it was a definitive conquest, of an absolute liberty of thought and personal conscience. According to this perspective, evangelizing activity should be substituted with **an interreligious dialogue, which would consist in an exchange of opinions and information, whereby each party would expose his own 'creed' and be enriched by the thoughts of others, without any preoccupation of arriving at conclusions.** [...] Consequently the path that each one wishes to follow according to one's own education and religious tradition would be respected. But this conception is **irreconcilable with the commandment of Christ** to the Apostles (cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15), transmitted by the Church [...] [The Council] **confirmed** at the same time the role of the Church, in which it is necessary that man enter and persevere, if he wishes to be saved (*Ad gentes*, no. 7). [...] **This traditional doctrine of the Church exposes the inconsistency and superficiality of a relativistic and irenic attitude, regarding the way of salvation in a religion other than that founded in the faith in Christ.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1-2, May 10, 1995)

The Church is necessary for all mankind for salvation

The Council makes frequent reference to the Church's role in the salvation of mankind. While acknowledging that God loves all people and grants them the possibility of being saved (cf. 1Tim 2:4), **the Church believes that God**

has established Christ as the one mediator and that she herself has been established as the universal sacrament of salvation. 'To this catholic unity of the people of God, therefore,...all are called, and they belong to it or are ordered to it in various ways, whether they be Catholic faithful or others who believe in Christ or finally all people everywhere who by the grace of God are called to salvation' (*Lumen Gentium*, 13). It is necessary to keep these two truths together, namely, the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind and the necessity of the Church for salvation. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 9, December 7, 1990)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Whoever knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ refuses to enter or to remain in it, cannot be saved

This Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation. Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5) and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 14, November 21, 1964)

It is only through Christ's Catholic Church that one can benefit fully from the means of salvation

For it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is 'the all-embracing means of salvation,' that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation. We believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, in order to establish

the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 3, November 21, 1964)

GREGORY XVI

Those who think that salvation is open to persons of any religion: 'without a doubt, they will perish forever'

Now We consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: indifferentism. This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained. [...] With the admonition of the apostle that 'there is one God, one faith, one baptism' (Eph 4:5) may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever. They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that 'those who are not with Christ are against Him' (Lk 11:23), and that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. Therefore 'without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate.' (Symbol s. Athanasius). (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 13, August 15, 1832)

PIUS XI

In error: those who hold the false opinion that all religions are praiseworthy and lead to God

For since they hold it for certain that men destitute of all religious sense are very rarely to be found, they seem to have founded on that belief a hope that the nations, although they differ among themselves in certain religious matters, will without much difficulty come to agree as brethren in professing certain doctrines, which form as it were a common basis of the spiritual life. [...] Certainly such attempts can nowise be approved by Catholics, founded as they are on that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy, since they all in different

ways manifest and signify that sense which is inborn in us all, and by which we are led to God and to the obedient acknowledgment of His rule. Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion they reject it, and little by little turn aside to naturalism and atheism, as it is called; from which it clearly follows that one who supports those who hold these theories and attempt to realize them, is altogether abandoning the divinely revealed religion. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 2, January 6, 1928)

IV LATERAN COUNCIL (ECUMENICAL XII)

Outside of the Church no one is saved

One indeed is the universal Church of the faithful, outside which no one at all is saved. (Denzinger-Hünemann 802. IV Lateran Council, Ch. 1, *The Catholic Faith*, 1215)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (XVII ECUMENICAL)

Regardless of good deeds no one can be saved unless united to the Catholic Church

[The sacrosanct Roman Church] firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart 'into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt 25:41), unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock; and that the unity of the ecclesiastical body is so strong that only to those remaining in it are the sacraments of the Church of benefit for salvation, and do fastings, almsgiving, and other functions of piety and exercises of Christian service produce eternal reward, and that no one, whatever almsgiving he has practiced, even if he has shed blood for the name of Christ, can be saved, unless he has remained in the bosom and unity of the Catholic Church. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1351. Council of Florence, *Bull Cantate Domino*, February 4, 1442)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother

He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother. If any one could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who shall be outside of the Church. (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *De Unitate Ecclesiae*, 6)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

Not at all equal: those who adhere to the Catholic truth and those who follow a false religion

For, the most benign God both excites the erring by His grace and aids them so that they can 'come to a knowledge of the truth' (1Tim 2:4), and also confirms in His grace those whom 'He has called out of darkness into his marvelous light' (1Pet 2:9), so that they may persevere in this same light, not deserting if He be not deserted [see n. 804]. Wherefore, not at all equal is the condition of those, who, through the heavenly gift of faith, have adhered to the Catholic truth, and of those, who, led by human opinions, follow a false religion. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3014. Vatican Council I, *Session III, Dogmatic constitution Dei Filius*, Ch. III, *Faith*, April 24, 1870)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Non-Christians are in a gravely deficient situation regarding salvation

This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism 'characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that 'one religion is as good as another' (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, 36). If it is true that the followers of other religions can receive divine grace, it is also certain that objectively speaking they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation (cf. Pius XII. Encyclical

Letter *Mystici corporis*). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Dominus Iesus*, no. 22, August 6, 2000)

Men are not saved equally in every religion

Therefore, no one will be saved who, knowing the Church to have been divinely established by Christ, nevertheless refuses to submit to the Church or withholds obedience from the Roman Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth. [...] [Pius XII] mentions those who 'are related to the Mystical Body of the Redeemer by a certain unconscious yearning and desire,' and these he by no means excludes from eternal salvation, but on the other hand states that they are in a condition 'in which they cannot be sure of their salvation' since 'they still remain deprived of those many heavenly gifts and helps which can only be enjoyed in the Catholic Church' With these wise words he reproves both those who exclude from eternal salvation all united to the Church only by implicit desire, and those who falsely assert that men can be saved equally well in every religion (cf. Pius IX, Allocution *Singulari quadam*, in Denzinger, no. 1641 ff.; also Pius IX in the encyclical letter *Quanto conficiamur moerore*, in Denzinger no. 1677). (Letter of the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office to the Archbishop of Boston, August 8, 1949)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

The Church is where the Spirit of God is; and the Spirit of God is where the Church is

'For in the Church,' it is said, 'God hath set [...] and all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not

partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behaviour. For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother's breasts, nor do they enjoy that most limpid fountain which issues from the body of Christ; but they dig for themselves broken cisterns (Jer 2:13) out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of the mire, fleeing from the faith of the Church lest they be convicted; and rejecting the Spirit, that they may not be instructed. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*, III, 24, 1)

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

To seek any vision or revelation foreign to Christ is an offence against God

For, in giving us, as He did, His Son, which is His Word - and He has no other - He spake to us all together, once and for all, in this single Word, and He has no occasion to speak further. [...] Herein the Apostle declares that God has become, as it were, dumb, and has no more to say, since that which He spake aforetime, in part to the prophets, He has now spoken altogether in Him, giving us the All, which is His Son. Wherefore he that would now enquire of God, or seek any vision or revelation, would not only be acting foolishly, but would be committing an offence against God, by setting his eyes altogether upon Christ, and seeking no new thing or aught beside. (Saint John of the Cross. *Ascent of Mount Carmel II*, 22, 3-5)

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The doctrine of the mysterious Polyhedron: the Goal of Ecumenism is the Harmony of all Christian Faiths

Ever since the early Greeks, the sphere has been considered the shape par excellence. This philosophical consideration served as a basis amongst the Scholastics for interesting theological constructions regarding the concept of God and the Church.

Francis, however, considers the figure of the polyhedron as symbol of the 'unity in diversity' to which his idea of ecumenism aspires. Is this Saint Paul's concept of 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of us all' (Eph 4:5)? What is this mysterious polyhedron, which Francis has spoken of on so many occasions?

FRANCIS

Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness. (*Apostolic exhortation Evangelii gaudium*, no. 236)

Uniformity is not Catholic, it is not Christian. Rather, unity in diversity. **Catholic unity is different but it is one: this is curious! The cause of diversity is also the cause of unity: the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit** does two things: he creates unity in diversity. **Unity does not imply uniformity; it does not necessarily mean doing everything together or thinking in the same way. Nor does it signify a loss of identity.** Unity in diversity is actually the opposite: it involves the joyful recognition and acceptance of the various gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one and the placing of these gifts at the service of all members of the Church. It means knowing how to listen, to accept differences, and having the freedom to think differently and express oneself with complete respect towards the other who is my brother or sister. Do not be afraid of differences! As I wrote in *Evangelii Gaudium*: **'Our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness'** (no. 236), but they form a unity. (*Address to members of the 'Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships.'* October 31, 2014)

I know that **you are persons of different religions, trades, ideas, cultures, countries, continents. Here and now you are practicing the culture of encounter**, so different from the xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance which we witness so often. Among the excluded, one finds an encounter of cultures where the aggregate does not wipe out the particularities. That is why I like the image of the polyhedron, a geometric figure with many different facets. **The polyhedron reflects the confluence of all the partialities that in it keep their originality. Nothing is dissolved, nothing is destroyed, nothing is dominated, everything is integrated.** (*Address to the participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*, October 28, 2014)

We are in the epoch of globalization, and we think about what globalization is and

what unity would be in the Church: perhaps a sphere, where all points are equidistant from the centre, all equal? No! This is uniformity. And the Holy Spirit doesn't create uniformity! What shape can we find? Let us consider a prism [poliedro]: the prism [poliedro] is unity, but all its parts are different; each has its own peculiarity, its charisma. This is unity in diversity. It is on this path that we Christians do what we call by the theological name of ecumenism. (*Visit to the Evangelical Pastor in Caserta*, July 28, 2014)¹

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¹ Note: Here, the translation posted on the website of the Holy See has wrongly used 'prism' for the original Italian word poliedro – unlike the better translations in the earlier cases.

Pius IX

To compare the Religion revealed by God with other ‘religions’ is to seek agreement between Christ and Belial

It is with no less deceit, venerable brothers, that other enemies of divine revelation, with reckless and sacrilegious effrontery, want to import the doctrine of human progress into the Catholic religion. [...] **Also perverse is the shocking theory that it makes no difference to which religion one belongs, a theory which is greatly at variance even with reason.** By means of this theory, those crafty men remove all distinction between virtue and vice, truth and error, honorable and vile action. They pretend that men can gain eternal salvation by the practice of any religion, as if there could ever be any sharing between justice and iniquity, any collaboration between light and darkness, or any agreement between Christ and Belial. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 7, 15, November 9, 1846)

It is deceitful to say that one may please God in Protestantism just as in the Catholic Faith

You are aware indeed, that the goal of this most iniquitous plot is [...] to draw the Italian people over to Protestantism, which in their deceit they repeatedly declare to be only another form of the same true religion of Christ, thereby just as pleasing to God. Meanwhile they know full well that the chief principle of the Protestant tenets, i.e., that the holy scriptures are to be understood by the personal judgment of the individual, will greatly assist their impious cause. They are confident that they can first misuse the Holy Scriptures by wrong interpretation to spread their errors and claim God’s authority while doing it. Then they can cause men to call into doubt the common principles of justice and honor. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Nostis et nobiscum*, no. 6, December 8, 1849)

Religious societies separated visibly from the Church are not part of it

Now, whoever carefully considers and meditates on the state in which the diverse religious societies are found, divided among themselves,

and separated from the Catholic Church... will easily be convinced that none of these societies, nor even all of them together, may in any way constitute nor be recognized as that Church, One and Catholic, that Christ the Lord founded and established, and that by His will exists. Nor may they in any way be considered branches or a part of this same Church; since they are visibly separated from the Catholic unity. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2998. Pius IX. *Apostolic letter Iam vos omnes*, September 13, 1868)

Condemnation of the doctrine that considers Protestantism as just a variant of the only true Religion

[Condemned]: 5. Divine revelation is imperfect, and therefore subject to a continual and indefinite progress, corresponding with the advancement of human reason.

[Condemned]:18. Protestantism is nothing else than a different form of the same true Christian religion, in which it is possible to serve God as well as in the Catholic Church (Denzinger-Hünemann 2905, 2918. Pius IX. *Syllabus of Modern Errors*, December 8, 1864)

Those that live separated from the true Faith do not attain eternal life

We should mention again and censure a very grave error in which some Catholics are unhappily engaged, who believe that men living in error, and separated from the true faith and from Catholic unity, can attain eternal life [see n. 1717]. Indeed, this is certainly quite contrary to Catholic teaching. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2865. Pius IX, *Encyclical Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The unity to which all men are called is in the teaching of the Apostles

All men are called to belong to the new people of God. Wherefore this people, while remaining one and only one, is to be spread throughout the whole world and must exist in all ages, so that the decree of God’s will may be fulfilled. In the beginning God made human nature one and decreed that all His

children, scattered as they were, would finally be gathered together as one (cf. Jn 11:52). It was for this purpose that God sent His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things (cf. Heb 1:2), that he might be teacher, king and priest of all, the head of the new and universal people of the sons of God. For this too God sent the Spirit of His Son as Lord and Life-giver. **He it is who brings together the whole Church and each and every one of those who believe, and who is the well-spring of their unity in the teaching of the apostles and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers** (cf. Acts 2:42). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 13, November 21, 1964)

JOHN PAUL II

Other communities do not have the fullness of the Catholic Church

Indeed, **'the elements of this already-given Church exist, found in their fullness in the Catholic Church and, without this fullness, in the other Communities'** (cf. *Uni. Redin.*, 4). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ut unum sint*, no. 11, March 25, 1995)

The work of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the one true Church

Whatever the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures and religions **serves as a preparation for the Gospel and can only be understood in reference to Christ**, the Word who took flesh by the power of the Spirit 'so that as perfectly human he would save all human beings and sum up all things.' Moreover, **the universal activity of the Spirit is not to be separated from his particular activity within the body of Christ, which is the Church.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 14, December 7, 1990)

Ecumenical dialogue does not mean diminishing the treasures of the Church

True ecumenical activity means openness, drawing closer, availability for dialogue, and a shared investigation of the truth in the full evangelical and Christian sense; **but in no way does it or can it mean giving up or in any way diminishing the treasures of divine truth that the Church has constantly confessed**

and taught. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptor hominis*. no. 6, March 4, 1979)

BENEDICT XVI

The unity operated by the Spirit is visibly manifest in the profession of the faith in its entirety

It is the Holy Spirit, the principle of unity, which establishes the Church as a communion (cf. LG, 13). **He is the principle of the unity of the faithful in the teaching of the Apostles, in the breaking of the bread and in prayer** (cf. *ibid*; Acts 2:42). **The Church**, however, analogous to the mystery of the Incarnate Word, **is not only an invisible spiritual communion, but is also visible** (cf. LG 8; *Communio notio*, 4); in fact, 'the society structured with hierarchical organs and the Mystical Body of Christ, the visible society and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church endowed with heavenly riches, are not to be thought of as two realities. On the contrary, they form one complex reality formed from a two-fold element, human and divine' (LG, 8). **The communion of the baptized in the teaching of the Apostles and in the breaking of the eucharistic bread is visibly manifested in the bonds of the profession of the faith in its entirety, of the celebration of all of the sacraments instituted by Christ, and of the governance of the College of Bishops united with its head, the Roman Pontiff.** (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic constitution Anglicanorum Coetibus*, November 4, 2009)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The principle of 'unity in diversity' expressed as it really is

From the beginning, this one Church has been marked by a great diversity which comes from both the variety of God's gifts and the diversity of those who receive them. Within the unity of the People of God, a multiplicity of peoples and cultures is gathered together. **Among the Church's members, there are different gifts, offices, conditions, and ways of life.** 'Holding a rightful place in the communion of the Church there are also particular Churches that retain their own traditions' (LG 13). **The great**

richness of such diversity is not opposed to the Church's unity. Yet sin and the burden of its consequences constantly threaten the gift of unity, and so the Apostle has to exhort Christians to 'maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph 4:3).

What are these bonds of unity? Above all, charity 'binds everything together in perfect harmony' (Col 3:14). **But the unity of the pilgrim Church is also assured by visible bonds of communion:**

- profession of one faith received from the Apostles;
- common celebration of divine worship, especially of the sacraments;
- apostolic succession through the sacrament of Holy Orders, maintaining the fraternal concord of God's family (cf. UR 2; LG 14; CIC, can. 205). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 814 – 815)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The true Church of Christ is not a kind of collection of churches and ecclesial communities

But at the same time Catholics are bound to profess that through the gift of God's mercy they belong to that Church which Christ founded and which is governed by the successors of Peter and the other Apostles, who are the depositories of the original Apostolic tradition, living and intact, which is the permanent heritage of doctrine and holiness of that same Church (cf. Paul VI -*Ecclesiam Suam*, AAS 56 (1964): 629). **The followers of Christ are therefore not permitted to imagine that Christ's Church is nothing more than a collection** (divided, but still possessing a certain unity) **of Churches and ecclesial communities**. Nor are they free to hold that Christ's Church nowhere really exists today and that it is to be considered only as an end which all Churches and ecclesial communities must strive to reach. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Mysterium Ecclesiae*, no. 1, June 24, 1973)

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Peaceful coexistence between different religions is favoured by the laicity of the state

Saint Augustine teaches that when justice disappears from temporal governments, they can be likened to ‘a large band of robbers’... This forceful expression does not sound so implausible to contemporary man; and there must be some reason for this...

Throughout the ages, the Catholic religion has inspired the most solid foundations of stability, justice and order ever known, particularly within the nations gathered under its protective mantle. On the other hand, when governments allowed this beneficial influence to fade, moral values began to evaporate from society, leaving a free path for errors that rapidly draw the multitudes toward a fatal abyss. Consequently, we end up wondering to what extent it would be possible to maintain true justice in a State which is not only secular, but is also indifferent toward the Catholic Church, putting it on the same level as other religious denominations, thus giving full liberty to all kinds of error.

What has the Church taught for the past two thousand years regarding its relationship with the State?

FRANCIS

Peaceful coexistence between different religions is favoured by the laicity of the state, which, without appropriating any one confessional stance, respects and esteems the presence of the religious dimension in society, while fostering its more concrete expressions. (*Address during the meeting with Brazil's leaders of society, July 27, 2013*)

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I – THE STATE MUST NOT BE INDIFFERENT WITH RESPECT TO RELIGION

LEO XIII

Justice and reason itself forbids the State to be godless or to treat various religions alike

Wherefore, civil society must acknowledge

God as its Founder and Parent, and must obey and reverence His power and authority. Justice therefore forbids, and reason itself forbids, the State to be godless; or to adopt a line of action which would end in godlessness—namely, to treat the various religions (as they call them) alike, and to bestow upon them promiscuously equal rights and privileges. Since, then, the profession of one religion is necessary in the State, that religion must be professed which alone is true, and which can

be recognized without difficulty, especially in Catholic States, because the marks of truth are, as it were, engravers upon it. This religion, therefore, the rulers of the State must preserve and protect, if they would provide -as they should do -with prudence and usefulness for the good of the community. For **public authority exists for the welfare of those whom it governs**; and, although its proximate end is to lead men to the prosperity found in this life, yet, in so doing, it **ought not to diminish, but rather to increase, man's capability of attaining to the supreme good in which his everlasting happiness consists**: which never can be attained if religion be disregarded. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Libertas praestantissimum*, no. 21, June 20, 1888)

It is a sin for the State not to have care for religion as something beyond its scope, or as of no practical benefit

As a consequence, **the State, constituted as it is, is clearly bound to act up to the manifold and weighty duties linking it to God, by the public profession of religion. Nature and reason**, which command every individual devoutly to worship God in holiness, because we belong to Him and must return to Him, since from Him we came, **bind also the civil community by a like law**. For, men living together in society are under the power of God no less than individuals are, and **society, no less than individuals, owes gratitude to God who gave it being and maintains it and whose ever-bounteous goodness enriches it with countless blessings**. Since, then, no one is allowed to be remiss in the service due to God, [...] So, too, **is it a sin for the State not to have care for religion as a something beyond its scope, or as of no practical benefit; or out of many forms of religion to adopt that one which chimes in with the fancy; for we are bound absolutely to worship God in that way which He has shown to be His will**. All who rule, therefore, would hold in honour the holy name of God. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Immortale Dei*, no. 6, November 1, 1885)

Conflict between Church and State puts virtue to proof

Moreover, if we would judge aright, the supernatural love for the Church and the natural love of our own country proceed

from the same eternal principle, since God Himself is their Author and originating Cause. Consequently, it follows that between the duties they respectively enjoin, neither can come into collision with the other. We can, certainly, and should love ourselves, bear ourselves kindly toward our fellow men, nourish affection for the State and the governing powers; but at the same time we can and must cherish toward the Church a feeling of filial piety, and love God with the deepest love of which we are capable. The order of precedence of these duties is, however, at times, either under stress of public calamities, or through the perverse will of men, inverted. **For, instances occur where the State seems to require from men as subjects one thing, and religion, from men as Christians, quite another; and this in reality without any other ground, than that the rulers of the State either hold the sacred power of the Church of no account, or endeavor to subject it to their own will. Hence arises a conflict, and an occasion, through such conflict, of virtue being put to the proof**. The two powers are confronted and urge their behests in a contrary sense; to obey both is wholly impossible. No man can serve two masters (Mt 6:24), for to please the one amounts to contemning the other. As to which should be preferred no one ought to balance for an instant. **It is a high crime indeed to withdraw allegiance from God in order to please men, an act of consummate wickedness to break the laws of Jesus Christ, in order to yield obedience to earthly rulers**, or, under pretext of keeping the civil law, to ignore the rights of the Church; 'we ought to obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29). This answer, which of old Peter and the other Apostles were used to give the civil authorities who enjoined unrighteous things, we must, in like circumstances, give always and without hesitation. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Sapientiae christianae*, no. 6-7, January 10, 1890)

GREGORY XVI

Religious indifferentism is a most unhealthy error

Now we examine another prolific cause of evils by which, we lament, the Church is at present afflicted, namely **indifferentism**, or that **base opinion which has become prevalent everywhere through the deceit of wicked**

men, that eternal salvation of the soul can be acquired by any profession of faith whatsoever, if morals are conformed to the standard of the just and the honest. . . . And so **from this most rotten source of indifferentism flows that absurd and erroneous opinion, or rather insanity, that liberty of conscience must be claimed and defended for anyone. Indeed, to this most unhealthy error that full and immoderate liberty of opinions which is spreading widely to the destruction of the sacred and civil welfare opens the way, with some men repeatedly asserting with supreme boldness that some advantage flows therefrom to religion itself.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 2730-2731. Gregory XVI, *Encyclical Mirari vos*, August 15, 1832)

PIUS XII

It is the tradition of the Church to maintain the distinction, but also the unity of the two powers

Your cities are a living part of the Church. **There are, in Italy, those who get stirred up, for fear that Christianity takes from Cesar that which is of Cesar. As though giving to Cesar what belongs to him was not a command of Jesus; as though laicity of the State, when healthy and legitimate, is not one of the principles of Catholic doctrine; as though it was not the tradition of the Church to make continuous efforts to maintain the distinction, but also – always according to correct principles – the unity of the two powers; as though, on the contrary, the amalgamation of the sacred and the profane had not been proven in history with greater intensity, than when a portion of the faithful separate from the Church.** (Pius XII. *Address to the Marchigiani residents in Rome*, March 23, 1958)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

To the Church belongs the right to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order

The Church, the ‘pillar and bulwark of the truth,’ ‘has received this solemn command of Christ from the apostles to announce the saving truth’ (1Tim 3:15; LG 17). **‘To the Church**

belongs the right always and everywhere to announce moral principles, including those pertaining to the social order, and to make judgments on any human affairs to the extent that they are required by the fundamental rights of the human person or the salvation of souls’ (CIC, can. 747 # 2). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2032)

II – BENEFITS FOR THE STATE BY THE RECOGNITION OF THE TRUE RELIGION

GREGORY XVI

Concord between Church and State has always been fortunate and salutary for the ecclesiastical and the civil welfare

Nor can we foresee more joyful omens for religion and the state from the wishes of those who desire that the Church be separated from the State, and that the mutual concord of the government with the sacred ministry be broken. For it is certain that that concord is **greatly feared by lovers of this most shameless liberty, which has always been fortunate and salutary for the ecclesiastical and the civil welfare.** (Denzinger-Schönmetzer 1615. Gregory XVI, *Encyclical Mirari vos*, August 15, 1832)

LEO XIII

The attempts of the sects would be vain if the doctrine of the Catholic Church had always survived among princes and peoples

But it is to be lamented that those to whom has been committed the guardianship of the public weal, deceived by the wiles of wicked men and terrified by their threats, have looked upon the Church with a suspicious and even hostile eye, not perceiving that **the attempts of the sects would be vain if the doctrine of the Catholic Church and the authority of the Roman Pontiffs had always survived, with the honor that belongs to them, among princes and peoples.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod apostolici muneris*, no. 4, December 28, 1878)

Christ commanded His Church to restore whatever might have fallen into ruin in human society

In order that these unparalleled benefits might last as long as men should be found on earth, **He entrusted to His Church the continuance of His work; and, looking to future times, He commanded her to set in order whatever might have become deranged in human society, and to restore whatever might have fallen into ruin.** Although the divine renewal we have spoken of chiefly and directly affected men as constituted in the supernatural order of grace, nevertheless some of its precious and salutary fruits were also bestowed abundantly in the order of nature. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum divinae sapientiae*, no. 2-3, February 10, 1880)

The divine power of the Christian religion has given birth to order for the State

These perils to commonwealth, which are before Our eyes, fill Us with grave anxiety, when We behold the security of rulers and the tranquility of empires, together with the safety of nations, put in peril almost from hour to hour. Nevertheless, **the divine power of the Christian religion has given birth to excellent principles of stability and order for the State, while at the same time it has penetrated into the customs and institutions of States.** And of this power not the least nor last fruit is a just and wise proportion of mutual rights and duties in both princes and peoples. For in **the precepts and example of Christ our Lord there is a wonderful force for restraining in their duty as much those who obey as those who rule.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Diuturnum illud*, no. 3, June 29, 1881)

No better mode has been devised for the building up and ruling the State than following the teachings of the Gospel

And, indeed, wherever the Church has set her foot she has straightway changed the face of things, and has attempered the moral tone of the people with a new civilization and with virtues before unknown. **All nations which have yielded to her sway have become eminent by their gentleness, their sense of justice, and the glory of their high deeds.** And yet a

hackneyed reproach of old date is levelled against her, that **the Church is opposed to the rightful aims of the civil government**, and is wholly unable to afford help in spreading that welfare and progress which justly and naturally are sought after by every well-regulated State. From the very beginning Christians were harassed by slanderous accusations of this nature, and on that account were held up to hatred and execration, for being (so they were called) enemies of the Empire. [...] **This odious calumny, with most valid reason, nerved the genius and sharpened the pen of Saint Augustine, who, notably in his treatise, The City of God, set forth in so bright a light the worth of Christian wisdom in its relation to the public wealth** that he seems not merely to have pleaded the cause of the Christians of his day, but **to have refuted for all future times impeachments so grossly contrary to truth.** The wicked proneness, however, to levy like charges and accusations has not been lulled to rest. **Many, indeed, are they who have tried to work out a plan of civil society based on doctrines other than those approved by the Catholic Church.** Nay, in these latter days a novel conception of law has begun here and there to gain increase and influence, the outcome, as it is maintained, of an age arrived at full stature, and the result of progressive liberty. But, though endeavours of various kinds have been ventured on, **it is clear that no better mode has been devised for the building up and ruling the State than that which is the necessary growth of the teachings of the Gospel.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Immortale Dei*, no. 1-2, November 11, 1885)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Christian revelation leads us to a deeper understanding of the laws of social life

One of the salient features of the modern world is the growing interdependence of men one on the other, a development promoted chiefly by modern technical advances. Nevertheless brotherly dialogue among men does not reach its perfection on the level of technical progress, but on the deeper level of interpersonal relationships. These demand a mutual respect for the full spiritual dignity of the person. **Christian revelation** contributes greatly to the promotion of this communion between

persons, and at the same time leads us to a deeper understanding of the laws of social life which the Creator has written into man's moral and spiritual nature. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 23, December 7, 1965)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church makes a moral judgment about economic and social matters, inspiring right attitudes with respect to socio-economic relationships

The Church receives from the Gospel the full revelation of the truth about man. When she fulfills her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, she bears witness to man, in the name of Christ, to his dignity and his vocation to the communion of persons. She teaches him the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom. **The Church makes a moral judgment about economic and social matters, 'when the fundamental rights of the person or the salvation of souls requires it'** (*Gaudium et Spes*, 76). In the moral order she bears a mission distinct from that of political authorities: **the Church is concerned with the temporal aspects of the common good because they are ordered to the sovereign Good, our ultimate end. She strives to inspire right attitudes with respect to earthly goods and in socio-economic relationships.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2419-2420)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

In this world the dominion of good men is profitable for human affairs

Wherefore if the true God is worshipped, and if He is served with genuine rites and true virtue, it is advantageous that good men should long reign both far and wide. Nor is this advantageous so much to themselves, as to those over whom they reign. For, so far as concerns themselves, their piety and probity, which are great gifts of God, suffice to give them true felicity, enabling them to live well the life that now is, and afterwards to receive that which is eternal. **In this world, therefore, the dominion of good men is profitable, not so much for themselves as for human affairs.**

But the dominion of bad men is hurtful chiefly to themselves who rule, for they destroy their own souls by greater license in wickedness; **while those who are put under them in service are not hurt except by their own iniquity.** For to the just all the evils imposed on them by unjust rulers are not the punishment of crime, but the test of virtue. Therefore the good man, although he is a slave, is free; but the bad man, even if he reigns, is a slave, and that not of one man, but, what is far more grievous, of as many masters as he has vices; of which vices when the divine Scripture treats, it says, 'For of whom any man is overcome, to the same he is also the bond-slave' (2Pet 2:19). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *City of God*, IV, 3)

Two cities formed by two loves: the earthly by the egoistic love of self, the heavenly by the love of God – only in the latter can charity and justice reign

Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, 'Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head' (Ps 3:3). **In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all.** The one delights in its own strength, represented in the persons of its rulers; the other says to its God, 'I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength' (Ps 18:1). **And therefore the wise men of the one city, living according to man, have sought for profit to their own bodies or souls, or both, and those who have known God 'glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise,' – that is, glorying in their own wisdom, and being possessed by pride, – 'they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. For they were either leaders or followers of the people in adoring images, 'and**

worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever' (Rom 1:21-25). **But in the other city there is no human wisdom, but only godliness, which offers due worship to the true God,** and looks for its reward in the society of the saints, of holy angels as well as holy men, 'that God may be all in all' (1Cor 15:28). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *City of God*, XIV, 28)

III – PERNICIOUS EFFECTS OF THE LAICITY OF THE STATE

PIUS XII

Laicity of the State deprives it of the beneficent and regenerating influence of God and the Church

The Holy Gospel narrates that when Jesus was crucified 'there was darkness over the whole earth' (Mt 27:45); a terrifying symbol of what happened and what still happens spiritually wherever incredulity, blind and proud of itself, has succeeded in excluding Christ from modern life, especially from public life, and has undermined faith in God as well as faith in Christ. The consequence is that the moral values by which in other times public and private conduct was gauged have fallen into disuse; and the much vaunted civilization of society, which has made ever more rapid progress, withdrawing man, the family and the State from the beneficent and regenerating effects of the idea of God and the teaching of the Church, has caused to reappear, in regions in which for many centuries shone the splendors of Christian civilization, in a manner ever clearer, ever more distinct, **ever more distressing, the signs of a corrupt and corrupting paganism:** 'There was darkness when they crucified Jesus'. **Many perhaps,** while abandoning the teaching of Christ, were not fully conscious of being led astray by a mirage of glittering phrases, which proclaimed such estrangement as an escape from the slavery in which they were before held; **nor did they then foresee the bitter consequences of bartering the truth that sets free, for error which enslaves.** They did not realize that, in renouncing the infinitely wise and paternal laws of God, and the unifying and elevating doctrines of Christ's love, **they**

were resigning themselves to the whim of a poor, fickle human wisdom; they spoke of progress, when they were going back; of being raised, when they groveled; of arriving at man's estate, when they stooped to servility. They did not perceive the inability of all human effort to replace the law of Christ by anything equal to it; 'they became vain in their thoughts' (Rom 1:21). **With the weakening of faith in God and in Jesus Christ, and the darkening in men's minds of the light of moral principles, there disappeared the indispensable foundation of the stability and quiet of that internal and external, private and public order,** which alone can support and safeguard the prosperity of States. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no. 30-32, October 20, 1939)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

The abandonment of God and his Christ overthrows the very foundations of human society

Thereupon there came into being and spread far and wide throughout the world that doctrine of rationalism or naturalism, utterly opposed to the Christian religion, since this is of supernatural origin, **which spares no effort to bring it about that Christ, who alone is our lord and saviour, is shut out from the minds of people and the moral life of nations.** Thus they would establish what they call the rule of simple reason or nature. **The abandonment and rejection of the Christian religion, and the denial of God and his Christ, has plunged the minds of many into the abyss of pantheism, materialism and atheism, and the consequence is that they strive to destroy rational nature itself, to deny any criterion of what is right and just, and to overthrow the very foundations of human society.** With this impiety spreading in every direction, **it has come about, alas, that many even among the children of the catholic church have strayed from the path of genuine piety, and as the truth was gradually diluted in them, their catholic sensibility was weakened.** (Vatican Council I. *Dogmatic constitution Filius Dei*, April 24, 1870)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Justice being taken away, what are kingdoms but great robberies?

Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies? For what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the pact of the confederacy; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If, by the admittance of abandoned men, this evil increases to such a degree that it holds places, fixes abodes, **takes possession of cities, and subdues peoples, it assumes the more plainly the name of a kingdom, because the reality is now manifestly conferred on it, not by the removal of covetousness, but by the addition of impunity.** Indeed, that was an apt and true reply which was given to **Alexander the Great** by a **pirate who had been seized**. For when that king had asked the man what he meant by keeping hostile possession of the sea, he answered with bold pride, **'What thou meanest by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a petty ship, I am called a robber, whilst thou who dost it with a great fleet art styled emperor.'** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *City of God*, IV, 4)

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'Pray for me!'

'Pray for me!' – these are words often uttered by Francis to the most varied audiences. And the more he says it, the more bewilderment he causes many Catholics, because it is not unusual that he says this not only to faithful of the Catholic Church, but also to excommunicated persons, schismatics, Muslims, communists, atheists, and others...

When someone asked him: 'Your Holiness, I want to ask why you ask so insistently that people pray for you? It isn't normal, we're not used to hearing a Pope ask so often that people pray for him' Francis answered, presumably making a show of great humility: 'I am truly conscious of my many limitations, with so many problems, and I am a sinner – as you know! – and I have to ask for this. But it comes from within' (*In-flight Press Conference, returning from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil -July 28, 2013*). We will not judge him by his actions. However, it would of course cause perplexity if Leo IX were to ask Miguel Cerulario – promoter of the Great Schism – to pray for him, or if Leo X were to ask the same of Luther

This is a topic of great significance, which raises doubts and requires clearing up....

FRANCIS

I ask you, finally, to pray for me – I need your prayers – and to **ask your people to pray for me**, that the Lord may assist me in my ministry as Bishop of Rome and Successor of Peter. (*Address to the delegation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, June 28, 2013*)



While **requesting your prayers**, I take this opportunity to assure you, Mr. President, of my highest consideration. (*Letter to the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, September 4, 2013*)

Building upon our shared moment of prayer in the course of Your Holiness's visit to Rome, let us continue to pray to God that all his children, born to new life through the waters of baptism and enlightened by faith, may also become one in love. For my part, I assure Your Holiness of my unceasing prayer for all Christians in Egypt and throughout the Middle East. (*Letter to His Holiness Tawadros II, Pope of Alexandria and Patriarch of the See of Saint Mark, May 5, 2014*)





And I ask a favour: pray for me. I have great need of your prayers. Thank you. (*Address to the leaders of other religions and other Christian denominations, September 21, 2014*)



And praying for each other (*Words to Bartholomew in the Patriarchal Church of Saint George, November 30, 2014*)



I pray for you and your intentions every day. **I thank you because I know that, amid your sufferings, you also pray for me and for my service to the Church.** (*Letter to the Christians of the Middle East, December 21, 2014*)

This is how their conversation concluded: **Pray for me. You, please pray for me.** I do. (*Meeting with Raúl Castro, May 10, 2015*)





I hope you have a good journalist day. It's a busy day, but congratulations. May God bless you and don't forget to **pray for me**. (*To journalists, June 8, 2015*)



I assure you of my prayer and **I ask all of you, please, to pray for me** and for my ministry. Thank you. (*Address to a delegation from the Czech Republic on the occasion of the 600th Anniversary of the death of Jan Hus, June 15, 2015*)

Please, I ask you; please **do not forget to pray for me**. Thank you very much. (*Meeting with civil authorities during the Apostolic Journey to Bolivia, July 8, 2015*)



I ask you, please, to pray for me. If some of you are unable to pray, with all respect, I ask you to send me your good thoughts and energy. Thank you. (*Address at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, July 9, 2015*)



God bless you and **pray for me**. Thank you. (*Meeting with representatives of Civil Society during the Apostolic Journey to Paraguay, July 11, 2015*)

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Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ Prayer is communion with Christ and the Church, which is His Body

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

- ◆ Christian prayer must always be within the ‘Communion of Saints’

Leo XIII

- ◆ The Communion of Saints is the mutual communication of help among all the faithful

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ The Lord hears every petition which is offered by those united the Church

Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments

- ◆ There can be no Christian prayer without the action of the Holy Spirit

The Catechism of Trent

- ◆ Under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit we cannot fail to be heard.
- ◆ The practice of praying in spirit is peculiar to Christians, and is not at all used by infidels

II – Outside of the state of grace, prayers are neither meritorious, nor efficacious, nor pleasing to God

Catechism of Saint Pius X

♦ Those who are outside the true Church are excluded from perfect communion in spiritual goods

Catechism of Trent

♦ Those who are bound in sin and estranged from the grace of God do not share in the spiritual fruit

Leo X

♦ Excommunication deprives one of the common spiritual prayers of the Church

Catechism of Saint Pius X

♦ We must be in the state of grace to render our prayers efficacious

Saint Thomas Aquinas

♦ Prayer is not meritorious without sanctifying grace

Catechism of the Catholic Church

♦ If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain

Saint Cyprian of Carthage

♦ ‘Where there are two or three, I am with them’... Christ is speaking to those who are in the Church, and not of schismatics

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

♦ Pray for those buried in sin and the excommunicated? The example of St. John the Apostle

Catechism of Trent

♦ The prayer of sinners who are resolved to continue in sin is not heard by God

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

♦ God does not hear hardened sinners even at the hour of death: ‘You shall seek me, and shall not find me’

I – PRAYERS ARE EFFICACIOUS WHEN UNITED TO CHRIST AND TO HIS BODY, WHICH IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Prayers have efficacy when one asks in the Name of Jesus Christ

In whose name should we ask of God the graces we stand in need of?

We should ask of God the graces we stand

in need of in the Name of Jesus Christ, as He Himself has taught us and as is done by the Church, which always ends her prayers with these words: Through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Why should we beg graces of God in the Name of Jesus Christ?

We should beg graces of God in the Name of Jesus Christ **because He is our Mediator, and it is through Him alone that we can approach the throne of God.** (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 8-9)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DIVINE WORSHIP
AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

Christian prayer draws its dignity from the filial relationship of Christ

Prayer directed to God should be united with **Christ**, the Lord of all men, the one mediator, through whom alone we have access to God. **Christ so unites the whole human family to himself that there is an intimate and necessary relationship between the prayer of Christ and the prayer of the whole human race.** For in Christ alone human religion achieves its redemptive value and purpose. A close and special bond exists between Christ and those whom, through the sacrament of regeneration, he makes members of his body, the Church. All the riches belonging to the Son flow from him as from the head into the whole body: the pouring out of the Spirit, truth, life and a share in his divine sonship, which he revealed to us in all his prayer on earth.

The whole body of the Church shares in the priesthood of Christ. The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated into a spiritual house and a holy priesthood. They become capable of taking part in the worship of the New Testament, not thanks to themselves, but to the gift and merits of Christ. [...] **Christian prayer draws its dignity from its sharing in the filial relationship of the Only-begotten Son to the Father. The prayer he expressed in his earthly life with his own words in the name of and for the salvation of the entire human race, he continues to address to his Father in the whole Church and in all her members.** (Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *General Introduction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, ch. I, II, 6-7, February 2, 1971, English translation 1974)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Prayer is communion with Christ and the Church, which is His Body

Prayer is the living relationship of the children of God with their Father who is good beyond measure, with his Son Jesus Christ and with

the Holy Spirit. [...] Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God **and in communion with him.** This communion of life is always possible because, through Baptism, we have already been united with Christ (Rom 6:5). **Prayer is Christian insofar as it is communion with Christ and extends throughout the Church, which is his Body.** Its dimensions are those of Christ's love (Eph 3:18-21). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2565)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Christian prayer must always be within the 'Communion of Saints'

This is why when a Christian prays, even if he is alone, his prayer is in fact always within the framework of the 'Communion of Saints' in which and with which he prays, whether in a public and liturgical way or in a private manner. Consequently, **it must always be offered within the authentic spirit of the Church at prayer, and therefore under its guidance,** which can sometimes take a concrete form in terms of a proven spiritual direction. **The Christian**, even when he is alone and prays in secret, **is conscious that he always prays for the good of the Church in union with Christ, in the Holy Spirit and together with all the Saints.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops on some aspects of Christian meditation*, no. 7, October 15, 1989)

LEO XIII

The Communion of Saints is the mutual communication of help among all the faithful

For the **Communion of Saints**, as everyone knows, **is nothing but the mutual communication of help**, expiation, prayers, blessings, **among all the faithful**, who, whether they have already attained to the heavenly country, or are detained in the purgatorial fire, or are yet exiles here on earth, **all enjoy the common franchise of that city whereof Christ is the head, and the constitution is charity.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Mirae caritatis*, no. 12, May 28, 1902)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The Lord hears every petition which is offered by those united the Church

But He holds out a ratification not only of sentences of excommunication, but of every petition which is offered by men holding together in the unity of the Church; for He adds, 'Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree upon earth,' whether in admitting a penitent, or casting out a forward person, 'touching anything which they shall ask,' anything, that is, that is not against the unity of the Church, 'it shall be done for them by my Father which is in heaven.' By saying, 'which is in heaven,' He points Him out as above all, and therefore able to fulfill all that shall be asked of Him. Or, He is in the heavens, that is, with saints, proof enough that whatever worthy thing they shall ask shall be done unto them, because they have with them Him of whom they ask. For this cause is the sentence of those that agree together ratified, because God dwells in them, 'For where two or more are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.' (Gloss quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea in Mt 18:18-20*)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DIVINE WORSHIP

AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS

There can be no Christian prayer without the action of the Holy Spirit

The unity of the praying Church is brought about by the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who is in Christ, in the whole Church, and in each baptized person. 'This Spirit comes to help us in our weakness' and 'expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words' (Rom 8:26). As the Spirit of the Son, he breathes into us 'the spirit of adopted sons, and makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father!'' (Rom 8:15; cf Gal 4:6; 1Cor 12:3; Eph 5:18; Jude 20). There can be no Christian prayer without the action of the Holy Spirit. He unites the whole Church and leads us through the Son to the Father. (Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. *General Introduction on the Liturgy of the Hours*, ch. I, II, 8, February 2, 1971, English translation 1974)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit we cannot fail to be heard

The Holy Ghost is the author of our prayers; and under His guiding influence, we cannot fail to be heard. We have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, 'Abba, (Father)'. This spirit succours our infirmity and enlightens our ignorance in the discharge of the duty of prayer; nay, even, as the Apostle says, He asketh for us with unspeakable groanings. (Catechism of Trent, no. 4000)

The practice of praying in spirit is peculiar to Christians, and is not at all used by infidels

The manner of praying is also a matter of the highest moment. Though prayer in itself is good and salutary, yet if not performed in a proper manner it is unavailing. Often we do not obtain what we ask, because, in the words of Saint James, we ask amiss. [...] We must, then pray in spirit and in truth; for the heavenly Father seeks those who adore Him in spirit and in truth. He prays in this manner whose prayer proceeds from an interior and intense ardour of soul. This spiritual manner of praying does not exclude the use of vocal prayer. Nevertheless, that prayer which is the vehement outpouring of the soul, deservedly holds the first place; and although not uttered with the lips, it is heard by God to whom the secrets of hearts are open. [...] This practice of praying in spirit is peculiar to Christians, and is not at all used by infidels. Of these Christ the Lord has said: When you pray, speak not much, as the heathens; for they think that in their much speaking they may be heard. Be not ye, therefore, like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you before you ask him. [...] Neither do the prayers of the hypocrite proceed from the heart; and against the imitation of their example, Christ the Lord warns us in these words: When ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites that love to stand and pray in the synagogues, and corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Amen I say, to you they have received their reward. But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father

who seeth in secret will repay thee. Here the word chamber may be understood to mean the human heart, which we should not only enter, but should also close against every distraction from without that could deprive our prayer of its perfection. For then will our heavenly Father, who sees perfectly our hearts and secret thoughts, grant our petitions. (Catechism of Trent no. 4000)

II – OUTSIDE OF THE STATE OF GRACE, PRAYERS ARE NEITHER MERITORIOUS, NOR EFFICACIOUS, NOR PLEASING TO GOD

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Those who are outside the true Church are excluded from perfect communion in spiritual goods

Do all the children of the Church share in this communion of goods?

All Christians who are in the grace of God share in the communion of internal goods, while those who are in mortal sin do not participate in these goods.

Why do not those who are in mortal sin participate in these goods?

Because that which unites the faithful with God, and with Jesus Christ as His living members, rendering them capable of performing meritorious works for life eternal, is the grace of God which is the supernatural life of the soul; and hence as those who are in mortal sin are without the grace of God, they are excluded from perfect communion in spiritual goods, nor can they accomplish works meritorious towards life eternal. [...]

Who are they who do not belong to the Communion of Saints?

Those who are damned do not belong to the Communion of Saints in the other life; and in this life those who belong neither to the body nor to the soul of the Church, that is, those who are in mortal sin, and who are outside the true Church.

Who are they who are outside the true Church?

A. Outside the true Church are: **Infidels, Jews, heretics, apostates, schismatics, and the**

excommunicated. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 4-5.10-11, The Communion of Saints)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Those who are bound in sin and estranged from the grace of God do not share in the spiritual fruit

The advantages of so many and such exalted blessings bestowed by Almighty God are enjoyed by those who lead a Christian life in charity, and are just and beloved of God. As to the dead members; that is, those who are bound in the thralldom of sin and estranged from the grace of God, they are not so deprived of these advantages as to cease to be members of this body; but since they are dead members, they do not share in the spiritual fruit which is communicated to the just and pious. (Catechism of Trent, no. 1090. IX, II, The Communion of Saints)

LEO X

Excommunication deprives one of the common spiritual prayers of the Church

[*Errors of Martin Luther*] Excommunications are only external penalties and they do not deprive man of the common spiritual prayers of the Church. [...]

[*Censure of the Supreme Pontiff*] we condemn, reprobate, and reject completely each of these theses or errors as either heretical, scandalous, false, offensive to pious ears or seductive of simple minds, and against Catholic truth. (Leo X. *Bull Exurge Domine*, June 15, 1520)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

We must be in the state of grace to render our prayers efficacious

What is the first and best disposition to render our prayers efficacious?

The first and best disposition to render our prayers efficacious is to be in the state of grace; or if we are not in that state, to desire to put ourselves in it. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 14)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Prayer is not meritorious without sanctifying grace

Neither prayer nor any other virtuous act is meritorious without sanctifying grace. And yet even that prayer which impetrates sanctifying grace proceeds from some grace, as from a gratuitous gift, since **the very act of praying is 'a gift of God,'** as Augustine states (*De Persever.* 23). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 83, a. 15)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain

Where does prayer come from? Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. But in naming the source of prayer, Scripture speaks sometimes of the soul or the spirit, but most often of the heart (more than a thousand times). According to Scripture, **it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain.** [...] Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2562, 2564)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

'Where there are two or three, I am with them': Christ is speaking to those who are in the Church, and not of schismatics

For when the Lord urged unanimity and peace upon His disciples, He said: 'I say to you that if two of you agree upon earth concerning anything whatsoever that you shall ask, it shall be granted you by my Father who is in heaven. For wherever two or three have gathered together in my name, I am with them, 'showing that **the most is granted not to the multitude but to the unanimity of those that pray.** [...] **but rebuking the faithless for their discord and commanding peace to the faithful by His**

word, He shows that He is with two or three who pray with one mind rather than with a great many who are in disagreement, and that more can be obtained by the harmonious prayer of a few than by the discordant supplication of many. [...] **The Lord, moreover, is speaking of His Church, and He is speaking to those who are in the Church, that if they are in agreement** [...] Where there are two or three, I am with them,' He who established and made the Church did not separate men from the Church, but rebuking the faithless for their discord and commanding peace to the faithful by His word, He shows that He is with two or three who pray with one mind rather than with a great many who are in disagreement, and that **more can be obtained by the harmonious prayer of a few than by the discordant supplication of many.** (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *The Unity of the Catholic Church*, XII)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

Pray for those buried in sin and the excommunicated? The example of St. John the Apostle

So the twelfth degree [of pride] may be called the habit of sinning, because in it the fear of God is lost, and its place is taken by scorn. To what extent may prayer be offered for the incorrigible, and spiritually dead? For such an one, says John the Apostle, I do not say that any one shall pray. But sayest thou, O Apostle, that no one may Hope? Surely he who loves that man may groan. He ventures not to pray, he need not for-bear to weep. What is this that I say that perchance there remains the resource of hope, where prayer has no place? **Take an instance of one who believes and hopes, yet does not pray.** Lord, she says, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. [...] **Wilt thou show wonders to the dead ? or shall physicians raise to life and give praise to thee? And concerning him who has been dead. Four days. Shall anyone in the sepulcher declare thy mercy; and thy truth in destruction?** Meanwhile it is possible that the Saviour may be pleased to meet us unforeseen and unexpectedly, and moved by the tears, not by tried prayers of the bearers, to restore the dead man to those who live, or actually to recall from among the dead one who is already buried. **But I should describe as dead the man who**

by excusing his sins, has already come down to the eighth degree. For praise perisheth from the dead as from one who does not exist. But after the tenth degree, which is third from the eighth, he is already being carried out into liberty to sin, when he is expelled from the monastic community. But after he has passed the fourth degree he is rightly said to be 'four days dead', and when he falls into the fifth degree of habitual sin he is already buried. They should nevertheless realize the great danger which those incur whom the Church [...] dares not to mention in her worship. For when on Good Friday prayer is expressly offered for certain wicked persons, no mention is made of those who are excommunicated. (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *The Twelve degrees of humility and pride*, ch. 21, no. 51-52.55-56)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

The prayer of sinners who are resolved to continue in sin is not heard by God

The last degree [of prayer] is that of those who not only do not repent of their sins and enormities, but, adding crime to crime, dare frequently to ask pardon of God for those sins, in which they are resolved to continue. With such dispositions they would not presume to ask pardon from their fellowman. **The prayer of such sinners is not heard by God.** It is recorded of Antiochus: Then this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not to obtain mercy. (Catechism of Trent, 4000)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

God does not hear hardened sinners even at the hour of death: 'You shall seek me, and shall not find me'

Miserable the sinner that hardens his heart and resists the divine calls: His heart shall be as hard as a stone and as firm as a smith's anvil (Job 41:15). Instead of yielding to the graces

and inspirations of God, and being softened by them, the unhappy man becomes more obdurate, as the anvil is hardened by repeated strokes of the hammer. **In punishment of his resistance to the divine calls, he will find his heart in the same miserable state at the very hour of death, at the moment of passing into eternity.** A hard heart shall fare evil at the last. Sinners, says the Lord, you have, for the love of creatures, turned your back upon me. They have turned their back upon me, and not their face; and **in the time of their affliction they will say: Arise, and deliver us. Where are the gods thou hast made thee? Let them arise and deliver thee** (Jer 2:27). They will have recourse to God at death; but he will say to them: **Why do you invoke me now? Call on creatures to assist you; for they have been your gods. The Lord will address them in this manner, because, in seeking him, they do not sincerely wish to be converted.** Saint Jerome says that he holds, and that he has learned from experience, that **they who have to the end led a bad life, will not die a good death** [...] It is a marvellous thing that God unceasingly threatens sinners with an unhappy death. **Then they shall call upon me, and I will not hear** (Prov. 1:28). Will God hear his cry when distress shall come upon him? (Job 27:9). I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock (Prov 1:26). According to Saint Gregory, God laughs when he is unwilling to show mercy (Mor 1, 9, c. 20). Revenge is mine, and I will repay them in due time: (Deut 22:35). The Lord pronounces the same threats in so many other places: **and sinners live in peace as securely as if God had certainly promised to give them, at death, pardon and paradise. It is true that at whatsoever hour the sinner is converted God promises to pardon him.** But he has not promised that sinners will be converted at death: on the contrary, he has often protested **that they who live in sin shall die in sin.** You shall die in your sins (Jn 8:21-24). He has declared that they who seek him at death shall not find him. **You shall seek me, and shall not find me** (Jn 7:34). (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Preparation for Death*, VI, 2-3)

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**A picture is worth a thousand words....
and a gesture, sometimes, more than an official document...**

As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words. That is why the expressive though silent message transmitted through certain gestures often deserves our attention just as much as certain declarations or documents do. This is all the more true in the case of the one who has the mission of representing Jesus Christ *ex officio*, as his Vicar on earth.

To better comprehend what the pictures accompanying this text 'say,' it may help to remember something of the doctrine of the Church regarding blessings. According to the Catechism it is a sacramental: 'Every blessing praises God and prays for his gifts' (no. 1671). Some more solemn blessings are reserved for bishops; others correspond to priests and others to deacons, as 'stewards of the mysteries of God' (1Cor 4:1). The faithful also, in virtue of the common priesthood received through baptism, may impart certain blessings like, for example, parents who bless their children.

Some 'blessings', however, are a cause of concern...Is a heretic's blessing valid? Is it licit to request such a blessing? What is the meaning of such a gesture? The Magisterium, Fathers and Doctors of the Church aid us in these confusing times, responding with their characteristic precision.

FRANCIS



As cardinal, being blessed by Evangelicals at Luna Park, Buenos Aires, Argentina, June 19, 2006.



With Tawadros II, head of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt. 2013



With Justin Welby, Primate of the Anglican Church.
2014



With Patriarch Bartholomew I, of the Orthodox
Church of Constantinople, asking for a blessing
and for 'the whole Church of Rome', November
29, 2014.



With a group of 100 evangelical pastors, headed by Italian pastor Giovanni Traettino. May 7, 2015

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I – IS A HERETIC’S ‘BLESSING’ VALID?

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Blessings are granted through the intercession of the Church

Among the sacramentals **blessings** occupy an important place. **They include** both praise of God for his works and gifts, and **the Church’s intercession for men that they may be able to use God’s gifts** according to the spirit of the Gospel. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1678)

PIUS XII

Their efficacy is due to the action of the Church inasmuch as She is holy and in closest union with her Head

This efficacy, where there is question of the eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments, derives first of all and principally from the act itself (*ex opere operato*). [...] **If one refers to the ‘sacramentals’** and the other rites instituted by the hierarchy of the Church, then its effectiveness is due rather to the action of the Church (*ex opere operantis Ecclesiae*), inasmuch as She is holy and acts always in closest union with her Head. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 27, November 20, 1947)

CODE OF CANON LAW

An excommunicated person is forbidden to celebrate sacramentals

An apostate from the faith, a heretic, or

a schismatic incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication; [...] **An excommunicated person is forbidden:** 1/ to have any ministerial participation in celebrating the sacrifice of the Eucharist or any other ceremonies of worship whatsoever; 2/ **to celebrate** the sacraments or **sacramentals** and to receive the sacraments; 3/ to exercise any ecclesiastical offices, ministries, or functions whatsoever or to place acts of governance. (Code of Canon Law, can. 1364 §1; can. 1331 §1)

LEO I, THE GREAT

The strength of the Holy Spirit is received only from Catholic ministers, not from heretics

In effect, those who have received the baptism of the heretics, having never been baptized before, should be confirmed only with an invocation of the Holy Spirit through the imposition of hands, since **they have received merely the form of baptism without the strength of sanctification.** [...] **The ablution should not be profaned with any repetition, but rather, as we have said, one should only invoke the sanctification of the Holy Spirit: so that that which no one receives from the heretics may be received from Catholic priests.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 316. *Leo I*, Letter *Regressus ad nos* to Nicetas, Bishop of Aquileia, March 21, 458)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

As an amputated member, a heretic does not possess the life of the Spirit

The Holy Spirit works in the Church in the same way the soul works in all the members of one body. [...] **It could happen that in a human body, or better, of a human body, a**

member has to be amputated: a hand, finger or foot. Does the soul by any chance go after the separated member? While it was attached to the body, it lived; once amputated, it loses life. In the same way, someone is a Christian Catholic when he lives in the body; separated from it, he becomes a heretic, and the Spirit does not follow the amputated member. Therefore, if you wish to have life in the Holy Spirit, conserve charity, love truth, desire unity and you will reach eternity. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 267*, 4)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

Jesus Christ is not pleased with the prayer of schismatics: how can two or three be gathered in the name of Christ when separated Him?

For when the Lord urged unanimity and peace upon His disciples, He said: 'I say to you that if two of you agree upon earth concerning anything whatsoever that you shall ask, it shall be granted you by my Father who is in heaven. For wherever two or three have gathered together in my name, I am with them,' showing that **the most is granted not to the multitude but to the unanimity of those that pray.** [...] **But how can he agree with anyone, who does not agree with the body of the Church herself and with the universal brotherhood? How can two or three be gathered in the name of Christ, who it is clear are separated from Christ and His gospel?** For we did not withdraw from them, but they from us, and when thereafter heresies and schisms arose, [...] **The Lord, moreover, is speaking of His Church, and He is speaking to those who are in the Church, that if they are in agreement** [...]: 'Where there are two or three, I am with them,' He who established and made the Church did not separate men from the Church, but **rebuking the faithless for their discord and commanding peace to the faithful by His word, He shows that He is with two or three who pray with one mind rather than with a great many who are in disagreement, and that more can be obtained by the harmonious prayer of a few than by the discordant supplication of many.** (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *The unity of the Catholic Church*, XII)

LEO XIII

Ordinations enacted according to the Anglican rite are invalid and entirely void

And so, assenting entirely to the decrees of all the Pontiffs, our predecessors, in this case, and confirming them most fully and, as it were, renewing them by Our authority, of Our own initiative and certain knowledge **We pronounce and declare that ordinations enacted according to the Anglican rite have hitherto been and are invalid and entirely void.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 3319. *Leo XIII*, Apostolic letter *Curae et caritatis*, September 13, 1896)

II – IS IT LICIT TO REQUEST SUCH A BLESSING?

PIUS XI

Giving countenance to a false Christianity, quite alien to the one Church of Christ

But some are more easily deceived by the outward appearance of good when there is question of fostering unity among all Christians. Is it not right, it is often repeated, indeed, even consonant with duty, that all who invoke the name of Christ should abstain from mutual reproaches and at long last be united in mutual charity? [...] These things and others that class of men who are known as pan-Christians continually repeat and amplify; and these men, so far from being quite few and scattered, have increased to the dimensions of an entire class, and have grouped themselves into widely spread societies, most of which are directed by non-Catholics, although they are imbued with varying doctrines concerning the things of faith. [...] **They add that the Church in itself, or of its nature, is divided into sections; that is to say, that it is made up of several churches or distinct communities, which still remain separate, and although having certain articles of doctrine in common, nevertheless disagree concerning the remainder;** [...] This being so, it is clear that the **Apostolic See cannot on any terms take part in their assemblies, nor is it anyway lawful for Catholics either to support or to work for such enterprises; for if they do so they will**

be giving countenance to a false Christianity, quite alien to the one Church of Christ. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, nos. 3-4, 7, 8, January 6, 1928)

The Apostle of love forbade contact with those who hold a mutilated version of Christ's teaching: His disciples must be united principally by the bond of one faith

These pan-Christians who turn their minds to uniting the churches seem, indeed, to pursue the noblest of ideas in promoting charity among all Christians: nevertheless how does it happen that this charity tends to injure faith? Everyone knows that John himself, the Apostle of love, [...] altogether forbade any intercourse with those who professed a mutilated and corrupt version of Christ's teaching: 'If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him: God speed you.' For which reason, since charity is based on a complete and sincere faith, the disciples of Christ must be united principally by the bond of one faith. Who then can conceive a Christian Federation, the members of which retain each his own opinions and private judgment, even in matters which concern the object of faith, even though they be repugnant to the opinions of the rest? And in what manner, We ask, can men who follow contrary opinions, belong to one and the same Federation of the faithful? For example, those who affirm, and those who deny that sacred Tradition is a true fount of divine Revelation; those who hold that an ecclesiastical hierarchy, made up of bishops, priests and ministers, has been divinely constituted, and those who assert that it has been brought in little by little in accordance with the conditions of the time; those who adore Christ really present in the Most Holy Eucharist through that marvelous conversion of the bread and wine, which is called transubstantiation, and those who affirm that Christ is present only by faith or by the signification and virtue of the Sacrament; those who in the Eucharist recognize the nature both of a sacrament and of a sacrifice, and those who say that it is nothing more than the memorial or commemoration of the Lord's Supper; those who believe it to be good and useful to invoke by prayer the Saints reigning with Christ, especially Mary the Mother of God, and to venerate their images, and those who urge

that such a veneration is not to be made use of, for it is contrary to the honor due to Jesus Christ. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 9, January 6, 1928)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

In these few things wherein they are not with the Church, there is no profit to them of the many things wherein they are with Her

'He shall redeem in peace my soul'. Against them that love not peace: 'in peace He shall redeem my soul.' 'Because with those that hated peace I was peace-making.' 'He shall redeem in peace my soul, from those that draw near to me.' For from those that are afar from me, it is an easy case: not so soon doth he deceive me that saith, Come, pray to an idol: he is very far from me. Art thou a Christian? A Christian, he saith. Out of a neighbouring place he is my adversary, he is at hand. 'He shall redeem in peace my soul, from those that draw near to me: for in many things they were with me.' Wherefore have I said, 'draw near to me?' Because 'in many things they were with me.' [...] **Baptism we had both of us**, in that they were with me: **the Gospel we both read**, they were in that with me: **the festivals of martyrs we celebrated**, they were there with me: **Easter's solemnity we attended**, they were there with me. **But not entirely with me: in schism not with me, in heresy not with me.** In many things with me, in few things not with me. **But in these few things wherein not with me, there is no profit to them of the many things wherein they were with me.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on Psalm 55* (54), no. 18)

SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Flee as you would from wild beasts from those who carry about the name of Jesus, but practice things unworthy of God

And indeed Onesimus himself greatly commends your good order in God, that ye **all live according to the truth**, and that no sect has any dwelling-place among you. Nor indeed do ye hearken to any one rather than to Jesus Christ, the true Shepherd and

Teacher. [...] For some are in the habit of carrying about the name [of Jesus Christ] in wicked guile, while yet they practise things unworthy of God, whom ye must flee as ye would wild beasts. For they are ravening dogs, who bite secretly, against whom ye must be on your guard, inasmuch as they are men who can scarcely be cured. (Saint Ignatius of Antioch. *Epistle to the Ephesians*, VI-VII)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

Shun those who compose prayers with unauthorized words and profane the Lord's offering by false sacrifices - they bear arms against the Church

Such a one is to be turned away from, and whoever has separated himself from the Church is to be shunned. 'Such a man is perverted and sins and is condemned by his very self' (Tit 3:11). [...] **That man bears arms against the Church; he fights against God's plan.** An enemy of the altar, a rebel against the sacrifice of Christ, for the faith faithless, for religion sacrilegious, a disobedient servant, an impious son, a hostile brother, despising the bishops and abandoning the priests of God, **he dares to set up another altar, to compose another prayer with unauthorized words, to profane the truth of the Lord's offering by false sacrifices,** and not to know that **he who struggles against God's plan on account of his rash daring is punished by divine censure.** (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *The unity of the Catholic Church*, Ch. XII)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The Church forbids the faithful to communicate with heretics

The Church forbids the faithful to communicate with those unbelievers who have forsaken the faith they once received, either by corrupting the faith, as heretics, or by entirely renouncing the faith, as apostates, because the Church pronounces sentence of excommunication on both. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 10, a. 9)

SACRED SCRIPTURES

He who receives a heretic shares in his evil works

Anyone who is so 'progressive' as not to remain in the teaching of the Christ does not have God; whoever remains in the teaching has the Father and the Son. **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him in your house or even greet him; for whoever greets him shares in his evil works.** (2Jn: 9-11)

LATERAN SYNOD

Condemnation of those who do not reject heretics

If anyone according to the holy Fathers, harmoniously with us and likewise with the Faith, **does not with mind and lips reject and anathematize all the most abominable heretics together with their impious writings even to one least portion,** whom the holy Catholic and apostolic Church of God, that is, the holy and universal five Synods and likewise all the approved Fathers of the Church in harmony, rejects and anathematizes, we mean Sabellius, Arius, Eunomius, Macedonius, Apollinaris, Polemon, Eutyches, Dioscurus, Timothy Aelurus, Severus, Theodosius, Colluthus, Themistius, Paul of Samosata, Diodorus, Theodore, Nestorius, Theodulus the Persian, Origen, Didymus, Evagrius, and briefly all the remaining heretics, [...] **let such a person be condemned.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 518-520. *Lateran Synod*, Session V, Against the Monothelites, can. 18, October 31, 649)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

In no way to be tolerated: that the clergy or faithful pray for Christian unity under the leadership of heretics

Surely nothing should be preferable to a Catholic man than that schisms and dissensions among Christians be torn out by the roots and that all Christians be 'careful to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' (Eph 4:3)... But, **that the faithful of Christ and the clergy should pray for Christian unity under the leadership of heretics,** and, what is

worse, according to an intention, polluted and infected as much as possible with heresy, **can in no way be tolerated.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 2887. *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Letter to the bishops of England, September 16, 1864*)

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The Old Covenant has not been revoked. The Jews have maintained their faith in God and should continue on their way: The Church is enriched with the values of Judaism

In the Declaration *Nostra Aetate* no. 4, Vatican Council II manifests the doctrine consistently recognized by the Church ever since the time of Saint Paul, that the Jewish People would finally convert to the Lord: 'Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues. Such is the testimony of the Apostle. In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Zeph 3:9)'. However, certain recent affirmations may give the impression that the Israelites should remain as they presently are...

Has God ceased to love the Hebrew people? Does He no longer desire their conversion? Will they be saved while trying to follow the Old Law? Have they kept the faith in God? Do the Jewish rites have a salvific efficacy as the Sacraments do? Are there two paths to Salvation – that of the Old and New Covenant? Should the Church learn from the Jews?

The more questions one raises, the more one seems to get entangled. Let us consider the doctrine of the Church, already twenty centuries old, so as to understand this clearly and to really love the Jewish People in truth.

FRANCIS

We hold the Jewish people in special regard because their covenant with God has never been revoked, for 'the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable' (Rom 11:29). The Church, which shares with Jews an important part of the sacred Scriptures, looks upon the people of the covenant and their faith as one of the sacred roots of her own Christian identity (cf. Rom 11:16-18). As Christians, we cannot consider Judaism as a foreign religion; nor do we include the Jews among those called to turn from idols and to serve the true God (cf. 1Thess 1:9). With them, we believe in the one God who acts in history, and with them we accept his revealed word. (*Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 247)

God continues to work among the people of the Old Covenant and to bring forth treasures of wisdom which flow from their encounter with his word. For this reason, the Church also is enriched when she receives the values of Judaism. While it is true that certain Christian beliefs are unacceptable to Judaism, and that the Church cannot refrain from proclaiming Jesus as Lord and Messiah, there exists as well a rich complementarity which allows us to read the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures together and to help one another to mine the riches of God's word. We can also share many ethical convictions and a common concern for justice and the development of peoples. (*Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 249)

You also asked me, at the end of your first article, **what should be said to the Jewish brethren concerning the promise that God made to them: is that an empty promise?** This question, believe me, is a radical one for us Christians because with the

help of God, especially in the light of the Second Vatican Council, we have rediscovered that the Jewish people remain for us the holy root from which Jesus was born. **I too have cultivated many friendships through the years with my Jewish brothers in Argentina and often while in prayer,** as my mind turned to the terrible experience of the Shoah, I looked to God. **What I can tell you, with Saint Paul, is that God has never neglected his faithfulness to the covenant with Israel,** and that, through the awful trials of these last centuries, **the Jews have preserved their faith in God. And for this, we, the Church and the whole human family, can never be sufficiently grateful to them. Moreover, persevering with faith in the God of the Covenant, they remind everyone, including us Christians, that we wait unceasingly as pilgrims for the return of the Lord, and that therefore we should be open to him and not remain entrenched in our achievements.** (*Letter to Eugenio Scalfari, Journalist of the Italian Newspaper La Repubblica, September 4, 2013*)

During my time as Archbishop of Buenos Aires, I had the joy of maintaining relations of sincere friendship with leaders of the Jewish world. **We talked often of our respective religious identities, the image of man found in the Scriptures, and how to keep an awareness of God alive in a world now secularized in many ways.** I met with them on various occasions to discuss the challenges which Jews and Christians both face. But above all, as friends, we enjoyed each other's company, we were all enriched through encounter and dialogue, and we welcomed each other, and this helped all of us grow as people and as believers. This has happened in many other places in the world, and these friendly relations are in a way the basis for the development of a more official dialogue. **So I encourage you to follow this path trying, as you do so, to involve younger generations. Humanity needs our joint witness in favour of respect for the dignity of man and woman created in the image and likeness of God, and in favor of peace which is above all God's gift.** As the prophet Jeremiah said, 'I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future of hope' (Jer 29:11). With this word, Peace – Shalom – I conclude my words, **asking for your prayers and assuring you of my own.** (*Address to Members of the International Jewish Committee, June 24, 2013*)

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I – IS THE OLD COVENANT STILL IN EFFECT?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

A former Commandment is annulled due to its incapacity to lead to perfection

When there is a change of priesthood, there is necessarily a change of law as well. [...] For it is testified: 'You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' **On the one hand,**

a former commandment is annulled because of its weakness and uselessness, for the Law brought nothing to perfection; on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God. (Heb 7:12,15-19)

The First Covenant, being imperfect, was substituted by another

Now he has obtained so much more excellent a ministry as he is mediator of a better covenant, enacted on better promises. **For if that first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been sought for a second**

one. But he finds fault with them and says: **Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will conclude a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers the day I took them by the hand to lead them forth from the land of Egypt; for they did not stand by my covenant and I ignored them, says the Lord. [...] When he speaks of a “new” covenant, he declares the first one obsolete. And what has become obsolete and has grown old is close to disappearing.** (Heb 8:6-9,13)

Christ declared the first regime abolished in order to establish the second

Since the law has only a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of them, it can never make perfect those who come to worship by the same sacrifices that they offer continually each year. Otherwise, would not the sacrifices have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, once cleansed, would no longer have had any consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is only a yearly remembrance of sins, for it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats take away sins. **For this reason, when he came into the world, he said: “Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in. Then I said, ‘As is written of me in the scroll, Behold, I come to do your will, O God.’”** First he says, ‘Sacrifices and offerings, holocausts and sin offerings, you neither desired nor delighted in.’ These are offered according to the law. Then he says, ‘Behold, I come to do your will.’ He takes away the first to establish the second. (Heb 10:1-9)

The Old Covenant was transitory, it was of the letter that brings death and not of the Spirit

Who has indeed qualified us as ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter brings death, but the Spirit gives life. Now if the ministry of death, carved in letters on stone, was so glorious that the Israelites could not look intently at the face of Moses because of its glory that was going to fade, how much more will the ministry of the Spirit be glorious? For if the ministry of

condemnation was glorious, the ministry of righteousness will abound much more in glory. Indeed, what was endowed with glory has come to have no glory in this respect because of the glory that surpasses it. **For if what was going to fade was glorious, how much more will what endures be glorious.** (2Cor 3:6-11)

Questions regarding foods and the Sabbath are but shadows of a future reality, the Body of Christ

Let no one, then, pass judgment on you in matters of food and drink or with regard to a festival or new moon or Sabbath. These are shadows of things to come; the reality belongs to Christ. (Col 2:16-17)

PIUS XII

With the death of the Redeemer the New Law succeeded the Old, which would soon be buried and a bearer of death

And first of all, by the death of our Redeemer, the New Testament took the place of the Old Law which had been abolished; then the Law of Christ together with its mysteries, enactments, institutions, and sacred rites was ratified for the whole world in the blood of Jesus Christ. For, while our Divine Savior was preaching in a restricted area – He was not sent but to the sheep that were lost of the House of Israel – the Law and the Gospel were together in force; but on the gibbet of His death Jesus made void the Law with its decrees fastened the handwriting of the Old Testament to the Cross, establishing the New Testament in His blood shed for the whole human race. ‘To such an extent, then’ says Saint Leo the Great, speaking of the Cross of our Lord, ‘was there effected a transfer from the Law to the Gospel, from the Synagogue to the Church, from the many sacrifices to one Victim, that, as Our Lord expired, that mystical veil which shut off the innermost part of the temple and its sacred secret was rent violently from top to bottom.’ **On the Cross then the Old Law died, soon to be buried and to be a bearer of death, in order to give way to the New Testament of which Christ had chosen the Apostles as qualified ministers.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corpori Christi*, no. 29-30, June 19, 1846)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

The legalities of the Law of Moses may not be observed without the loss of eternal salvation

The sacrosanct Roman Church, founded by the voice of our Lord and Savior [...] firmly believes, professes, and teaches that the matter pertaining to the law of the Old Testament, of the Mosaic law, which are divided into ceremonies, sacred rites, sacrifices, and sacraments, because they were established to signify something in the future, although they were suited to the divine worship at that time, after our Lord's coming had been signified by them, ceased, and the sacraments of the New Testament began; and that whoever, even after the passion, placed hope in these matters of the law and submitted himself to them as necessary for salvation, as if faith in Christ could not save without them, sinned mortally. Yet it does not deny that after the passion of Christ up to the promulgation of the Gospel they could have been observed until they were believed to be in no way necessary for salvation; but after the promulgation of the Gospel it asserts that they cannot be observed without the loss of eternal salvation. All, therefore, who after that time observe circumcision and the Sabbath and the other requirements of the law, it declares alien to the Christian faith and not in the least fit to participate in eternal salvation, unless someday they recover from these errors. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1330.1348. *Council of Florence*, Bull *Cantate Domino*, Decree on behalf of the Jacobites, February 4, 1442)

BENEDICT XIV

The observance of the annulled ceremonies of the Mosaic Law constitutes a sin

The first consideration is that the ceremonies of the Mosaic Law were abrogated by the coming of Christ and that they can no longer be observed without sin after the promulgation of the Gospel. Therefore, the distinction made by the old Law between clean and unclean foods belongs to the ceremonial precepts, whereby it may be justly affirmed that such a distinction no longer exists, and

that no discrimination of foods should be permitted. (Benedict XIV. *Encyclical Ex quo primum*, no. 61, March 1, 1756)

II – THE PRECEPTS OF THE OLD LAW IN RELATION TO THE NEW LAW

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The Old Law contained three kinds of precepts: moral, ceremonial and juridical

We must therefore distinguish three kinds of precept in the Old Law; viz. 'moral' precepts, which are dictated by the natural law; 'ceremonial' precepts, which are determinations of the Divine worship; and 'judicial' precepts, which are determinations of the justice to be maintained among men. Wherefore the Apostle (Rom 7:12) after saying that the 'Law is holy,' adds that 'the commandment is just, and holy, and good': 'just,' in respect of the judicial precepts; 'holy,' with regard to the ceremonial precepts (since the word '*sanctus*' – 'holy' is applied to that which is consecrated to God); and 'good,' i.e. conducive to virtue, as to the moral precepts. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II q. 99, a.4, co.)

The moral precepts are parts of the precepts of the Decalogue

The moral precepts, distinct from the ceremonial and judicial precepts, are about things pertaining of their very nature to good morals. [...]

The precepts of the Law are so many parts of the precepts of the Decalogue. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II q. 100, a.1, a 3)

The Ceremonial precepts pertain to divine worship

The ceremonial precepts are determinations of the moral precepts whereby man is directed to God, just as the judicial precepts are determinations of the moral precepts whereby he is directed to his neighbor. Now man is directed to God by the worship due to Him. Wherefore those precepts are properly called ceremonial, which pertain to the Divine worship. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa*

Theologica I-II, q.101, a.1)

The ceremonial precepts cannot purify from sin for they do not contain grace within themselves

On the other hand, they had no power of cleansing from uncleanness of the soul, i.e. from the uncleanness of sin. The reason of this was that at no time could there be expiation from sin, except through Christ, 'Who taketh away the sins [Vulgate: 'sin'] of the world' (John 1:29). [...] Consequently **they could not cleanse from sin**: thus the Apostle says (Hebrews 10:4) that 'it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away'; and for this reason he calls them (Gal 4:9) 'weak and needy element': weak indeed, because they cannot take away sin; but this weakness results from their being needy, i.e. from the fact that **they do not contain grace within themselves**. [...] It is therefore evident that under the state of the **Old Law the ceremonies had no power of justification**. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q.103, a.2)

The ceremonial precepts should disappear in order to institute the ceremonies of the New Law

Now external worship should be in proportion to the internal worship, which consists in faith, hope and charity. Consequently exterior worship had to be subject to variations according to the variations in the internal worship, in which a threefold state may be distinguished. One state was in respect of faith and hope, both in heavenly goods, and in the means of obtaining them – in both of these considered as things to come. Such was the state of faith and hope in the **Old Law**. Another state of interior worship is that in which we have faith and hope in heavenly goods as things to come; but in the means of obtaining heavenly goods, as in things present or past. **Such is the state of the New Law**. The **third state** is that in which both are possessed as present; wherein nothing is believed in as lacking, nothing hoped for as being yet to come. **Such is the state of the Blessed**. In this state of the Blessed, then, nothing in regard to worship of God will be figurative; there will be naught but 'thanksgiving and voice of praise' (Is 51:3). Hence it is written concerning the city of the

Blessed (Apoc 21:22): 'I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb.' Proportionately, therefore, the ceremonies of the first-mentioned state which foreshadowed the second and third states, had need to cease at the advent of the second state; and other ceremonies had to be introduced which would be in keeping with the state of divine worship for that particular time, wherein heavenly goods are a thing of the future, but the Divine favors whereby we obtain the heavenly boons are a thing of the present. The mystery of the redemption of the human race was fulfilled in Christ's Passion: hence Our Lord said then: 'It is consummated' (Jn 19:30). Consequently the prescriptions of the Law must have ceased then altogether through their reality being fulfilled. As a sign of this, we read that at the Passion of Christ 'the veil of the temple was rent' (Mt 27:51). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q.103, a. 3)

It is a mortal sin to observe the old rites after the Passion of Christ

The Apostle says (Gal 5:2): 'If you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.' But nothing save mortal sin hinders us from receiving Christ's fruit. Therefore since Christ's Passion it is a mortal sin to be circumcised, or to observe the other legal ceremonies. All ceremonies are professions of faith, in which the interior worship of God consists. Now man can make profession of his inward faith, by deeds as well as by words: and in either profession, if he make a false declaration, he sins mortally. Now, **though our faith in Christ is the same as that of the fathers of old; yet, since they came before Christ, whereas we come after Him, the same faith is expressed in different words, by us and by them**. For by them was it said: 'Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,' where the verbs are in the future tense: whereas we express the same by means of verbs in the past tense, and say that she 'conceived and bore.' In like manner the ceremonies of the Old Law betokened Christ as having yet to be born and to suffer: whereas our sacraments signify Him as already born and having suffered. Consequently, **just as it would be a mortal sin now for anyone, in making a profession of faith, to say that Christ is yet to be born, which the fathers of old said devoutly**

and truthfully; so too it would be a mortal sin now to observe those ceremonies which the fathers of old fulfilled with devotion and fidelity. Such is the teaching Augustine (*Contra Faust.* XIX, 16), who says: 'It is no longer promised that He shall be born, shall suffer and rise again, truths of which their sacraments were a kind of image: but it is declared that He is already born, has suffered and risen again; of which our sacraments, in which Christians share, are the actual representation.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q.103, a.4)

The judicial precepts referring to human relations among the hebrew people ceased with the coming of Christ

Hence there are two conditions attached to the judicial precepts: viz. first, that they refer to man's relations to other men; secondly, that they derive their binding force not from reason alone, but in virtue of their institution. The judicial precepts did not bind forever, but were annulled by the coming of Christ: yet not in the same way as the ceremonial precepts. For the ceremonial precepts were annulled so far as to be not only 'dead,' but also deadly to those who observe them since the coming of Christ, especially since the promulgation of the Gospel. On the other hand, the judicial precepts are dead indeed, because they have no binding force: but they are not deadly. For if a sovereign were to order these judicial precepts to be observed in his kingdom, he would not sin: unless perchance they were observed, or ordered to be observed, as though they derived their binding force through being institutions of the Old Law: for it would be a deadly sin to intend to observe them thus. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q.104, a. 1, a.3)

Christ Fulfilled the Law and Perfected it through Words and Doctrine Granting Grace for its Fulfillment

Our Lord said (Mt 5:17): 'I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill': and went on to say (Mt 5:18): 'One jot or one tittle shall not pass of the Law till all be fulfilled.' Now everything perfect fulfills that which is lacking in the imperfect. And accordingly the New Law fulfills the Old by supplying that which was

lacking in the Old Law. [...] The end of the Old Law was the justification of men. The Law, however, could not accomplish this: but foreshadowed it by certain ceremonial actions, and promised it in words. And in this respect, the New Law fulfills the Old by justifying men through the power of Christ's Passion. This is what the Apostle says (Rom 8:3-4): 'What the Law could not do ... God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh... hath condemned sin in the flesh, that the justification of the Law might be fulfilled in us.' And in this respect, the New Law gives what the Old Law promised, according to 2 Corinthians 1:20: 'Whatever are the promises of God, in Him,' i.e. in Christ, "they are 'Yea'." Again, in this respect, it also fulfills what the Old Law foreshadowed. Hence it is written (Col 2:17) concerning the ceremonial precepts that they were 'a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ'; in other words, the reality is found in Christ. Wherefore the New Law is called the law of reality; whereas the Old Law is called the law of shadow or of figure. Now Christ fulfilled the precepts of the Old Law both in His works and in His doctrine. In His works, because He was willing to be circumcised and to fulfill the other legal observances, which were binding for the time being; according to Gal 4:4: 'Made under the Law.' In His doctrine He fulfilled the precepts of the Law in three ways. First, by explaining the true sense of the Law. This is clear in the case of murder and adultery, the prohibition of which the Scribes and Pharisees thought to refer only to the exterior act: wherefore Our Lord fulfilled the Law by showing that the prohibition extended also to the interior acts of sins. Secondly, Our Lord fulfilled the precepts of the Law by prescribing the safest way of complying with the statutes of the Old Law. Thus the Old Law forbade perjury: and this is more safely avoided, by abstaining altogether from swearing, save in cases of urgency. Thirdly, Our Lord fulfilled the precepts of the Law, by adding some counsels of perfection: this is clearly seen in Mt 19:21, where Our Lord said to the man who affirmed that he had kept all the precepts of the Old Law: 'One thing is wanting to thee: If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell whatsoever thou hast,' etc. [Saint Thomas combines Mt 19:21 with Mk 10:21.] (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q. 107, a. 2)

The New Law perfects the Old Law

Every law ordains human conduct to some end. [...] Accordingly then **two laws may be distinguished from one another in two ways. First, through being altogether diverse, from the fact that they are ordained to diverse ends.** [...] We must therefore say that, according to the first way, **the New Law is not distinct from the Old Law: because they both have the same end, namely, man's subjection to God;** and there is but one God of the New and of the Old Testament, according to Rom 3:30: 'It is one God that justifieth circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.' According to the second way, **the New Law is distinct from the Old Law: because the Old Law is like a pedagogue of children,** as the Apostle says (Gal 3:24), **whereas the New Law is the law of perfection,** since it is the law of charity, of which the Apostle says (Col 3:14) that it is 'the bond of perfection.' [...] All the differences assigned between the Old and New Laws are gathered from their relative perfection and imperfection. For the precepts of every law prescribe acts of virtue. [...] Hence the Old Law, which was given to men who were imperfect, that is, who had not yet received spiritual grace, was called the 'law of fear,' inasmuch as it induced men to observe its commandments by threatening them with penalties; and is spoken of as containing temporal promises. On the other hand, those who are possessed of virtue, are inclined to do virtuous deeds through love of virtue, not on account of some extrinsic punishment or reward. Hence the New Law which derives its pre-eminence from the spiritual grace instilled into our hearts, is called the 'Law of love': and it is described as containing spiritual and eternal promises, which are objects of the virtues, chiefly of charity. Accordingly such persons are inclined of themselves to those objects, not as to something foreign but as to something of their own. For this reason, too, **the Old Law is described as 'restraining the hand, not the will';** since when a man refrains from some sins through fear of being punished, his will does not shrink simply from sin, as does the will of a man who refrains from sin through love of righteousness: and hence the **New Law, which is the Law of love, is said to restrain the will.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q. 107, a. 1)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Christ changed the old signs, bringing them to their plenitude, such that there is a clear distinction between those which announced that Christ came, and those which foretold his coming.

[The Jews] ask us: 'What do the readings of the Law and the Prophets serve you, if you do not wish to observe their precepts?' For we do not circumcise the flesh, and we consume the meat that the Law calls impure; we do not keep the Sabbath, the new moon or the feast days; we do not sacrifice animal victims to God, nor do we celebrate the Passover as they with the lamb and unleavened bread. Inclusively, **the Apostle calls some other preceding sacraments, shadows of what was to come (Col 2:17), for they signified that which was to be revealed, that which was disclosed to us; such that, with the shadows removed, we benefit from their uncovered light.** It would take much time to dispute each point separately: just as we are circumcised by uncovering the old man not by the cutting of flesh, [...] so also, our Passover is Christ, and our unleavened bread is the sincerity of truth, which does not contain the leaven of malice (1Cor 5: 7-8), and if there are other matters that need not be fulfilled now, contained within the former signs, they are fulfilled in He whose kingdom will not end. It is certainly fitting that all of the causes be fulfilled in He who did not come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them. (Mt 5:17) **In this way, Christ did not annul the former signs by opposing them; rather, he changed them by bringing them to their plenitude, in such a way that there is a clear distinction between those who announced that Christ came, and those who foretold his coming.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Adversus Iudaeos*, III, no. 4)

III – WHAT DOES THE LOVE OF GOD TOWARD THE JEWISH PEOPLE IMPLY?

SACRED SCRIPTURES

The whole house of Israel must acknowledge Jesus as both Lord and Messiah

[When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled,

they were all in one place together. Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and proclaimed to them,] ‘You who are Israelites, hear these words. Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. **This man**, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. But God raised him up, releasing him from the throes of death, because it was impossible for him to be held by it. [...] God raised this Jesus; **of this we are all witnesses**. Exalted at the right hand of God, he received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father and poured it forth, as you (both) see and hear. [...] **Therefore let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified**’. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, ‘What are we to do, my brothers?’ Peter (said) to them, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is made to you and to your children and to all those far off, whomever the Lord our God will call.’ (Acts 2:14,22-24,32,36-39)

Jesus is the Messiah given to the descendants of the Prophets and of the Covenant

When Peter saw this, he addressed the people, “You Israelites, why are you amazed at this, [...] The God of Abraham, (the God) of Isaac, and (the God) of Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and denied in Pilate’s presence, when he had decided to release him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. [...] **Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away, and that the Lord may grant you times of refreshment and send you the Messiah already appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the times of universal restoration of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old. For Moses said: ‘A prophet like me will the Lord, your God, raise up for you from among your own kinsmen; to him you shall**

listen in all that he may say to you. Everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be cut off from the people.’ Moreover, all the prophets who spoke, from Samuel and those afterwards, also announced these days. You are the children of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors when he said to Abraham, **In your offspring all the families of the earth shall be blessed. For you first, God raised up his servant and sent him to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.**” (Acts 3:12.13,19-26)

The Law, received from the angels, was not observed

And he replied, ‘My brothers and fathers, listen. [...] It was this Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘**God will raise up for you, from among your own kinsfolk, a prophet like me.**” It was he who, in the assembly in the desert, was with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai and with our ancestors, and he received living utterances to hand on to us. “**Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him; instead, they pushed him aside and in their hearts turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods’ [...]** You stiff-necked people, **uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always oppose the holy Spirit; you are just like your ancestors. Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute?** They put to death those who foretold the coming of the righteous one, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become. **You received the law as transmitted by angels, but you did not observe it.**” (Acts 7:2.37-40,51-53)

Whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts – till they turn to the Lord

Since we have such hope, we act very boldly and not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the Israelites could not look intently at the cessation of what was fading. **Rather, their thoughts were rendered dull, for to this present day the same veil remains unlifted when they read the old covenant, because through Christ it is taken away. To this day, in fact, whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their hearts, but whenever a person turns to the Lord the veil is removed.** Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2Cor 3:12-17)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

It is an offense to God not to fix one's eyes entirely upon Christ

Christ, the Son of God made man, is the Father's one, perfect and unsurpassable Word. In him he has said everything; there will be no other word than this one. Saint John of the Cross, among others, commented strikingly on Hebrews 1:1-2: 'In giving us his Son, his only Word (for he possesses no other), he spoke everything to us at once in this sole Word – and he has no more to say... because what he spoke before to the prophets in parts, he has now spoken all at once by giving us the All Who is His Son. Any person questioning God or desiring some vision or revelation would be guilty not only of foolish behavior but also of offending him, by not fixing his eyes entirely upon Christ and by living with the desire for some other novelty.' (The ascent of Mount Carmel, 2, 22, 3-5). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 65)

COUNCIL OF FLORENCE (ECUMENICAL XVII)

No one living outside the Catholic Church, not even the Jews, can participate in eternal life

It firmly believes, professes, and proclaims that those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans, but also Jews and heretics and schismatics cannot become participants in eternal life, but will depart 'into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt 25:41), unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1351. Council of Florence. *Bull Cantata Domino*, February 4, 1442)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The old sacrifice in Jerusalem having ceased, in all places is offered the new sacrifice

Finally, if you insist, oh Jews, on distorting the meaning of prophetic words according to your own view, thus resisting the Son of God against your salvation; [...] if you wish to understand

things in this way, what will you say and how will you interpret the other Prophet (Mal 1:10-11) that cuts through such words, crying out with perfect clarity: 'I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand. For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts.' With so much clear evidence with what right then, do you object? [...] Certainly here you cannot deny that not only does He not accept a sacrifice from your hands, but also that you do not offer a sacrifice with your hands. For there exists only one place established by the law of the Lord, where he commanded that the sacrifices be offered by your hands, outside of which place he firmly prohibited it. Since such places were lost through fault, you do not dare to offer in other places the sacrifices that were only licit to offer there. [...] Then, do not think that just because you are not offering a sacrifice to Him, or due to the fact that he does not receive it from your hands, that sacrifices are no longer offered to God. [...] Open your eyes at last and see that, from the rising of the sun to its setting, the sacrifice of the Christians is offered not only in one place, as you had established, but in all places; and not to any god, but to the One who had foresaid this, the God of Israel. For which he also said in another place to his Church: 'And the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called' (Is 54:5). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Adversus Iudaeos*, IX, no.12-13)

When the Jews approach Christ, they shall no longer be abandoned

Therefore, the Prophet calls you to the light of the Lord when he said: 'O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.' 'You, o house of Jacob,' who He has called and chosen; not 'You,' who He has rejected: 'For you have rejected your people, the house of Jacob' (Is 2:5-6). Whosoever wishes to come from the house of Jacob will belong to house that is called, and set free from the one abandoned. In effect, the light of the Lord in which the people walk is that light of which the same Prophet said: 'I will give you as a light for

the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth” (Isa 49: 6). **To whom does he say this if not Christ? How has it been fulfilled if not in Christ? [...] Then ‘Draw near to him and be radiant’ (Ps 34:5) What does ‘Draw near to Him’ mean other than: ‘Believe’? Why then are you going elsewhere to draw near to him, when he is the rock that the prophet Daniel said would increase and become such a great mountain so as to fill the earth? (Dan 2:35) In the same way, those who say: ‘Come, let us climb the mountain of the Lord,’ are not trying to move out and reach any other place. Where they are, is where they climb; for a sacrifice is offered according to Melchizedek in all places. Likewise, another prophet also said: ‘The Lord [...] will famish all the gods of the earth and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations’ (Zeph 2:11). When, therefore, one says: ‘Draw near to him,’ one doesn’t say: prepare ships or beasts that they may carry your victims, or, walk from the farthest places unto the place where God accepts the sacrifices of your devotion. Rather it is said: Draw near to Him whom you have heard preached, draw near to him who is glorified before your eyes. You shall not tire as you walk, for you shall draw near to him from wherever you believe. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Adversus Iudaeos*, IX, no. 14)**

The Jews should be invited to conversion with love, resisting they shall continue as sinners

Dearest ones, independently of whether the Jews hear this with pleasure or with indignation; we, however, and to the extent that we may, must preach with love toward them. In no way should we proudly boast against the separated branches, rather, we must consider the grace of he who, with such mercy, is the root that supports us, (Rom 11:17-18); for it is not by being haughty, but by associating with the lowly that we speak, without insulting presumption, but rather with celebration and trembling (cf. Ps 2:11): ‘Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord’ (Is 2:5). For, ‘his name is great among the nations’ (Mal 1:11). **If they heard and listen, they will be among those to whom it was said: ‘Look to him, and be radiant; so your faces shall never be ashamed’ (Ps 34:5). If they hear and do not obey, if seeing, they becomes envious, they will be included among those of whom it was**

said: ‘The wicked man sees it and is angry; he gnashes his teeth and melts away’ (Ps 112:10). ‘But I,’ says the Church to Christ, ‘as a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever’ (Ps 52:8). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Adversus Iudaeos*, X, no. 15)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The Jews when be forgiven neither by circumcision nor by other deeds, but only by Baptism

‘For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins’ (Rom 11:27). **Not when they are circumcised, not when they sacrifice, not when they do the other deeds of the Law, but when they attain to the forgiveness of sins. If then this hath been promised, but has never yet happened in their case, nor have they ever enjoyed the remission of sins by baptism, certainly it will come to pass.** Hence he proceeds, ‘For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance’ (Rom 11:29). (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 19*, Letter to the Romans, no. 60)

Beloved, because of their ancestors, the virtue of the latter is useless to them till they believe

Nevertheless **God hath not even now cut short the calling of you,** but He waiteth for all the Gentiles that are to believe to come in, and then they also shall come. Then he makes another concession in their favor, by saying, ‘As regards divine election, **they are beloved for the sake of their fathers.**’ And what does this mean. **Insomuch as they are enemies, punishment is theirs: but insomuch as they are beloved, the virtue of their ancestors is useless to them, unless they believe.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 19*, Letter to the Romans, no. 60)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The final Coming of Christ is linked to the Recognition of the Messiah by all of Israel, of which a part is hardened in incredulity

The glorious Messiah’s coming is suspended at

every moment of history until his recognition by 'all Israel', for 'a hardening has come upon part of Israel' in their 'unbelief' toward Jesus. Saint Peter says to the Jews of Jerusalem after Pentecost: 'Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.' Saint Paul echoes him: For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead? **The 'full inclusion' of the Jews in the Messiah's salvation, in the wake of 'the full number of the Gentiles'**, will enable the People of God to achieve 'the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ', in which 'God may be all in all.' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 674)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

One should not persecute the Jews – meanwhile, the dead remain in death.

One should not persecute the Jews, or put them to death, nor even drive them away. Ask those familiar with the Holy Scriptures, what the Psalms prophesize about the Jews, and what the Church says: 'Slay them not, lest my people forget.' Indeed, the Jews are a living memorial for us of the Passion of Our Lord. For this motive, they now live scattered throughout the universe; and weeping the just punishment of so great a crime, wherever they be, they bear witness to our redemption. [...] However, 'they shall return at evening, and in His time, He will look upon them with benevolence' And, finally, when the plenitude of the nations is reunited, then as the Apostle says: 'Israel shall be saved' (Rom 11:26). Till then, he who dies 'remains in death.' (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Letter* 363, no. 6)

One should seek the conversion of the Jews, and not their persecution

Does the Church not progress more steadily by convincing the Jews of their errors and converting them to the faith, than if the latter were exterminated suddenly by a general massacre? Do you think the universal prayer

of the Church 'from the rising of the sun to its setting' for the perfidious Jews – so that the Lord God tear the veil from their hearts and have them go from their darkness to the light of truth – was randomly established? If one believed that the incredulous could not believe, it would be 'useless and ridiculous to pray for them.' But **with the eyes of mercy, consider that the Lord is compassionate toward them and repays their wickedness with goodness, and their hatred with love.** What then would become the words of the Psalmist: take care 'with killing them.' And, elsewhere: 'When all nations will be entered into the fold, it will be the turn of Israel to be saved.' Or, another: 'The Lord will rebuild Jerusalem and gather together the dispersed of Israel'? By chance do you wish to claim that the prophets were liars, and annul all of the treasures of the love and mercy of Jesus Christ? Your 'doctrine is not yours', but rather, that 'of your father', who 'sent you'. But I believe you to be satisfied in following your master. 'He was an assassin since the beginning,' a liar and the father of lies. What a monstrous belief! What infernal wisdom in opposition to the words of the prophets, in contradiction with the doctrine of the apostles and hostile to mercy and grace! What a shameful heresy! (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Letter*, 365, no. 2)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

By observing their rites, the Jews bear witness to our faith

Thus from the fact that the Jews observe their rites, which, of old, foreshadowed the truth of the faith which we hold, there follows this good – that our very enemies bear witness to our faith, and that our faith is represented in a figure, so to speak. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 10 a. 11)

IV – WHAT DID SAINT PAUL SAY IN THE CONTEXT OF ROMANS 11:29?

(We recommend that chapters 9-11 of the Letter to the Romans be read as it is impossible to include everything here)

SACRED SCRIPTURES

They did not fulfill the Law since they looked to works and not to Faith

What then shall we say? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have achieved it, that is, righteousness that comes from faith; **but that Israel, who pursued the law of righteousness, did not attain to that law? Why not? Because they did it not by faith, but as if it could be done by works. They stumbled over the stone that causes stumbling, as it is written: 'Behold, I am laying a stone in Zion that will make people stumble and a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him shall not be put to shame.'** (Rom 9:30-33)

It is undiscerning zeal to establish one's own righteousness and not submit to God

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God on their behalf is for salvation. I testify with regard to them that **they have zeal for God, but it is not discerning. For, in their unawareness of the righteousness that comes from God and their attempt to establish their own (righteousness), they did not submit to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for the justification of everyone who has faith.** (Rom 10:1-4)

A hardening of a part of Israel will last until the full number of gentiles enter, till then they will continue as enemies of God

I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers, so that you will not become wise (in) your own estimation: **a hardening has come upon Israel in part, until the full number of the Gentiles comes in, and thus all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The deliverer will come out of Zion, he will turn away godlessness from Jacob; and this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.'** In respect to the gospel, they are enemies on your account; but in respect to election, they are beloved because of the patriarchs. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you once disobeyed God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now disobeyed in order that, by virtue of the mercy shown to you, they too may

(now) receive mercy. **For God delivered all to disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all.** Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable are his judgments and how unsearchable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord or who has been his counselor?' 'Or who has given him anything that he may be repaid?' For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen. (Rom 11:25-36)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The blindness of the Jews was permitted for the good of the gentiles

First, with respect to the fall of particular Jews, when he says: a hardening has come upon Israel, not universally but upon a part: 'Blind the heart of this people' (Is 6:10). Secondly, he predicts the end of this blindness, saying: until the full number of the Gentiles come in to the faith, i.e., not only some Gentile nations as were then converted; but either in all or the greater part the Church would be established: 'The earth is the Lord's and all its fullness' (Ps 23:1) [...] It should be noted that **the word, until, can signify the cause of the blindness of the Jews. For God permitted them to be blinded, in order that the full number of the Gentiles come in. It can also designate the termination, i.e., that the blindness of the Jews will last up to the time when the full number of the Gentiles will come to the faith.** With this agrees his next statement, namely, and then, i.e., when the full number of the Gentiles has come in, all Israel will be saved, not some, as now, but universally all: 'I will save them by the Lord their God' (Hos 1:7); 'He will again have compassion upon us' (Mic 7:19). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, lectio 4, Rom. 11:25-32)

Mercy for the Jews will be in virtue of the New Covenant

Thirdly, he shows the manner of salvation when he says: **And this will be my covenant with them, a new one from me, when I take away their sins. For the old covenant did not remove sins, because 'it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins'** (Heb 10:4). Therefore, because the Old

Testament was imperfect, a new testament is promised to them: **'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah' (Jer 31:31) and it will have the power to remit sin through the blood of Christ:** 'This is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins' (Mt 26:28); 'He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea' (Mic 7:19). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, lectio 4, Rom. 11:25-32)

The enmity of the Jews toward the Gospel helped in the diffusion of the Gospel itself

As regards the gospel, which they resist, they are enemies for your sake, i.e., it has turned out to your benefit. Hence, it says in Lk (19:27): 'As for those enemies of mind, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me'; and in Jn (15:24): 'But now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.' **Or as regards the gospel means their enmity has helped the gospel, which has been spread everywhere by reason of such enmity:** 'In the word of truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing' (Col 1:5). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, lectio 4, Rom. 11:25-32)

The Jews will obtain mercy because of the promises made to their forefathers

But they are beloved by God for the sake of their forefathers as regards election, because **He chose their descendants on account of their forefathers' grace:** 'The Lord loved your fathers and chose their descendants after them' (Deut 10:15). This does not mean that the

merits established by the fathers were the cause of the eternal election of the descendants, but that God from all eternity chose the fathers and the sons in such a way that the children would obtain salvation on account of the fathers; **not as though the merits of the fathers were sufficient for the salvation of the sons, but through an outpouring of divine grace and mercy, the sons would be saved on account of the promises made to the fathers. [...]** Then when he says, For the gifts, he excludes an objection. **For someone might claim that even though the Jews were formerly beloved on account of their forefathers, nevertheless the hostility they exert against the gospel prevents them from being saved in the future. But the Apostle asserts that this is false,** saying: The gifts and call of God are irrevocable, i.e., without repentance. As if to say: That God gives something to certain ones or call certain ones is without repentance, because God does not change His mind: 'The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind' (Ps 110:4). However, this seems false, for the Lord says: 'It repenteth me that I made man.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, lectio 4, Rom 11:25-32)

God wishes that all be saved by his Mercy

God wishes all men to be saved by His mercy, in order that they be humbled by this fact and ascribe their salvation not to themselves but to God: 'Destruction is thy own, O Israel: thy help is only in me' (Hos 13:9); 'In order that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be made subject to God' (Rom 3:19). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, lectio 4, Rom 11:25-32)

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**Dear sister, our separated brethren should not be perceived as adversaries,
but rather recognized as brothers and sisters in faith**

‘There will be one flock, one shepherd’ (Jn 10:16)...This was Christ’s desire in leaving the mandate for the Apostles to ‘proclaim the gospel to every creature’ (Mk 16:15). However, throughout history, some sheep have gone astray from the flock and ‘quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic Church’ (Unitatis Redintegratio, no. 3), tearing apart the unity of the seamless tunic of Christ. The Catholic Church – universal and necessary for salvation – just as the Good Shepherd, doesn’t hesitate to accept back the sheep who wish to return to the unity of the flock, dialoguing with them. But, within this dialogue, may the Church cease to be Herself, hiding Her doctrine and the identity of Her faith from separated Christians, for the sake of a misinterpreted ecumenism? Is shamelessly holding cordial relations with those who uphold a pseudo feminine priesthood true ecumenism, or merely an accord which is obviously harmful to the faith? At the very least, doesn’t it constitute an untimely indifference with respect to the Catholic Episcopate, to speak of the ‘need to seek and promote unity in their dioceses, parishes and communities across the whole world,’ comparing it in a surreptitious manner to the feminine pseudo episcopate? Let’s remember a little of the Catholic teaching regarding these topics...

FRANCIS

Dear Dr. Jackelén, **dear sister**, dear friends,

I greet you cordially and I thank you for your kind words. Last year, with gratitude to God, we celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Ecumenism Unitatis Redintegratio, which is still for us the fundamental point of reference for the ecumenical efforts of the Catholic Church. This document made clear that ecumenism was henceforth to become a priority. It invited all Catholics to undertake the way of unity, in recognition of the signs of the times, so that division among Christians could be overcome. Such division is not only in opposition to the will of Christ, but is indeed a scandal in the world, as it damages the most sacred of duties: the preaching of the Gospel to every creature. In speaking of the ‘seamless robe of Christ,’ **the Decree expressed deep respect for and appreciation of our separated brethren, to whom, in our daily lives, we risk paying too little attention. They should not be perceived as adversaries or competitors, but rather recognized for what they are: brothers and sisters in faith. Catholics and Lutherans need to seek and promote unity in their dioceses, parishes and communities across the whole world. On the way towards full and visible unity in the faith, in sacramental life and in ecclesial ministry there remains much work still to be done.** But we can be certain that the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, will be always the light and strength of spiritual ecumenism and theological dialogue. [...] I would like, in addition, to express my gratitude for two things. **First of all, I wish to thank the Swedish Lutheran Church for welcoming so many South American migrants in the time of the dictatorships. This fraternal welcome made it possible to raise families. In the second place, I wish to thank you for the delicacy, dear sister, with which you mentioned my good friend, Pastor Anders Root; I shared the Chair of Spiritual Theology with him, and he helped me a great deal in my own spiritual life.** Thank you. (Address to Antje Jackelén and the delegation of the Evangelical-Lutheran church of Sweden, May 4, 2015)

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I – ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES DERIVED FROM THE REFORMATION DO NOT HAVE THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS. THE CHURCH MAY NOT ACCEPT WOMEN WITHIN THE HIERARCHY

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Ecclesial communities born of the Reformation do not have the Sacrament of Holy Orders

Ecclesial communities derived from the Reformation and separated from the Catholic Church, 'have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Holy Orders.' (*Unit. Redint.* 22). It is for this reason that Eucharistic intercommunion with these communities is not possible for the Catholic Church. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1400)

The ordination of women is not possible

The Lord Jesus chose men (*viri*) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry (cf. Mk 3:14-19; Lk 6:12-16, 1Tim 3:1-13, 2Tim 1:6, Titus 1:5-9, Saint Clement of Rome *Ad Cor.* 42, 4; 44, 3). The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible (cf. John Paul II, MD 26-27; CDF, Declaration *Inter insigniores*). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1577)

CODE OF CANON LAW

Sacred ordination is only valid for baptized males

A baptized male alone receives sacred ordination validly. (Code of Canon Law, can. 1024)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Women should keep silent in the churches

As in all the churches of the holy ones, women should keep silent in the churches, for they are not allowed to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. But if they want to learn anything, they should ask their husbands at home. For it is improper for a woman to speak in the church. (1Cor 14:33-35)

I do not permit women to teach

A woman must receive instruction silently and under complete control. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. She must be quiet. (1Tim 2:11-12)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Excommunication *latae sententiae* for the attempt of feminine 'priestly ordination'

In order to protect the nature and validity of the sacrament of order, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in virtue of the special faculty given by the supreme authority of the Church (cf. can. 30, Code of Canon Law), in the Ordinary Session of 19 December 2007, has decreed: Without prejudice to the prescript of can. 1378 of the Code of Canon Law, both the one who attempts to confer a sacred order on a woman, and the woman who attempts to receive a sacred order, incur an excommunication *latae sententiae* reserved to the Apostolic See. If, in fact, the one who attempts to confer a sacred order on a woman, or the woman who attempts to receive a sacred order, is one of Christ's faithful subject to the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, that person, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 1443 of the same Code, is to be punished with a major excommunication, the remission of which is also reserved to the Apostolic See (cf. can. 1423, Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *General Decree regarding the delict attempted sacred ordination of a woman*, December 19, 2007)

The Church does not consider Herself authorized to accept women through priestly ordination

For some years now various Christian communities stemming from the sixteenth-century Reformation or of later origin have been admitting women to the pastoral office on a par with men. This initiative has led to petitions and writings by members of these communities and similar groups, directed towards making this admission a general thing; it has also led to contrary reactions. This therefore constitutes an ecumenical problem, and the Catholic Church must make her thinking known on it, all the more because in various sectors of opinion the question has been asked whether she too could not modify her discipline and admit women to priestly ordination. A number of Catholic theologians have even posed this question publicly, evoking studies not only in the sphere of exegesis, patrology and Church history but also in the field of the history of institutions and customs, of sociology and of psychology. The various arguments capable of clarifying this important problem have been submitted to a critical examination. As we are dealing with a debate which classical theology scarcely touched upon, the current argumentation runs the risk of neglecting essential elements. For these reasons, in execution of a mandate received from the Holy Father and echoing the declaration which he himself made in his letter of 30 November 1975, the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith judges it necessary to recall that the Church, in fidelity to the example of the Lord, does not consider herself authorized to admit women to priestly ordination. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Inter Insigniores*, Introduction, October 15, 1976)

The Church has never accepted the priestly or episcopal ordination of women

The Catholic Church has never felt that priestly or episcopal ordination can be validly conferred on women. A few heretical sects in the first centuries, especially Gnostic ones, entrusted the exercise of the priestly ministry to women: This innovation was immediately noted and condemned by the Fathers, who considered it as unacceptable in the Church.

It is true that in the writings of the Fathers, one will find the undeniable influence of prejudices unfavourable to woman, but nevertheless, it should be noted that these prejudices had hardly any influences on their pastoral activity, and still less on their spiritual direction. But over and above these considerations inspired by the spirit of the times, one finds expressed – especially in the canonical documents of the Antiochan and Egyptian traditions – this essential reason, namely, that by calling only men to the priestly Order and ministry in its true sense, the Church intends to remain faithful to the type of ordained ministry willed by the Lord Jesus Christ and carefully maintained by the Apostles. The same conviction animates medieval theology, even if the Scholastic doctors, in their desire to clarify by reason the data of faith, often present arguments on this point that modern thought would have difficulty in admitting, or would even rightly reject. Since that period and up till our own time, it can be said that the question has not been raised again for the practice has enjoyed peaceful and universal acceptance. The Church's tradition in the matter has thus been so firm in the course of the centuries that the Magisterium has not felt the need to intervene in order to formulate a principle which was not attacked, or to defend a law which was not challenged. But each time that this tradition had the occasion to manifest itself, it witnessed to the Church's desire to conform to the model left her by the Lord. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Inter Insigniores*, no. 1, October 15, 1976)

Could the Church today depart from the attitude of Jesus and the Apostles?

Jesus Christ did not call any women to become part of the Twelve. If he acted in this way, it was not in order to conform to the customs of his time, for his attitude towards women was quite different from that of his milieu, and he deliberately and courageously broke with it. [...] Could the Church today depart from this attitude of Jesus and the Apostles, which has been considered as normative by the whole of tradition up to our own day? Various arguments have been put forward in favour of a positive reply to this question, and these must now be examined.

It has been claimed in particular that the attitude of Jesus and the Apostles is explained by the influence of their milieu and their times. It is said that, if Jesus did not entrust to women and not even to his Mother a ministry assimilating them to the Twelve, this was because historical circumstances did not permit him to do so. No one however has ever proved- and it is clearly impossible to prove- that this attitude is inspired only by social and cultural reasons. As we have seen, and examination of the Gospels shows on the contrary that Jesus broke with the prejudices of his time, by widely contravening the discriminations practiced with regard to women. One therefore cannot maintain that, by not calling women to enter the group of the Apostles, Jesus was simply letting himself be guided by reasons of expediency. For all the more reason, social and cultural conditioning did not hold back the Apostles working in the Greek milieu, where the same forms of discrimination did not exist. Another objection is based upon the transitory character that one claims to see today in some of the prescriptions of Saint Paul concerning women, and upon the difficulties that some aspects of his teaching raise in this regard. But it must be noted that these ordinances, probably inspired by the customs of the period, concern scarcely more than disciplinary practices of minor importance, such as the obligation imposed upon women to wear a veil on their head (1Cor 11:2-16); such requirements no longer have a normative value. However, the Apostle's forbidding of women to speak in the assemblies (1Cor 14:34-35; 1Tim 2:12) is of a different nature, and exegetes define its meaning in this way: Paul in no way opposes the right, which he elsewhere recognizes as possessed by women, to prophesy in the assembly (1Cor 11:15); the prohibition solely concerns the official function of teaching in the Christian assembly. For Saint Paul this prescription is bound up with the divine plan of creation (1Cor 11:7; Gen 2:18-24): it would be difficult to see in it the expression of a cultural fact. Nor should it be forgotten that we owe to Saint Paul one of the most vigorous texts in the New Testament on the fundamental equality of men and women, as children of God in Christ (Gal 3:28). Therefore there is no reason for accusing him of prejudices against women, when we note the trust that

he shows towards them and the collaboration that he asks of them in his apostolate. [...] Adaptations to civilizations and times therefore cannot abolish on essential points, the sacramental reference to constitutive events of Christianity and to Christ himself. In the final analysis it is the Church through the voice of the Magisterium, that, in these various domains, decides what can change and what must remain immutable. When she judges she cannot accept certain changes, it is because she knows she is bound by Christ's manner of acting. Her attitude, despite appearances, is therefore not one of archaism but of fidelity: it can be truly understood only in this light. The Church makes pronouncements in virtue of the Lord's promise and the presence of the Holy Spirit, in order to proclaim better the mystery of Christ and to safeguard and manifest the whole of its rich content. The practice of the Church therefore has a normative character: in the fact of conferring priestly ordination only on men, it is a question of unbroken tradition throughout the history of the Church, universal in the East and in the West, and alert to repress abuses immediately. This norm, based on Christ's example, has been and is still observed because it is considered to conform to God's plan for his Church. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Inter Insigniores*, no.2, 4, October 15, 1976)

Women can play a role within ecclesial life without being priests

In entrusting his mother to the Apostle John, Jesus on the Cross invites his Church to learn from Mary the secret of the love that is victorious. Far from giving the Church an identity based on an historically conditioned model of femininity, the reference to Mary, with her dispositions of listening, welcoming, humility, faithfulness, praise and waiting, places the Church in continuity with the spiritual history of Israel. In Jesus and through him, these attributes become the vocation of every baptized Christian. [...] In this way, women play a role of maximum importance in the Church's life by recalling these dispositions to all the baptized and contributing in a unique way to showing the true face of the Church, spouse of Christ and mother of believers. In this perspective one understands how the reservation of priestly

ordination solely to men does not hamper in any way women's access to the heart of Christian life. Women are called to be unique examples and witnesses for all Christians of how the Bride is to respond in love to the love of the Bridegroom. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops on the collaboration of men and women in the Church and in the world*, no. 16, July 31, 2004)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Among the faithful, the Lord constitutes only some as ministers

The Lord Jesus, 'whom the Father has sent into the world' (Jn 10:36) has made his whole Mystical Body a sharer in the anointing of the Spirit with which he himself is anointed. In him all the faithful are made a holy and royal priesthood; they offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, and they proclaim the perfections of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light. Therefore, there is no member who does not have a part in the mission of the whole Body; but each one ought to hallow Jesus in his heart, and in the spirit of prophecy bear witness to Jesus. The same Lord, however, has established ministers among his faithful to unite them together in one body in which, 'not all the members have the same function' (Rom 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful are able by the sacred power of orders to offer sacrifice and to forgive sins, and they perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ. Therefore, having sent the apostles just as he himself been sent by the Father, Christ, through the apostles themselves, made their successors, the bishops, sharers in his consecration and mission. The office of their ministry has been handed down, in a lesser degree indeed, to the priests. Established in the order of the priesthood they can be co-workers of the episcopal order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission entrusted to priests by Christ. The office of priests, since it is connected with the episcopal order, also, in its own degree, shares the authority by which Christ builds up, sanctifies and rules his Body. Wherefore the priesthood, while indeed it presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, is conferred by that special sacrament; through it priests, by

the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and are conformed to Christ the Priest in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head. (Vatican Council II. *Decree *Presbyterorum ordinis**, no. 2, December 7, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

Christ entrusted the task of being an 'icon' of His countenance through the ministerial priesthood only to men

In this perspective of 'service' – which, when it is carried out with freedom, reciprocity and love, expresses the truly 'royal' nature of mankind – one can also appreciate that the presence of a certain diversity of roles is in no way prejudicial to women, provided that this diversity is not the result of an arbitrary imposition, but is rather an expression of what is specific to being male and female. This issue also has a particular application within the Church. If Christ – by his free and sovereign choice, clearly attested to by the Gospel and by the Church's constant Tradition – entrusted only to men the task of being an 'icon' of his countenance as 'shepherd' and 'bridegroom' of the Church through the exercise of the ministerial priesthood, this in no way detracts from the role of women, or for that matter from the role of the other members of the Church who are not ordained to the sacred ministry, since all share equally in the dignity proper to the 'common priesthood' based on Baptism. These role distinctions should not be viewed in accordance with the criteria of functionality typical in human societies. Rather they must be understood according to the particular criteria of the sacramental economy, i.e. the economy of 'signs' which God freely chooses in order to become present in the midst of humanity. (John Paul II. *Letter to women*, no. 11, June 29, 1995)

Definitive pronouncement regarding the impossibility of the priestly ordination of women

When the question of the ordination of women arose in the Anglican Communion, Pope Paul VI, out of fidelity to his office of safeguarding the Apostolic Tradition, and

also with a view to removing a new obstacle placed in the way of Christian unity, reminded Anglicans of the position of the Catholic Church: ‘She holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include: the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God’s plan for his Church’ (Paul VI, Response to the Letter of His Grace the Most Reverend Dr. F.D. Coggan, Archbishop of Canterbury, concerning the Ordination of Women to the Priesthood, November 30, 1975). [...] Although the teaching that priestly ordination is to be reserved to men alone has been preserved by the constant and universal Tradition of the Church and firmly taught by the Magisterium in its more recent documents, at the present time in some places it is nonetheless considered still open to debate, or the Church’s judgment that women are not to be admitted to ordination is considered to have a merely disciplinary force. Wherefore, in order that all doubt may be removed regarding a matter of great importance, a matter which pertains to the Church’s divine constitution itself, in virtue of my ministry of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32) I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, no. 1, 4, May 22, 1994)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

That the Church may not ordain women belongs to the deposit of the faith

Dubium: Whether the teaching that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women, which is presented in the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* to be held definitively, is to be understood as belonging to the deposit of faith.

Responsum: Affirmative.

This teaching requires definitive assent, since, founded on the written Word of God, and from the beginning constantly preserved and applied in the Tradition of the Church, it has been set forth infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium (cf. Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* 25, 2). Thus, in the present circumstances, the Roman Pontiff, exercising his proper office of confirming the brethren (cf. Lk 22:32), has handed on this same teaching by a formal declaration, explicitly stating what is to be held always, everywhere, and by all, as belonging to the deposit of the faith. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Responsum ad propositum dubium concerning the teaching contained in the Apostolic letter Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, October 28, 1995)

There is no contradiction between the dignity of women and exclusively masculine priesthood

But in any case it cannot be forgotten that the Church teaches, as an absolutely fundamental truth of Christian anthropology, the equal personal dignity of men and women, and the necessity of overcoming and doing away with ‘every type of discrimination regarding fundamental rights’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, 29). It is in the light of this truth that one can seek to understand better the teaching that women cannot receive priestly ordination. A correct theology can prescind neither from one nor from the other of these doctrines, but must hold the two together; only thus will it be able to deepen our comprehension of God’s plan regarding woman and regarding the priesthood – and hence, regarding the mission of woman in the Church. If however, perhaps by allowing oneself to be conditioned too much by the ways and spirit of the age, one should assert that a contradiction exists between these two truths, the way of progress in the intelligence of the faith would be lost. [...] Furthermore, to understand that this teaching implies no injustice or discrimination against women, one has to consider the nature of the ministerial priesthood itself, which is a service and not a position of privilege or human power over others. Whoever, man or woman, conceives of the priesthood in terms of personal affirmation, as a goal or point of departure in a career of human success, is

profoundly mistaken, for the true meaning of Christian priesthood, whether it be the common priesthood of the faithful or, in a most special way, the ministerial priesthood, can only be found in the sacrifice of one's own being in union with Christ, in service of the brethren. Priestly ministry constitutes neither the universal ideal nor, even less, the goal of Christian life. In this connection, it is helpful to recall once again that 'the only higher gift, which can and must be desired, is charity (cf. 1Cor 12-13)' (*Inter Insigniores*, VI). [...] Here, however, we find ourselves before the essential interdependence of Holy Scripture and Tradition, an interdependence which makes of these two forms of the transmission of the Gospel an unbreakable unity with the Magisterium, which is an integral part of Tradition and is entrusted with the authentic interpretation of the Word of God, written and handed down (*Dei Verbum*, 9 and 10). **In the specific case of priestly ordination, the successors of the Apostles have always observed the norm of conferring it only on men, and the Magisterium, assisted by the Holy Spirit, teaches us that this did not occur by chance, habitual repetition, subjection to sociological conditioning, or even less because of some imaginary inferiority of women; but rather because 'the Church has always acknowledged as a perennial norm her Lord's way of acting in choosing the twelve men whom he made the foundation of his Church'** (Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* no. 2). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Concerning the reply of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the teaching contained in the Apostolic letter Ordinatio sacerdotalis*, October 28, 1995)

JOHN PAUL II

When He called only men as His apostles, Christ exercised the same freedom with which He emphasized the dignity of women

Against the broad background of the 'great mystery' expressed in the spousal relationship between Christ and the Church, it is possible to understand adequately the calling of the 'Twelve'. **In calling only men as his Apostles, Christ acted in a completely free and sovereign manner. In doing so, he exercised**

the same freedom with which, in all his behavior, he emphasized the dignity and the vocation of women, without conforming to the prevailing customs and to the traditions sanctioned by the legislation of the time. Consequently, the assumption that he called men to be apostles in order to conform with the widespread mentality of his times, does not at all correspond to Christ's way of acting. 'Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men' (Mt 22:16). These words fully characterize Jesus of Nazareth's behavior. Here one also finds an explanation for the calling of the 'Twelve'. They are with Christ at the Last Supper. They alone receive the sacramental charge, 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Lk 22:19, 1Cor 11:24), which is joined to the institution of the Eucharist. On Easter Sunday night they receive the Holy Spirit for the forgiveness of sins: 'Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained' (Jn 20:23). [...] **Since Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, linked it in such an explicit way to the priestly service of the Apostles, it is legitimate to conclude that he thereby wished to express the relationship between man and woman, between what is 'feminine' and what is 'masculine'. It is a relationship willed by God both in the mystery of creation and in the mystery of Redemption. It is the Eucharist above all that expresses the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom towards the Church the Bride. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts 'in persona Christi', is performed by a man.** This explanation confirms the teaching of the Declaration *Inter Insigniores*, published at the behest of Paul VI in response to the question concerning the admission of women to the ministerial priesthood. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Mulieris dignitatem* no. 26, August 15, 1988)

The vocation of women in the Church

The awareness that women with their own gifts and tasks have their own specific vocation, has increased and been deepened in the years following the Council and has found its fundamental inspiration in the Gospel and the Church's history. In fact, for the believer the

Gospel, namely, the word and example of Jesus Christ, remains the necessary and decisive point of reference. In no other moment in history is this fact more fruitful and innovative. **Though not called to the apostolate of the Twelve, and thereby, to the ministerial priesthood, many women, nevertheless, accompanied Jesus in his ministry and assisted the group of Apostles (cf. Lk 8:2-3), were present at the foot of the Cross (cf. Lk 23:49), assisted at the burial of Christ (cf. Lk 23:55) received and transmitted the message of resurrection on Easter morn (cf. Lk 24:1-10), and prayed with the apostles in the Cenacle awaiting Pentecost (cf. Acts 1:14). From the evidence of the Gospel, the Church at its origin detached herself from the culture of the time and called women to tasks connected with spreading the gospel. In his letters the Apostle Paul even cites by name a great number of women for their various functions in service of the primitive Christian community (cf. Rom 16:1-15, Phil 4:2-3, Col 4:15 and 1Cor 11:5; 1Tim 5:16). 'If the witness of the Apostles founds the Church', stated Paul VI, 'the witness of women contributes greatly towards nourishing the faith of Christian communities'. Both in her earliest days and in her successive development the Church, albeit in different ways and with diverse emphases, has always known women who have exercised an oftentimes decisive role in the Church herself and accomplished tasks of considerable value on her behalf. History is marked by grand works, quite often lowly and hidden, but not for this reason any less decisive to the growth and the holiness of the Church. It is necessary that this history continue, indeed that it be expanded and intensified in the face of the growing and widespread awareness of the personal dignity of woman and her vocation, particularly in light of the urgency of a 're-evangelization' and a major effort towards 'humanizing' social relations. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Christifideles laici*, no. 49, December 30, 1988)**

II – ECUMENISM AND THE UNIQUENESS OF THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The pastoral attitude of the bishops in relating with members of Christian Churches

As regards the manner and method of proceeding in this work, the Bishops themselves will make regulations as to what is to be done and what is to be avoided, and shall see that these are observed by all. **They shall also be on guard lest, on the false pretext that more attention should be paid to the points on which we agree than to those on which we differ, a dangerous indifferentism be encouraged, especially among persons whose training in theology is not deep and whose practice of their faith is not very strong. For care must be taken lest, in the so-called 'irenic' spirit of today, through comparative study and the vain desire for a progressively closer mutual approach among the various professions of faith, Catholic doctrine – either in its; dogmas or in the truths which are connected with them – be so conformed or in a way adapted to the doctrines of dissident sects, that the purity of Catholic doctrine be impaired, or its genuine and certain meaning be obscured. Also they must restrain that dangerous manner of speaking which generates false opinions and fallacious hopes incapable of realization; for example, to the effect that the teachings of the Encyclicals of the Roman Pontiffs on the return of dissidents to the Church, on the constitution of the Church, on the Mystical Body of Christ, should not be given too much importance seeing that they are not all matters of faith, or, what is worse, that in matters of dogma even the Catholic Church has not yet attained the fullness of Christ, but can still be perfected from outside. They shall take particular care and shall firmly insist that, in going over the history of the Reformation and the Reformers the defects of Catholics be not so exaggerated and the faults of the Reformers be so dissimulated, or that things which are rather accidental be not so emphasized, that what is most essential, namely the defection from the Catholic faith, be scarcely any longer seen or felt. Finally, they shall take precautions**

lest, through an excessive and false external activity, or through imprudence and an excited manner of proceeding, the end in view be rather harmed than served. **Therefore the whole and entire Catholic doctrine is to be presented and explained: by no means is it permitted to pass over in silence or to veil in ambiguous terms the Catholic truth** regarding the nature and way of justification, the constitution of the Church, the primacy of jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff, and the only true union by the return of the dissidents to the one true Church of Christ. It should be made clear to them that, in returning to the Church, they will lose nothing of that good which by the grace of God has hitherto been implanted in them, but that it will rather be supplemented and completed by their return. However, one should not speak of this in such a way that they will imagine that in returning to the Church they are bringing to it something substantial which it has hitherto lacked. **It will be necessary to say these things clearly and openly, first because it is the truth that they themselves are seeking, and moreover because outside the truth no true union can ever be attained.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Ecclesia Catholica of the Holy Office*, no. 2, December 20, 1949)

The authentic ecumenical task requires complete clarity in the presentation of the faith

Finally, there have been some commentaries on the Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* which have suggested that the document constitutes an additional and inopportune obstacle on the already difficult path of ecumenism. In this regard, it should not be forgotten that according to both the letter and the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (cf. *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 11), the authentic ecumenical task, to which the Catholic Church is unequivocally and permanently committed, requires complete sincerity and clarity in the presentation of one's own faith. Furthermore, it should be noted that the doctrine reaffirmed by the Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* cannot but further the pursuit of full communion with the Orthodox Churches which, in fidelity to Tradition, have maintained and continue to maintain the same teaching. The singular originality of the Church and of the

priestly ministry within the Church requires a precise clarity of criteria. Concretely, one must never lose sight of the fact that the Church does not find the source of her faith and her constitutive structure in the principles of the social order of any historical period. **While attentive to the world in which she lives and for whose salvation she labors, the Church is conscious of being the bearer of a higher fidelity to which she is bound. It is a question of a radical faithfulness to the Word of God which she has received from Christ who established her to last until the end of the ages.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Concerning the reply of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith on the teaching contained in the Apostolic letter *Ordinatio sacerdotalis**, October 28, 1995)

Relativistic theories seek to justify religious pluralism, not only de facto but also de iure

The Church's constant missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only de facto but also de iure (or in principle). As a consequence, it is held that certain truths have been superseded; for example, the definitive and complete character of the revelation of Jesus Christ, the nature of Christian faith as compared with that of belief in other religions, the inspired nature of the books of Sacred Scripture, the personal unity between the Eternal Word and Jesus of Nazareth, the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit, the unicity and salvific universality of the mystery of Jesus Christ, the universal salvific mediation of the Church, the inseparability – while recognizing the distinction – of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Christ, and the Church, and the subsistence of the one Church of Christ in the Catholic Church. The roots of these problems are to be found in certain presuppositions of both a philosophical and theological nature, which hinder the understanding and acceptance of the revealed truth. Some of these can be mentioned: the conviction of the elusiveness and inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian revelation; **relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what is true for some would not be true for others;**

the radical opposition posited between the logical mentality of the West and the symbolic mentality of the East; the subjectivism which, by regarding reason as the only source of knowledge, becomes incapable of raising its 'gaze to the heights, not daring to rise to the truth of being; the difficulty in understanding and accepting the presence of definitive and eschatological events in history; the metaphysical emptying of the historical incarnation of the Eternal Logos, reduced to a mere appearing of God in history; the eclecticism of those who, in theological research, uncritically absorb ideas from a variety of philosophical and theological contexts without regard for consistency, systematic connection, or compatibility with Christian truth; finally, the tendency to read and to interpret Sacred Scripture outside the Tradition and Magisterium of the Church. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 4, August 6, 2000)

A truth of faith that must be firmly believed: the unicity of the Church founded by Christ

The Lord Jesus, the only Saviour, did not only establish a simple community of disciples, but constituted the Church as a salvific mystery: he himself is in the Church and the Church is in him (cf. Jn 15:1ff., Gal 3:28, Eph 4:15-16, Acts 9:5). Therefore, the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery belongs also to the Church, inseparably united to her Lord. Indeed, Jesus Christ continues his presence and his work of salvation in the Church and by means of the Church (cf. Col 1:24-27), which is his body (cf. 1Cor 12:12-13, 27, Col 1:18). And thus, just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too Christ and the Church can neither be confused nor separated, and constitute a single 'whole Christ'. This same inseparability is also expressed in the New Testament by the analogy of the Church as the Bride of Christ (cf. 2Cor 11:2, Eph 5:25-29, Rev 21:2,9). Therefore, in connection with the unicity and universality of the salvific mediation of Jesus Christ, the unicity of the Church founded by him must be firmly believed as a truth of Catholic faith. Just as there is one Christ, so there exists a single body of Christ, a single Bride of Christ: 'a single Catholic and apostolic Church.'

Furthermore, the promises of the Lord that he would not abandon his Church (cf. Mt 16:18, 28:20) and that he would guide her by his Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13) mean, according to Catholic faith, that the unicity and the unity of the Church – like everything that belongs to the Church's integrity – will never be lacking. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 16, August 6, 2000)

Ecclesial Christian Communities that have not conserved the valid Episcopate may not be truly considered a Church

Therefore, there exists a single Church of Christ, which subsists in the Catholic Church, governed by the Successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him. The Churches which, while not existing in perfect communion with the Catholic Church, remain united to her by means of the closest bonds, that is, by apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist, are true particular Churches. Therefore, the Church of Christ is present and operative also in these Churches, even though they lack full communion with the Catholic Church, since they do not accept the Catholic doctrine of the Primacy, which, according to the will of God, the Bishop of Rome objectively has and exercises over the entire Church. On the other hand, the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 17, August 6, 2000)

PAUL VI

The message of Christ is the truth and admits neither indifference nor syncretism

Such an exhortation seems to us to be of capital importance, for the presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is indeed necessary. It is unique. It

cannot be replaced. It does not permit either indifference, syncretism or accommodation. It is a question of people's salvation. It is the beauty of the Revelation that it represents. It brings with it a wisdom that is not of this world. It is able to stir up by itself faith – faith that rests on the power of God. **It is truth.** It merits having the apostle consecrate to it all his time and all his energies, and to sacrifice for it, if necessary, his own life. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 5, December 8, 1975)

The danger of dialogue...it should not weaken our attachment to our faith

But the danger remains. Indeed, the worker in the apostolate is under constant fire. **The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth. Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith. Our apostolate must not make vague compromises concerning the principles which regulate and govern the profession of the Christian faith both in theory and in practice. An immoderate desire to make peace and sink differences at all costs (irenism and syncretism) is ultimately nothing more than skepticism about the power and content of the Word of God which we desire to preach.** The effective apostle is the man who is completely faithful to Christ's teaching. He alone can remain unaffected by the errors of the world around him, the man who lives his Christian life to the full. (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam Suam*, no. 88, August 6, 1964)

JOHN PAUL II

The proclaiming of Christ and interreligious dialogue are not identical or interchangeable.

In the light of the economy of salvation, **the Church sees no conflict between proclaiming Christ and engaging in interreligious dialogue. Instead, she feels the need to link the two in the context of her mission ad gentes. These two elements must maintain both their intimate connection and their distinctiveness; therefore they should not be confused, manipulated or regarded as identical, as though they were interchangeable.**

[...] Dialogue should be conducted and implemented with the conviction that **the Church is the ordinary means of salvation and that she alone possesses the fullness of the means of salvation** (Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 3; Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 7). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris Missio*, no. 55, December 7, 1990)

Ecumenical dialogue should call to conversion, announcing the Catholic faith with clarity – all forms of facile 'agreement' must be absolutely avoided

Here once again the Council proves helpful. It can be said that the entire Decree on Ecumenism is permeated by the spirit of conversion. **In the Document, ecumenical dialogue takes on a specific characteristic; it becomes a 'dialogue of conversion', and thus, in the words of Pope Paul VI, an authentic 'dialogue of salvation'.** Dialogue cannot take place merely on a horizontal level, being restricted to meetings, exchanges of points of view or even the sharing of gifts proper to each Community. It has also a primarily vertical thrust, directed towards the One who, as the Redeemer of the world and the Lord of history, is himself our **Reconciliation.** This vertical aspect of dialogue lies in our acknowledgment, jointly and to each other, that we are men and women who have sinned. It is precisely this acknowledgment which creates in brothers and sisters living in Communities not in full communion with one another that interior space where Christ, the source of the Church's unity, can effectively act, with all the power of his Spirit, the Paraclete. [...] **With regard to the study of areas of disagreement, the Council requires that the whole body of doctrine be clearly presented. At the same time, it asks that the manner and method of expounding the Catholic faith should not be a hindrance to dialogue with our brothers and sisters. Certainly it is possible to profess one's faith and to explain its teaching in a way that is correct, fair and understandable, and which at the same time takes into account both the way of thinking and the actual historical experiences of the other party. Full communion of course will have to come about through the acceptance of the whole truth into which the Holy Spirit**

guides Christ's disciples. Hence all forms of reductionism or facile 'agreement' must be absolutely avoided. Serious questions must be resolved, for if not, they will reappear at another time, either in the same terms or in a different guise. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ut unum sint*, no. 35-36, May 25, 1995)

BENEDICT XVI

Ecumenical dialogue must not lead to indifferentism and false irenism

The coherence of the ecumenical endeavour with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and with the entire Tradition, has been one of the areas to which the Congregation has always paid attention, in collaboration with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. Today we can note the many good fruit yielded by ecumenical dialogue. However, we must also recognize that the risk of a false irenism and of indifferentism – totally foreign to the thinking of the Second Vatican Council – demands our vigilance. This indifferentism is caused by the increasingly widespread opinion that truth is not accessible to man; hence it is necessary to limit oneself to finding rules for a praxis that can better the world. And like this, faith becomes substituted by a moralism without deep foundations. The centre of true ecumenism is, on the contrary, the faith in which the human being finds the truth which is revealed in the Word of God. Without faith the entire ecumenical movement would be reduced to a form of 'social contract' to which to adhere out of common interest, a 'praxeology', in order to create a better world. The logic of the Second Vatican Council is quite different: the sincere search for the full unity of all Christians is a dynamic inspired by the Word of God, by the divine Truth who speaks to us in this word. **The crucial problem which marks ecumenical dialogue transversally is therefore the question of the structure of revelation – the relationship between Sacred Scripture, the living Tradition in Holy Church and the Ministry of the Successors of the Apostles as a witness of true faith. And in this case the problem of ecclesiology which is part of this problem is implicit: how God's truth reaches us. Fundamental here is the discernment between Tradition with**

a capital 'T' and traditions. (Benedict XVI. *Address to participants in the plenary meeting of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith*, January 27, 2012)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

Dialogue between religions cannot in any way pledge itself to syncretism

We cannot, however, forget the transcendence of the Gospel in relation to all human cultures in which the Christian faith has the vocation to root itself and come to fruition according to all its potentialities. **However great the respect should be for what is true and holy in the cultural heritage of a people, this attitude does not demand that one should lend an absolute character to this cultural heritage. No one can forget that, from the beginning, the Gospel was a 'scandal for the Jews and foolishness for the pagans'. Inculturation which borrows the way of dialogue between religions cannot in any way pledge itself to syncretism.** (International Theological Commission. *Faith and Inculturation*, no. 14, 1988)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Church: God's only flock like a standard lifted high for the nations to see

In order to establish this His holy Church everywhere in the world till the end of time, Christ entrusted to the College of the Twelve the task of teaching, ruling and sanctifying. Among their number He selected Peter, and after his confession of faith determined that on him He would build His Church. Also to Peter He promised the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and after His profession of love, entrusted all His sheep to him to be confirmed in faith and shepherded in perfect unity. Christ Jesus Himself was forever to remain the chief cornerstone and shepherd of our souls. Jesus Christ, then, willed that the apostles and their successors – the bishops with Peter's successor at their head – should preach the Gospel faithfully, administer the sacraments, and rule the Church in love. It is thus, under the action of the Holy Spirit, that Christ wills His people to increase, and He perfects His people's

fellowship in unity: in their confessing the one faith, celebrating divine worship in common, and keeping the fraternal harmony of the family of God. **The Church, then, is God's only flock; it is like a standard lifted high for the nations to see it: for it serves all mankind through the Gospel of peace as it makes its pilgrim way in hope toward the goal of the fatherland above. This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church, in Christ and through Christ, the Holy Spirit energizing its various functions. It is a mystery that finds its highest exemplar and source in the unity of the Persons of the Trinity: the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, one God.** (Vatican Council II. *Decree on ecumenism Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 2, November 21, 1964)

The separated brethren are not blessed with that unity which Christ wished to bestow on His Church

Even in the beginnings of this one and only Church of God there arose certain rifts, which the Apostle strongly condemned. But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions made their appearance and quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic Church – for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. The children who are born into these Communities and who grow up believing in Christ cannot be accused of the sin involved in the separation, and the Catholic Church embraces upon them as brothers, with respect and affection. For men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church – whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church – do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles. But even in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ's body, and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church. [...] Nevertheless, **our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as Communities and Churches,**

are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those who through Him were born again into one body, and with Him quickened to newness of life – that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is 'the all-embracing means of salvation,' that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation. We believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, in order to establish the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. (Vatican Council II. *Decree on ecumenism Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 3, November 21, 1964)

Nothing is as foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenicism

The way and method in which the Catholic faith is expressed should never become an obstacle to dialogue with our brethren. It is, of course, essential that the doctrine should be clearly presented in its entirety. Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenicism, in which the purity of Catholic doctrine suffers loss and its genuine and certain meaning is clouded. At the same time, the Catholic faith must be explained more profoundly and precisely, in such a way and in such terms as our separated brethren can also really understand. Moreover, in ecumenical dialogue, Catholic theologians standing fast by the teaching of the Church and investigating the divine mysteries with the separated brethren must proceed with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility. When comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a 'hierarchy' of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith. (Vatican Council II. *Decree on ecumenism Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 11, November 21, 1964)

There are significant differences between these Churches and ecclesial Communities and the Catholic Church

It must however be admitted that in these Churches and ecclesial Communities there

exist important differences from the Catholic Church, not only of a historical, sociological, psychological and cultural character, but especially in the interpretation of revealed truth. (Vatican Council II. *Decree on ecumenism Unitatis redintegratio*, no. 19, November 21, 1964)

The Catholic Church was made necessary for salvation by Christ

This Sacred Council wishes to turn its attention firstly to the Catholic faithful. Basing itself upon Sacred Scripture and Tradition, it teaches that **the Church, now sojourning on earth as an exile, is necessary for salvation.** Christ, present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one Mediator and the unique way of salvation. In explicit terms He Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. **Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved.** They are fully incorporated in the society of the Church who, possessing the Spirit of Christ accept her entire system and all the means of salvation given to her, and are united with her as part of her visible bodily structure and through her with Christ, who rules her through the Supreme Pontiff and the bishops. The bonds which bind men to the Church in a visible way are profession of faith, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical government and communion. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 14, November 21, 1964)

The one true religion subsists in the Catholic Church

First, the council professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness. **We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men.** Thus He spoke to the Apostles: 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the

Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined upon you' (Mt 28: 19-20). On their part, all men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, and to embrace the truth they come to know, and to hold fast to it. This Vatican Council likewise professes its belief that it is upon the human conscience that these obligations fall and exert their binding force. **The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power.** Religious freedom, in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society. **Therefore it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.** (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Dignitatis humanae*, no. 1, December 7, 1965)

The purpose of missionary activity consists in attracting all people to the Church of Christ

'Go into the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe, shall be condemned' (Mk 16:15ff.). **Whence the duty that lies on the Church of spreading the faith and the salvation of Christ, not only in virtue of the express command which was inherited from the Apostles by the order of bishops, assisted by the priests, together with the successor of Peter and supreme shepherd of the Church, but also in virtue of that life which flows from Christ into His members;** 'From Him the whole body, being closely joined and knit together through every joint of the system, according to the functioning in due measure of each single part, derives its increase to the building up of itself in love' (Eph. 4:16). **The mission of the Church, therefore, is fulfilled by that activity which makes her, obeying the command of Christ and influenced by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit, fully present to all men or nations, in order that, by the example of her life and by her preaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace, she may lead them to the faith, the freedom and the peace of Christ; that thus there may lie open before them a firm**

and free road to full participation in the mystery of Christ. [...] **The proper purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization, and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root.** Thus from the seed which is the word of God, particular autochthonous churches should be sufficiently established and should grow up all over the world, endowed with their own maturity and vital forces. Under a hierarchy of their own, together with the faithful people, and adequately fitted out with requisites for living a full Christian life, they should make their contribution to the good of the whole Church. [...] **Wherever God opens a door of speech for proclaiming the mystery of Christ (cf. Col. 4:3), there is announced to all men (cf. Mk 16:15, 1Cor 9:15; Rom 10:14) with confidence and constancy (cf. Acts 4:13, 29, 31, 9:27, 28, 13:46, 14:3, 19:8, 26:26, 28:31, 1Thess 2:2, 2Cor 3:12; 7:4; Phil 1:20, Eph 3:12, 6:19, 20) the living God, and He Whom He has sent for the salvation of all, Jesus Christ (cf. 1Thess 1:9-10; 1Cor 1:18-21, Gal 1:31, Acts 14:15-17, 17:22-31), in order that non – Christians, when the Holy Spirit opens their heart (cf. Acts 16:14), may believe and be freely converted to the Lord, that they may cleave sincerely to Him Who, being the ‘way, the truth, and the life’ (Jn 14:6), fulfills all their spiritual expectations, and even infinitely surpasses them.** This conversion must be taken as an initial one, yet sufficient to make a man realize that he has been snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of God’s love, who called him to enter into a personal relationship with Him in Christ. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no. 5-6, 13, December 7, 1965)

PIUS XI

One may not unite in any way the ‘pan-Christians’ within one body

But some are more easily deceived by the outward appearance of good when there is question of fostering unity among all Christians. Is it not right, it is often repeated, indeed, even consonant with duty, that all who invoke the name of Christ should abstain from mutual reproaches and at long last be united in mutual charity? Who would dare to say that he loved Christ, unless he worked with

all his might to carry out the desires of Him, Who asked His Father that His disciples might be ‘one.’ And did not the same Christ will that His disciples should be marked out and distinguished from others by this characteristic, namely that they loved one another: ‘By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another’? **All Christians, they add, should be as ‘one’: for then they would be much more powerful in driving out the pest of irreligion, which like a serpent daily creeps further and becomes more widely spread, and prepares to rob the Gospel of its strength. These things and others that class of men who are known as pan-Christians continually repeat and amplify; and these men, so far from being quite few and scattered, have increased to the dimensions of an entire class, and have grouped themselves into widely spread societies, most of which are directed by non-Catholics, although they are imbued with varying doctrines concerning the things of faith. This undertaking is so actively promoted as in many places to win for itself the adhesion of a number of citizens, and it even takes possession of the minds of very many Catholics and allures them with the hope of bringing about such a union as would be agreeable to the desires of Holy Mother Church, who has indeed nothing more at heart than to recall her erring sons and to lead them back to her bosom. But in reality beneath these enticing words and blandishments lies hid a most grave error, by which the foundations of the Catholic faith are completely destroyed. Admonished, therefore, by the consciousness of Our Apostolic office that We should not permit the flock of the Lord to be cheated by dangerous fallacies, We invoke, Venerable Brethren, your zeal in avoiding this evil; for We are confident that by the writings and words of each one of you the people will more easily get to know and understand those principles and arguments which We are about to set forth, and from which Catholics will learn how they are to think and act when there is question of those undertakings which have for their end the union in one body, whatsoever be the manner, of all who call themselves Christians. We were created by God, the Creator of the universe, in order that we might know Him and serve Him; our Author therefore has a perfect right to our service. God might, indeed, have prescribed for man’s government only the natural law,**

which, in His creation, He imprinted on his soul, and have regulated the progress of that same law by His ordinary providence; but He preferred rather to impose precepts, which we were to obey, and in the course of time, namely from the beginnings of the human race until the coming and preaching of Jesus Christ, He Himself taught man the duties which a rational creature owes to its Creator: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days, hath spoken to us by his Son.' From which it follows that there can be no true religion other than that which is founded on the revealed word of God: which revelation, begun from the beginning and continued under the Old Law, Christ Jesus Himself under the New Law perfected. Now, if God has spoken (and it is historically certain that He has truly spoken), all must see that it is man's duty to believe absolutely God's revelation and to obey implicitly His commands; that we might rightly do both, for the glory of God and our own salvation, the Only-begotten Son of God founded His Church on earth. Further, We believe that those who call themselves Christians can do no other than believe that a Church, and that Church one, was established by Christ; but if it is further inquired of what nature according to the will of its Author it must be, then all do not agree. A good number of them, for example, deny that the Church of Christ must be visible and apparent, at least to such a degree that it appears as one body of faithful, agreeing in one and the same doctrine under one teaching authority and government; but, on the contrary, they understand a visible Church as nothing else than a Federation, composed of various communities of Christians, even though they adhere to different doctrines, which may even be incompatible one with another. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 3-6, January 6, 1928)

Union among Christians who defend contrary doctrines is not possible

Who then can conceive a Christian Federation, the members of which retain each his own opinions and private judgment, even in matters which concern the object of faith, even though they be repugnant to the opinions of the rest? And in what manner, We

ask, can men who follow contrary opinions, belong to one and the same Federation of the faithful? For example, those who affirm, and those who deny that sacred Tradition is a true fount of divine Revelation; those who hold that an ecclesiastical hierarchy, made up of bishops, priests and ministers, has been divinely constituted, and those who assert that it has been brought in little by little in accordance with the conditions of the time; those who adore Christ really present in the Most Holy Eucharist through that marvelous conversion of the bread and wine, which is called transubstantiation, and those who affirm that Christ is present only by faith or by the signification and virtue of the Sacrament; those who in the Eucharist recognize the nature both of a sacrament and of a sacrifice, and those who say that it is nothing more than the memorial or commemoration of the Lord's Supper; those who believe it to be good and useful to invoke by prayer the Saints reigning with Christ, especially Mary the Mother of God, and to venerate their images, and those who urge that such a veneration is not to be made use of, for it is contrary to the honor due to Jesus Christ, 'the one mediator of God and men.' (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 9, January 6, 1928)

Diverging opinions lead to neglect of religion and so-called 'modernism,' that claim dogmatic truth is not absolute

How so great a variety of opinions can make the way clear to effect the unity of the Church We know not; that unity can only arise from one teaching authority, one law of belief and one faith of Christians. But We do know that from this it is an easy step to the neglect of religion or indifferentism and to modernism, as they call it. Those, who are unhappily infected with these errors, hold that dogmatic truth is not absolute but relative, that is, it agrees with the varying necessities of time and place and with the varying tendencies of the mind, since it is not contained in immutable revelation, but is capable of being accommodated to human life. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 9, January 6, 1928)

The union of Christians will only occur

with the return of dissidents to the one true Church

The union of Christians can only be promoted by promoting the return to the one true Church of Christ of those who are separated from it, for in the past they have unhappily left it. To the one true Church of Christ, we say, which is visible to all, and which is to remain, according to the will of its Author, exactly the same as He instituted it. During the lapse of centuries, the mystical Spouse of Christ has never been contaminated, nor can she ever in the future be contaminated, as Cyprian bears witness: 'The Bride of Christ cannot be made false to her Spouse: she is incorrupt and modest. She knows but one dwelling, she guards the sanctity of the nuptial chamber chastely and modestly.' The same holy Martyr with good reason marveled exceedingly that anyone could believe that 'this unity in the Church which arises from a divine foundation, and which is knit together by heavenly sacraments, could be rent and torn asunder by the force of contrary wills.' **For since the mystical body of Christ, in the same manner as His physical body, is one, compacted and fitly joined together, it were foolish and out of place to say that the mystical body is made up of members which are disunited and scattered abroad: whosoever therefore is not united with the body is no member of it, neither is he in communion with Christ its head.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no.10, January 6, 1928)

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EXEGESIS

Francis and the curious miracle of the non-multiplication of the loaves

It is probable that many of our readers received their catechism classes during the turbulent years of the 70's, and may have heard, wide-eyed and scandalized, that the well-known miracle of the multiplication of the loaves – transmitted in the Gospel – was nothing more than a metaphor to symbolize the power of sharing with others. It was a time in which many things in the Church were re-interpreted by some...and much innocence was lost.

Despite such misguided flights of imagination, the fact is that this particular miracle of the multiplication of loaves appears on two different occasions in the Gospels, the first of which is narrated by all four Evangelists – perhaps the only miracle that receives this attention. That's why it's not difficult to have quite a complete picture of the circumstances that surrounded the happening: we even know what type of loaves they were, and where they came from. According to Saint John, they were barley loaves provided by a young boy. The four Gospels carefully recount the number of those benefited: more or less five thousand men, without counting the women and children.

Therefore, it was a miracle experienced by a significant number of witnesses who were hungry and were aware of the lack of food, but who ended up satisfying themselves on the loaves and fishes. Moreover, they could attest to the reality of the miracle by the leftovers collected afterwards by the disciples. The same happened with the second multiplication, narrated in the Synoptics: in this episode, Jesus fed around four thousand people with seven loaves and a few small fish. And though Jesus was accused by his detractors of all sorts of lies, even they could not go so far as to deny this miracle, which was so amply witnessed.

In light of such a clear narration, would it be licit for a Catholic to doubt the power of Christ? Wouldn't he who walked on water and transformed water into wine have the power to multiply loaves and even produce them out of nothing? Just as those who sought Jesus, eager to learn his doctrine, the Church also transmits very firm and accessible teachings to all of us regarding the divine power of our Redeemer, and these specific episodes, as well as indicating how the other facts narrated in the Gospels should be interpreted.

FRANCIS

Regarding the loaves and fishes, I would like to add a new perspective. They didn't multiply, no, that's not true. The loaves simply didn't come to an end. Just like the flour and the oil of the widow that didn't run out. When multiplication is spoken of, it might be confused with magic, no. No, no, the grandeur of God is so great, and the love he puts in our hearts, that if we wish, that which we have will not run out. Lot's of confidence in this. (Address to the Caritas International Executive Committee, May 16, 2013)

Jesus reasons with God's logic, which is that of sharing. How many times we turn away so as not to see our brothers in need! And this looking away is a polite way to say, with white gloves, 'Sort it out for yourselves'. And this is not Jesus' way: this is selfishness. Had he sent away the crowds, many people would have been left with nothing to eat. **Instead those few loaves and fish, shared and blessed by God, were enough for everyone. And pay heed! It isn't magic, it's a 'sign': a sign that calls for faith in God, provident Father, who does not let us go without 'our daily bread', if we know how to share it as brothers. (Angelus, August 3, 2014)**

Those words of Jesus have a particular resonance for us today: No one needs to go be excluded, no one has to be discarded; 'you yourselves', give them something to eat. Jesus speaks these words to us, here in this square. Yes, no one has to be discarded; 'you', give them something to eat. Jesus' way of seeing things leaves no room for the mentality which would cut bait on the weak and those most in need. Taking the lead, he gives us his own example, he shows us the way forward. What he does can be summed up in three words. **He 'takes' a little bread and some fish, he 'blesses' them and then 'gives' them to his disciples to share with the crowd. And this is how the miracle takes place. It is not magic or sorcery. With these three gestures, Jesus is able to turn a mentality which discards others into a mindset of communion, a mindset of community.** I would like briefly to look at each of these actions. [...]

The hands which Jesus lifts to bless God in heaven are the same hands which gave bread to the hungry crowd. **We can imagine now how those people passed the loaves of bread and the fish from hand to hand, until they came to those farthest away. Jesus generated a kind of electrical current among his followers, as they shared what they had, made it a gift for others, and so ate their fill.** Unbelievably, there were even leftovers: enough to fill seven baskets. A memory which is taken, a memory which is blessed and a memory which is given, always satisfies people's hunger. (*Holy Mass in Christ the Redeemer Square, Santa Cruz de la Sierra – Bolivia, July 9, 2015*)

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I – CHRIST’S MIRACLES PROVE HIS DIVINITY

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Jesus himself considers his own miracles as a proof of his Divinity for others

But I have testimony greater than John’s. **The works that the Father gave me to accomplish, these works that I perform testify on my behalf that the Father has sent me.** Moreover, the Father who sent me has testified on my behalf. (Jn 5:36-37)

Those who do not believe in Christ have his miracles as a proof of his divine power

If I do not perform my Father’s works, do not believe me; but if I perform them, even if you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may realize (and understand) that the Father is in me and I am in the Father. (Jn 10:37-38)

Jesus became famous because of his mighty deeds, wonders, and signs

You who are Israelites, hear these words, **Jesus the Nazorean was a man commended to you by God with mighty deeds, wonders, and signs**, which God worked through him in your midst, as you yourselves know. This man, delivered up by the set plan and foreknowledge of God, you killed, using lawless men to crucify him. (Acts 2:22-23)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The miracles of Christ showed that His supernatural doctrine was from God

God enables man to work miracles for two reasons. **First and principally, in confirmation of the doctrine that a man teaches. [...]**

Secondly, in order to make known God’s presence in a man by the grace of the Holy Ghost: so that when a man does the works of God we may believe that God dwells in him by His grace. Wherefore it is written (Gal. 3:5):

‘He who giveth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you.’

Now both these things were to be made known to men concerning Christ — namely, that God dwelt in Him by grace, not of adoption, but of union: and that His supernatural doctrine was from God. And therefore it was most fitting that He should work miracles. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* III, q.43, a.1)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Christ’s deeds, miracles and words: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission

The Gospels were written by men who were among the first to have the faith (cf. Mk 1:1; Jn 21:24) and wanted to share it with others. Having known in faith who Jesus is, they could see and make others see the traces of his mystery in all his earthly life. From the swaddling clothes of his birth to the vinegar of his Passion and the shroud of his Resurrection, everything in Jesus’ life was a sign of his mystery (cf. Lk 2:7; Mt 27: 48; Jn 20:7). His deeds, miracles and words all revealed that ‘in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily’ (Col 2:9). His humanity appeared as ‘sacrament’, that is, the sign and instrument, of his divinity and of the salvation he brings: what was visible in his earthly life leads to the invisible mystery of his divine sonship and redemptive mission. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 515)

LEO XIII

Christ proves His own divinity and the divine origin of His mission by miracles

Christ proves His own divinity and the divine origin of His mission by miracles; He teaches the multitudes heavenly doctrine by word of mouth; and He absolutely commands that the assent of faith should be given to His teaching, promising eternal rewards to those who believe and eternal punishment to those who do not. [...] Whatsoever He commands, He commands by the same authority. He requires the assent of the mind to all truths without exception. It was thus the duty of all who heard Jesus Christ, if

they wished for eternal salvation, not merely to accept His doctrine as a whole, but to assent with their entire mind to all and every point of it, since it is unlawful to withhold faith from God even in regard to one single point. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 8, June 29, 1896)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

God willed that external proofs of His revelation, namely miracles, should be joined to the internal aids of the Holy Spirit

[That faith is consonant with reason].However, in order that the ‘obedience’ of our faith should be ‘consonant with reason’ (cf. Rom 12:1), God has willed that to the internal aids of the Holy Spirit there should be joined external proofs of His revelation, namely: divine facts, especially miracles and prophecies which, because they clearly show forth the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain signs of a divine revelation, and are suited to the intelligence of all [can. 3 and 4]. Wherefore, not only Moses and the prophets, but especially Christ the Lord Himself, produced many genuine miracles and prophecies; and we read concerning the apostles: ‘But they going forth preached everywhere: the Lord working withal and confirming the word with signs that followed’ (Mk 16:20). (Denzinger-Hünemann 3009. Vatican Council I, *Session III, Dogmatic constitution concerning the Catholic Faith*, April 24, 1870)

JOHN PAUL II

The whole primitive Church saw in each one of the miracles the supreme power of Christ over nature and laws

As many as the discussions that would like to create, or that in fact, have been instigated regarding the subject of miracles (to which, on the other hand, the Christian apologists have already responded), it is certain that the ‘miracles, prodigies and signs’, attributed to Jesus and inclusively to his Apostles and disciples who worked ‘in his name’, may not be separated from the authentic context of the Gospel.

[...] Whatever may have been the subsequent rebuttals, **from the genuine sources of the life and teachings of Jesus a first certainty emerges: the Apostles, the Evangelists and the whole primitive Church saw in each one of the miracles the supreme power of Christ over nature and laws.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, December 2, 1987)

Christ's miracles were not denied even by his adversaries – unable to do so, they sought to attribute them to the power of the devil

The analysis not only of the text, but also of the context, speaks in favor of their 'historic' character, testifying that they are facts which occurred in reality, and truly performed by Christ. Those who approach them with intellectual uprightness and scientific expertise cannot lay them aside with just a word, as if they were merely posterior inventions. With respect to this, it is well to observe that these facts are not only testified and narrated by the Apostles and by the disciples of Jesus, but they are also confirmed in many cases by his adversaries. For example, it is very significant that the latter did not deny the miracles performed by Jesus, but rather they sought to attribute them to the power of the 'devil'. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3-4, November 11, 1987)

Saint John speaks of the miracles as 'signs' to demonstrate the action of God in person, Christ

In the Gospel of John we do not find similar forms, but rather the detailed description of the seven happenings that the Evangelist calls 'signs' (and not miracles). With this expression he wishes to indicate that which is most essential in these occurrences: the demonstration of the action of God in person, present in Christ, while the world 'miracle' indicates more the 'extraordinary' aspect that these happenings have in the eyes of those who have seen them or heard of them. However, before concluding his Gospel, John also tells us that 'Jesus did many other signs in the presence of (his) disciples that are not written in this book' (Jn 20: 30). And gives the reason for the choice that he made: 'But these are written that you may (come to)

believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name' (Jn 20: 31). **To this purpose the Synoptics as well as the fourth Gospel are directed: to show through miracles the truth of the Son of God and lead to the faith, which is the beginning of salvation.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 6, November 11, 1987)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

Anathema: for anyone considers the miracles in Sacred Scripture as fables and myths

[The demonstrability of revelation] **If anyone shall have said that miracles are not possible, and hence that all accounts of them, even those contained in Sacred Scripture, are to be banished among the fables and myths; or, that miracles can never be known with certitude, and that the divine origin of the Christian religion cannot be correctly proved by them: let him be anathema.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 3034. Vatican Council I. *Dogmatic Constitution concerning the Catholic Faith*, April 24, 1870)

II – TRADITION AND SACRED SCRIPTURE: THE DEPOSIT OF THE WORD OF GOD CONFIDED TO THE CHURCH

VATICAN COUNCIL II

The Magisterium must serve the Word of God

Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. Holding fast to this deposit the entire holy people united with their shepherds remain always steadfast in the teaching of the Apostles, in the common life, in the breaking of the bread and in prayers (Acts 2:42, Greek text), so that holding to, practicing and professing the heritage of the faith, it becomes on the part of the bishops and faithful a single common effort. (cf. Pius XII, , 'Munificentissimus Deus,' Nov. 1, 1950; St. Cyprian, Letter 66, 8).

But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on (cf. Vatican Council I, Dz 1792 (3011)), has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church (cf. Pius XII, 'Humani

Generis' Aug 12, 1950), whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This teaching office is not above the word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit, it draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.

It is clear, therefore, that sacred tradition, Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Dei Verbum*, no. 10, November 18, 1965)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

If anyone does not agree with the Gospels, he despises Christ and stands self-condemned

We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith (1Tim 3:15). [...] These have all declared to us that there is one God, Creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets; and one Christ the Son of God. If any one do not agree to these truths, he despises the companions of the Lord; nay more, he despises Christ Himself the Lord; yea, he despises the Father also, and stands self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as is the case with all heretics. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against heresies*, III 1,1:1,2)

BENEDICT XV

Those who overturn the fundamental truth of the Bible destroy Catholic teaching handed down by the Fathers

Nor is Sacred Scripture lacking other

detractors; We recognize those who, if they are restrained within certain limits, so abuse right principles indeed that they cause the foundations of the truth of the Bible to totter, and undermine the Catholic doctrine handed down by the Fathers in common. Among these Fathers Jerome, if he were still alive, would surely hurl the sharpest weapons of his speech, because, neglecting the sense and judgment of the Church, they very smoothly take refuge in citations which they call implicit, or in accounts historical in appearance; or, they contend that certain kinds of literature are found in the sacred books, with which the whole and perfect truth of the divine word cannot be reconciled; or, they have such an opinion on the origin of the Bible that its authority collapses and utterly perishes. Now, what must be thought of those who in expounding the Gospels themselves diminish the human faith due them and overturn divine faith? For what our Lord Jesus Christ said, and what He did they are of the opinion did not come down to us entire and unchanged, although they are witnesses of all those who wrote down religiously what they themselves had seen and heard; but that – especially with reference to the fourth Gospel – part came down from the evangelists who themselves planned and added much, and part was brought together from the account of the faithful of another age. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3654. Benedict XV, *Encyclical Spiritus Paraclitus*, September 15, 1920)

LEO XIII

Illicitude of interpreting Holy Scripture contrary to the true sense which the Church has always held

The Synod of the Vatican adopted the teaching of the Fathers, when, as it renewed the decree of Trent on the interpretation of the divine Word, it declared this to be its mind, that in matters of faith and morals, which pertain to the building up of Christian doctrine, that is to be held as the true sense of Holy Scripture which Mother Church has held and holds, whose prerogative it is to judge of the true sense and interpretation of Scripture; and, therefore, it is permitted to no one to interpret the Holy Scripture against this sense, or even against the unanimous agreement of

the Fathers. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3281. Leo XIII, *Encyclical Providentissimus Deus*, November 18, 1893)

Interpretations which oppose the teaching of the Church are senseless and false

Wherefore, it is clear that that interpretation must be rejected as senseless and false, which either makes inspired authors in some manner quarrel among themselves, or opposes the teaching of the Church. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3283. Leo XIII, *Encyclical Providentissimus Deus*, November 18, 1893)

Pius X

Those who go beyond the limits determined by the Fathers and the Church in the interpretation of Sacred Scripture fall into serious errors

With truly lamentable results, our age, casting aside all restraint in its search for the ultimate causes of things, frequently pursues novelties so ardently that it rejects the legacy of the human race. Thus it falls into very serious errors, which are even more serious when they concern sacred authority, the interpretation of Sacred Scripture, and the principal mysteries of Faith. The fact that many Catholic writers also go beyond the limits determined by the Fathers and the Church herself is extremely regrettable. In the name of higher knowledge and historical research (they say), they are looking for that progress of dogmas which is, in reality, nothing but the corruption of dogmas. (Pius X. *Decree Lamentabili sane exitu*, July 3, 1907)

Condemned: the idea that the Evangelists recorded false things which would be profitable for their readers

[Condemned and proscribe]: In many narrations the Evangelists recorded, not so much things that are true, as things which, even though false, they judged to be more profitable for their readers.

Until the time the canon was defined and constituted, the Gospels were increased by additions and corrections. Therefore there remained in them only a faint and uncertain

trace of the doctrine of Christ. (Pius X. *Decree Lamentabili sane exitu*, no. 14-15, July 3, 1907)

Excommunication latae sententiae for those who defend propositions, opinions or teachings condemned in the decree Lamentabili sane exitu

Moreover, in order to check the daily increasing audacity of many modernists who are endeavoring by all kinds of sophistry and devices to detract from the force and efficacy not only of the decree *Lamentabili sane exitu* (the so-called Syllabus), issued by our order by the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition on July 3 of the present year, but also of our encyclical letters *Pascendi dominici gregis* given on September 8 of this same year, we do by our apostolic authority repeat and confirm both that decree of the Supreme Sacred Congregation and those encyclical letters of ours, adding the penalty of excommunication against their contradictors, and this we declare and decree that should anybody, which may God forbid, be so rash as to defend any one of the propositions, opinions or teachings condemned in these documents he falls, ipso facto, under the censure contained under the chapter 'Docentes' of the constitution *Apostolicae Sedis*, which is the first among the excommunications latae sententiae, simply reserved to the Roman Pontiff. This excommunication is to be understood as *salvis poenis*, which may be incurred by those who have violated in any way the said documents, as propagators and defenders of heresies, when their propositions, opinions and teachings are heretical, as has happened more than once in the case of the adversaries of both these documents, especially when they advocate the errors of the modernists that is, the synthesis of all heresies. (Pius X. *Motu Proprio Praestantia Scripturae*, November 18, 1907)

PONTIFICAL BIBLICAL COMMISSION

Those who teach the faithful must abstain from proposing insufficiently proven novelties that do not correspond with the truth

Finally, those who instruct the Christian people with sacred preaching have the necessity of the greatest prudence. Before all else, teach

doctrine, remembering the recommendation of Saint Paul: 'Attend to yourself and to your teaching, persevere in both tasks, for by doing so you will save both yourself and those who listen to you' (1Tim 4:16). **Absolutely abstain from proposing vain or insufficiently proven novelties.** Present new opinions, if necessary, that have been solidly demonstrated with caution, keeping in mind the condition of the listener. **While narrating biblical facts, do not add fictitious circumstances that do not correspond with the truth.** This virtue of prudence should be above all a characteristic of those who spread writings of circulation for the faithful. **Your preoccupation should be in putting the riches of the divine word with clarity 'so that the faithful feel moved and encouraged to better their own lives'** (Encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*). **Be scrupulous in not ever separating from the common doctrine or from the tradition of the Church, not even in small things,** taking advantage of the progress of biblical science and the results of the modern investigators, but **avoiding all of the rash opinions of the innovators** (cf. Apostolic Letter *Quoniam in re biblica*; Pius X Acta, III, p. 75). **It is severely prohibited to you to spread, to collaborate with a pernicious aspiration for novelties, some attempts for the resolution of the difficulties, without a prudent selection and serious examination, confusing in this way the faith of many people.** (Pontifical Biblical Commission. *The truth about the Gospels*, no. 4, April 21, 1964)

LEO XIII

The announcers of novelties approach the faulty cisterns of human wisdom

The Bible is then, the principal and most accessible source of sacred eloquence. But **those who constitute themselves as announcers of novelties, do not nourish the ensemble of their speeches from the font of living water, but rather foolishly and mistakenly approach the faulty cisterns of human wisdom;** consequently, putting aside the doctrine inspired by God – or that of the Fathers of the Church and of the Councils – all they do is expose the names and ideas of profane and contemporary writers, still living: **these ideas frequently give rise to ambiguous and very dangerous interpretations.** (Leo XIII cited by

St. *Pius X. Moto Proprio, Sacrorum Antistitum, The Oath against Modernism, September 1, 1910*)

Detestable errors of those who consider that the miracles are not what they are said to be, but the effects of natural law, or tricks and myths

They deny that there is any such thing as revelation or inspiration, or Holy Scripture at all; they see, instead, only the forgeries and the falsehoods of men; they set down the Scripture narratives as stupid fables and lying stories: **the prophecies and the oracles of God are to them either predictions made up after the event or forecasts formed by the light of nature; the miracles and the wonders of God's power are not what they are said to be, but the startling effects of natural law, or else mere tricks and myths;** and the Apostolic Gospels and writings are not the work of the Apostles at all. **These detestable errors, whereby they think they destroy the truth of the divine Books,** are obtruded on the world as the peremptory pronouncements of a certain newly-invented 'free science;' a science, however, which is so far from final that they are perpetually modifying and supplementing it. **And there are some of them who, notwithstanding their impious opinions and utterances about God, and Christ, the Gospels and the rest of Holy Scripture, would be considered both theologians and Christians and men of the Gospel, and who attempt to disguise by such honourable names their rashness and their pride.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Providentissimus Deus*, no. 10, November 18, 1893)

III – THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH REGARDING THE MIRACLES OF THE MULTIPLICATION OF THE LOAVES

SACRED SCRIPTURE

They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over – twelve wicker baskets full

And he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking **the five loaves and the two fish,** and looking up to heaven, he said the

blessing, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up the fragments left over – twelve wicker baskets full. Those who ate were about five thousand men, not counting women and children. (Mt 14:19-21)

Moved with pity for the crowd Jesus multiplied the loaves a second time

Jesus summoned his disciples and said, 'My heart is moved with pity for the crowd, for they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way. 'The disciples said to him, 'Where could we ever get enough bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves do you have?' 'Seven,' they replied, 'and a few fish.' He ordered the crowd to sit down on the ground. Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, gave thanks, broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, who in turn gave them to the crowds. They all ate and were satisfied. They picked up the fragments left over – seven baskets full. Those who ate were four thousand men, not counting women and children. (Mt 15:32-38)

When the people saw the sign Jesus had done they wanted to carry him off to make him king

So they collected them, and filled twelve wicker baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves that had been more than they could eat. When the people saw the sign he had done, they said, 'This is truly the Prophet, the one who is to come into the world.' Since Jesus knew that they were going to come and carry him off to make him king, he withdrew again to the mountain alone. (Jn 6:13-15)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The multiplication of the loaves was not effected by way of creation, but by an addition of extraneous matter

The multiplication of the loaves was not effected by way of creation, but by an addition of extraneous matter transformed

into loaves; hence Augustine says on Jn 6:1-14: 'Whence He multiplieth a few grains into harvests, thence in His hands He multiplied the five loaves': and it is clearly by a process of transformation that grains are multiplied into harvests. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* III, q. 44, a.4, ad.4)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

He who multiplied the five loaves is the same One who multiplies the fruits of the seeds

It was a great miracle that was wrought, dearly beloved, for five thousand men to be filled with five loaves and two fishes, and the remnants of the fragments to fill twelve baskets. A great miracle: but we shall not wonder much at what was done, if we give heed to Him That did it. He multiplied the five loaves in the hands of them that broke them, who multiplies the seeds that grow in the earth, so as that a few grains are sown, and whole barns are filled. But, because he does this every year, no one marvels. Not the inconsiderableness of what is done, but its constancy takes away admiration of it. But when the Lord did these things, He spoke to them that had understanding, not by words only, but even by the miracles themselves. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 80 (CXXX Ben)*, no.1)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

In multiplying the loaves, Jesus showed his power over material nature

But what is divine is that the five loaves were more than sufficient for five thousand people, for clearly it was not this little food that had satisfied the people, but its multiplication.

As you have seen, as though by an irrepressible font abounding from the hands of the distributors the fragments that they had not yet divided, and without daring to touch them with their fingers, the pieces spontaneously appeared. When such things are read, how can we be surprised with the perpetual movement of the waters or become amazed that the liquid fonts flow without ceasing when a solid substance expands in

abundance? This happens to make us see that which we ordinarily do not see. **By one thing He has manifested with such evidence that he is equally the Author of the others and the Creator of all of material nature, that was not found, but made, and supplies his successive contributions to the production of all things.** (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Treatise on the Gospel of Saint Luke*, Book. VI, no. 84-85)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The remains of the multiplication exceeded as fragments so that the absent might learn of the miracle

'And He brake and gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.' **The five loaves He brake and gave, and the five multiplied themselves in the hands of the disciples.** And not even here doth He stay the miracle, **but He made them even to exceed; to exceed, not as whole loaves, but as fragments; to signify that of those loaves these were remains, and in order that the absent might learn what had been done.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily on St. Matthew*, Homily XLIX)

The fragments showed that what had taken place was no illusion

And I marvel not only at the quantity of loaves created, but besides the quantity, at the exactness of the surplus, that He caused the superabundance to be neither more nor less than just so much as He willed, foreseeing how much they would consume; a thing which marked unspeakable power. **The fragments then confirmed the matter, showing both these points; that what had taken place was no illusion, and that these were from the loaves by which the people had been fed.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily on the Gospel of St. John*. Homily XLII)

JOHN XXIII

With the multiplication of the loaves, Christ desired to manifest his power to the multitudes that followed him

But thanks to the multiplication of indispensable material nourishment, **Christ desired, twice in his mortal life, to manifest his power to the crowds that followed him.** And he employed the miracle in order to direct spirits toward spiritual realities, but not failing to first of all satiate the famished bodies. (John XXIII. *Address to the participants of the 10th International FAO Conference*, May 3, 1960)

JOHN PAUL II

This miracle marks the beginning of the uninterrupted multiplication of the Bread of new life in the Church

This is an amazing miracle which marks in a way the beginning of a long historical process: **the uninterrupted multiplication in the Church of the Bread of new life for the people** of every race and culture. This sacramental ministry is entrusted to the Apostles and to their successors. And they, faithful to the divine Master's command, never cease to break and distribute the Eucharistic bread from generation to generation. (John Paul II. *Homily on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi*, no. 3, June 22, 2000)

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PHILOSOPHY

The Formula for Happiness: “Live and Let Live”

The principle end of human existence is happiness. Even without Aristotle’s affirmation of this principle, no one would ever question that there are few things in this life as universal as the natural desire for happiness, which surges forth from the human heart: there is no one who does not desire happiness. The question is where to find it...the options are many and varied.

Within our secularized – and unhappy – society, there is certainly no lack of ‘self-help’ manuals which present diverse alternatives, based either on an indifferent detachment imbued with agnostic ethics or on a dubious philanthropy without God.

On the contrary, since the dawn of Christianity, the Fathers of the Church, and of course, the Magisterium, have pointed out the advantages of transcending the legitimate though transitory joys of this valley of tears, in order to seek the eternal joys ‘where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal’ (Mt 6: 20). But... have things changed recently?

FRANCIS

Counsels given by Pope Francis in his ‘decatalogue for happiness’ published by Pablo Calvo, in his interview with the Pontiff for the Argentinean magazine, Viva (a supplement of the newspaper El Clarín) to mark the first 500 days of the pontificate of Pope Francis.

“What is the formula for happiness?” asked the journalist, and explains: “He did not avoid the question: the Argentine Pope in his prompt response, and throughout the rest of the conversation, has the courage to develop a recipe for happiness. The following are ten ingredients of this potion which seems unattainable, but which Francis invites us to try.”

1 - Live and let live. “The Romans have a saying, which can be taken as a point of reference,’ Pope Francis said. They say: ‘Campa e lascia campà’ (live and let live). That’s the first step to peace and happiness.”

2 - Give yourself tirelessly to others. “If one gets tired, one runs the risk of being egoistic, and stagnant water is the first to be corrupted.”

3 - Walk softly. “In ‘Don Segundo Sombra’ there is a very beautiful thing, a man who looks back on his life, the main character. He says that in youth he was a rocky stream that carried everything ahead; as an adult, he was a running river and that in old age, he felt movement, but it was slowed down. I would use this image of the poet and novelist Ricardo Güiraldes, the last adjective, calmed down. The ability to move with kindness and humility, calmness of life. Elderly people have this wisdom; they are the memory of a people. And a people that doesn’t take care of its elderly has no future.”

4 - Play with your children: “Consumerism has led to a frenzy, and the loss of the healthy culture of relaxation, reading, enjoying art. Now I don’t often hear confessions, but when I was in Buenos Aires I used to hear a lot, and when a young mother came I would ask: ‘How many children do you have? Do you play with your children?’ It was

an unexpected question, but I would say to them that playing with their children is important for a healthy culture. It is difficult. The parents go to work early and come back when the children are asleep. It is hard. But it must be done.”

5 - Spend Sundays with family: “The other day, in Campobasso, I went to a meeting between the university world and the world of manual workers. And all complained that they couldn’t work on Sunday. Sunday is for the family.”

6 - Help young people to find work: “It is important to be creative with young people. If they lack opportunities, they fall into drugs. And the number of suicides among unemployed youths is very high. The other day I read, but I don’t count this as a scientific fact, that there are 75 million young people under the age of 25 unemployed, It is not enough to give them food, there has to be a one-year course to learn to be a plumber, an electricist, a tailor. That gives them the dignity of being the bread-winners.”

7 - Care for nature: “We have to take care of creation and we are not doing so. This is one of the greatest challenges we have.”

8 - Quickly forget negative experiences: “The necessity to speak badly of others indicates poor self-esteem, it is to say: ‘I feel so low, that instead of raising myself up, I put others down.’ To quickly forget what is negative is healthy.”

9 - Respect those who think differently: “We can question others with our testimony, so both may progress in this communication. But the worst thing that can happen is religious proselytism, which paralyzes: ‘I dialogue with you to convince you.’ No. Each person should dialogue from within his own identity. The Church grows through attraction, not through proselytism.”

10 - Actively strive for peace. “We are living in a time of much war. In Africa, there seem to be tribal wars, but they are much more than that. War destroys. And we must cry out for peace. Peace sometimes gives the idea of stillness, but it is never stillness. It is always an active peace.” (*Interview with Pablo Calvo*, July 27, 2014 – English summaries of the same: [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#))

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I – NO CREATURE MAY GRANT US THE HAPPINESS THAT IS FOUND ONLY IN GOD

JOHN PAUL II

The temptation of reducing Christianity to a pseudo-science of well-being

The temptation today is to reduce Christianity to merely human wisdom, a pseudo-science of well-being. In our heavily secularized world a 'gradual secularization of salvation' has taken place, so that people strive for the good of man, but man who is truncated, reduced to his merely horizontal dimension. We know, however, that Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all mankind, and opens up the wondrous prospect of divine filiation. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 11, December 7, 1990)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Only the universal good can satisfy the human will

It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e. of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of Ps. 102:5: 'Who satisfieth thy desire with good things.' Therefore God alone constitutes man's happiness. (St. Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q. 2, a. 8)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The supreme good of humanity is God, and nothing else

We all certainly desire to live happily; and there is no human being but assents to this statement almost before it is made.[...] And no one can be happy who does not enjoy what is man's

chief good, nor is there any one who enjoys this who is not happy. We must then have at hand our chief good, if we think of living happily. [...] God then remains, in following after whom we live well, and in reaching whom we live both well and happily. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum*, Book.1, no. 4-5,10)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

True happiness is not found in human achievements

[...] true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement – however beneficial it may be – such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1723)

Only in God will man will find the happiness that he never stops searching for

The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself. Only in God will he find the truth and happiness he never stops searching for. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 27)

JOHN PAUL II

True happiness is a gift of the Holy Spirit

If a Christian 'saddens' the Holy Spirit, inhabiting his soul, he certainly cannot hope to possess true happiness, which comes from Him: 'Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...' (Gal 5:22). Only the Holy Spirit gives the profound, full and lasting happiness, to which every human heart aspires. Man is a being made for happiness, not sadness. [...] True happiness is a gift of the Holy Spirit. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2, June 19, 1991)

BENEDICT XVI

Jesus is the happiness we seek

Dear young people, the happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy

has a name and a face: it is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist. Only he gives the fullness of life to humanity! [...] I repeat today what I said at the beginning of my Pontificate: 'If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! **Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide.** Only in this friendship is **the great potential of human existence truly revealed.** Only in this friendship do we experience beauty and liberation' (Homily at the Mass of Inauguration, 24 April, 2005). Be completely convinced of this: Christ takes from you nothing that is beautiful and great, but brings everything to perfection for the glory of God, the happiness of men and women, and the salvation of the world. (Benedict XVI. *Address on the Celebration of welcoming the young people on the occasion of the XX World Youth Day*, August 18, 2005)

The example of Saint Francis: only the Infinite can fill the human heart

'Francis was always happy and generous, dedicated to play and song, roaming through the town of Assisi day and night with friends like him, spend-thrifts, dissipating all that they could have or earn on lunches and other things' (3 LTC 1, 2). Of how many of today's youth could something similar be said? [...] In that way of living there was the desire for happiness that dwells in every human heart. **But could that life bring true joy?** Francis certainly did not find it. You yourselves, dear young people, can verify this beginning with your experience. **The truth is that finite things can give only a faint idea of joy, but only the Infinite can fill the heart.** (Benedict XVI, Speech. *Meeting with Youth in Assisi*, June 17, 2007)

Bishops have the duty to point out the world's inability to bring true joy

Like the wise householder who brings forth from his treasure 'what is new and what is old' (Mt 13:52), **your people** need to view the changes in society with discernment, and here **they look to you for leadership. Help them to recognize the inability of the secular, materialist culture to bring true satisfaction and joy.** Be bold in speaking to them of the joy that comes **from following Christ and living according to his commandments.** Remind them that **our hearts were made for the Lord and**

that they find no peace until they rest in him (cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, 1:1). (Benedict XVI. *Address to the Bishops of Ireland on their Ad Limina Visit*, 28 October, 2006)

CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

In adherence to God is true happiness found

It is unquestionably a chief duty of the pastor to use the utmost diligence to excite the faithful to a love of the infinite goodness of God towards us, that, burning with a sort of divine ardor, they may be powerfully attracted to the Supreme and all perfect Good, to adhere to which is true and solid happiness, as is fully experienced by him who can say with the Prophet: What have I in heaven? And besides thee what do I desire upon earth? (Catechism of the Council of Trent. *Introduction*)

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

The hope of eternal goods fills our soul with joy

They should be considered **happy those who, in view of the hope of the future life, bear with the present,** thus exchanging present goods for the eternal. [...] Thus, risen above present things, you will apply your mind to the **hope of eternal goods,** whose only knowledge is **capable of filling our soul with joy,** and introducing the happiness of the angels into our hearts. (Saint Basil the Great. *Homily De gratiarum actione*, no. 3,7: PG 31, 223,237-238)

II – WHICH IS THE PATH TO HAPPINESS?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Blessed is the man

Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after false gods! (Ps 40:4)

Blessed is the man whom thou dost chasten, o Lord, and whom thou dost teach out of thy law (Ps 94:12)

Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!

His descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in his house; and his righteousness endures for ever. (Ps 112:1-3)

Blessed is the man who does not blunder with his lips and need not suffer grief for sin. **Blessed is he whose heart does not condemn him**, and who has not given up his hope. (Sir 14:1-2)

But he who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer that forgets but a doer that acts, he **shall be blessed in his doing**. (Jas 1:25)

BENEDICT XVI

The secret of happiness consists in putting God in first place

God loves us: this is the source of true joy. Even if one has all he or she wants, one can sometimes be unhappy; on the other hand, **one can be deprived of everything**, even freedom or health, and **be in peace and joy if God is in his or her heart**. Thus, **the secret is this: God must always have first place in our life**. (Benedict XVI. *Speech on the visit to Rome's prison for minors Casal del Marmo*, March 18, 2007)

The Eucharist is the source of Christian joy

Where is the source of Christian joy to be found if not in the Eucharist, which Christ left us as spiritual Food while we are pilgrims on this earth? **The Eucharist nurtures in believers of every epoch that deep joy** which makes us one with love and peace and **originates from communion with God and with our brothers and sisters**. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, March 18, 2007)

True joy comes from Christ's Cross

True joy is something different from pleasure; **joy grows** and continues to mature in suffering, **in communion with the Cross of Christ**. **It is here alone that the true joy of faith is born**. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the priests of the Diocese of Aosta*, 25, July 2005)

Observing the Commandments is the path to happiness

God wants us to be happy. That is why **he gave us specific directions for the journey of life: the commandments**. **If we observe them, we will find the path** to life and **happiness**. At first glance, they might seem to be a list of prohibitions and an obstacle to our freedom. But if we study them more closely, we see in the light of Christ's message that the commandments are a set of essential and valuable rules leading to a happy life in accordance with God's plan. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the Twenty-Seventh World Youth Day*, no. 5, March 15, 2012)

Blessed are they who obey the word of God

This close relationship between God's word and joy is evident in the Mother of God. Let us recall the words of Saint Elizabeth: 'Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord' (Lk 1:45). **Mary is blessed because she has faith, because she believed**, and in this faith she received the Word of God into her womb in order to give him to the world. The joy born of the Word can now expand to all those who, by faith, let themselves be changed by God's word. The Gospel of Luke presents this mystery of hearing and joy in two texts. Jesus says: 'My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it' (Lk 8:21). And in reply to a woman from the crowd who blesses the womb that bore him and the breasts that nursed him, **Jesus reveals the secret of true joy: 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it!'** (Lk 11:28). (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 124, September 30, 2010)

JOHN PAUL II

True happiness does not exist outside of friendship with God

True happiness includes the justice of the kingdom of God, which Saint Paul affirmed is 'righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom 14:17).

This is the evangelical justice, which consists in **conformity to the will of God, in the obedience to his laws and in a personal friendship with Him**. **Outside of this friendship, true happiness does not exist**. [...] Sin is a source of sadness, because it is a deviation and almost

a separation of the soul from the true order of God, who gives consistency to life. The **Holy Spirit**, who works in man the new justice in charity, **eliminates sadness and transmits happiness**: that happiness which we see blossoming within the Gospel. (John Paul II. *General Audience*, no. 3, June 19, 1991)

Happiness is an inevitable consequence of being closer to God

Each time we come together for the Eucharist, we are strengthened in sanctity and renewed in happiness. **Happiness and sanctity, in fact, are inevitable consequences of drawing closer to God. When we nourish ourselves with the living bread that came down from heaven, we grow in likeness to our resurrected Savior, who is the source of our happiness**, a 'great joy that will be for all the people' (Lk 2:10). (John Paul II. *Homily in the national stadium of Karachi – Pakistan*, no. 8, February 16, 1981)

The Ten Commandments are a sure path toward happiness

In fact, the Lord indicated a secure path for achieving happiness in the moral law, an expression of his creating and salvific will, that is **in the Ten Commandments**, engraved in each person's conscience, manifested historically to the Hebrew people and perfected by the gospel message. [...]

Saint John adverts again, in his letter, that the love of God, font and guarantee of true happiness, is not a vague or sentimental, but rather, concrete and dedicated: 'For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments' (1Jn 5:3). **One who consciously and deliberately transgresses the law of God, meets up inevitably with unhappiness. But, Christians possess, on the contrary, the secret of happiness.** (John Paul II. *Homily*, Church of Our Lady of the Lake, no. 2, September 2, 1979)

Happiness comes from grace, God's pardon and the hope of eternal joy...

Christian joy is a reality that is not easy to describe, because it is spiritual and also belongs to the mystery. He who really believes that Jesus is the Word Incarnate, the Redeemer of man, cannot but feel within himself a sense

of immense joy, which is consolation, peace, abandonment, resignation, bliss. [...]

– It is the joy of interior light on the meaning of life and history;

– It is the joy of God's presence in the soul, by means of 'grace';

– It is the joy of God's forgiveness, by means of his priests, when one has, unfortunately, offended his infinite love, and, having repented, returns to his Father's arms;

– It is the joy of the expectation of eternal happiness, as a result of which life is understood as an 'exodus', a pilgrimage, committed though we are in the affairs of the world. (John Paul II. *Address to a group of pilgrims from the Archdiocese of Naples*, Italy, 24 March, 1979)

...from faith lived in prayer and reception of the sacraments

Carry, above all, **Christian happiness** in your heart: happiness which stems from a serenely accepted faith, intensely deepened by means of personal meditation and study of the Word of God and of the teaching of the Church; dynamically lived in union with God in Christ, in prayer and the constant reception of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist and Reconciliation; in the assimilation of the gospel message, at times difficult for our weak human nature, which is not always in line with the exciting but also challenging demands of the 'Sermon on the Mount', or the 'Beatitudes' 'Noli gaudere in saeculo – Saint Augustine tells us –: *gaude in Christo, gaude in verbo eius, gaude in lege eius...*' (Enarr. in Ps. 93, 24-: PL 37, 1212). (John Paul II. *Speech to young people of the Communion and Liberation Movement*, no. 1, March 16, 1980)

...from the Sunday Eucharist and peace of conscience

Let us find again the joy that participation in the Eucharist gives us. Let Sunday Mass become for us the climax of every week. Let us find again the joy that comes from repentance, from conversion, from this splendid sacrament of reconciliation with God, which Christ set up to re-establish peace in man's conscience. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 3, March 25, 1979)

PAUL VI

True joy is found in seeking God and turning away from sin

It is therefore by becoming more present to God, by turning away from sin, that man can truly enter into spiritual joy. Without doubt 'flesh and blood' (Mt 16:17) are incapable of this. But Revelation can open up this possibility and grace can bring about this return. Our intention is precisely to invite you to the sources of Christian joy. [...]

In essence, **Christian joy is the spiritual sharing in the unfathomable joy**, both divine and human, which is **in the heart of Jesus Christ** glorified. (Paul VI. *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete in Domino*, no. I- II, May 9, 1975)

True happiness is only possible within the Church

A common joy, truly supernatural, a gift of the Spirit of unity and love, which is not possible in truth except where the preaching of the faith is accepted in its entirety, according to the apostolic norm. [...] The joy of being Christian, of being united with the Church, of being 'in Christ,' and in the state of grace with God, is truly able to fill the human heart. (Paul VI. *Apostolic Exhortation Gaudete in Domino*, no. VII/ Conclusion, May 9, 1975)

JOHN XXIII

He who seeks true joy must flee from sin

He who seeks the joys of the Lord Jesus and his Mother, must **walk uprightly along the good path, without vacillations or compromises; flee from sin**, origin of all unhappiness and inequity, even material ones; and work toward the good: that its, practice charity, the works of mercy, justice, honesty – and all of this within the splendid light of the Eucharist, which should suavely permeate all minds and wills. **Only in this way does man possess interior happiness**, the true peace. (John XXIII. *Radio Message to the city of Turin*, March 27, 1960)

Sanctity is a font of happiness

This is all: know how to sanctify oneself and sacrifice oneself with Christ and for love

of Christ. All the centuries are open to the spray of sanctity, which alone is the font of true happiness. (John XXIII. *Homily for the Beatification of Father Inocencio Berzo*, November 12, 1961)

PIUS XII

Happiness is found in God and in the practice of His teachings

Today the world navigates adrift, perhaps more than ever, behind the false indications of happiness. **And happiness is only found in God and in the practice of His divine teachings**. (Pius XII. *Radio Message to the Clergy and Argentineans*, February 1, 1948)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Our greatest good is a pure conscience

A Christian can be content in a state of poverty **by reflecting that our greatest good is a pure and peaceful conscience**; that our true home is heaven; and that Jesus Christ made Himself poor for love of us and has promised a special reward to those who bear poverty patiently. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, Tenth Commandment, q.4)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

If you wish to be happy, be undefiled

From its commencement, dearly beloved, does this great Psalm exhort us unto bliss, which there is no one who desires not....And therefore this is the lesson which he teaches, who says, 'Blessed are those that are undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord' (Ps 118:1). As much as to say, I know what you wish, **you are seeking bliss: if then you would be blessed, be undefiled. For the former all desire, the latter fear: yet without it what all wish cannot be attained**. But where will any one be undefiled, save in the way? In what way, save in the law of the Lord?... (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Commentary on Psalm 119*, no. 1 (118))

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**The Communists have stolen the flag. The flag of the poor is Christian.
Now when they speak one could say to them: but you are Christians**

For the past century the world has been submerged in terrible chaos. All of the conflicts experienced by humanity until this point were nothing in comparison with the warfare of the twentieth century. And it wasn't just because of military apparatus, but also cruel ideologies employed with the intention of oppressing humanity. How often were ideas launched by Karl Marx in the 19th century to be found at the root of these abuses, later to spread throughout the entire world under misleading disguises... Many of those who lived during this period did not comprehend the necessity of practicing vigilance as the Divine Master had directed (Mt 26:41), and, forgetting that the children of light must also be as shrewd as serpents (Mt 10:16), they witnessed the errors of Russia spreading throughout the world, just as predicted at Fatima. One hundred million deaths – the greater part of them occurring among the poor – was the sinister price paid for the lack of preparation before the steadily advancing evil... Among the dead were an unending list of priests, religious men and women, fathers and mothers of families, children, elderly, etc. – people who anonymously or shining by their example, suffered atrocious persecutions especially for professing the Catholic religion.

So, can a Christian find something good about an 'intrinsically perverse' communist doctrine, a doctrine which is not only directly opposed to the teachings of Jesus, but also intends to finish off with natural rights, something that even the most decadent of ancient civilizations never attempted? Is there any similarity between this appalling doctrine and the works of mercy that the Church has undertaken for centuries? What 'benefits' does communism bring to the world, besides the dubious effects of atheism and generalized poverty? Does the supposed standard of the poor hoisted by the communists (sic!) mean casting into poverty all of those who cry out under the yoke of Marxism? It must be because, to help the poor, communism is of the theory that 'misery loves company'...

It has been a century – as we noted above – since the persecutions began, but let's not forget that the theory came to light many decades before... A lesson that we cannot overlook for the future of a humanity that, unfortunately, no longer has Almighty God in the heart.

FRANCIS

[Franca Giansoldati]: You are regarded as a communist, pauperist, populist Pope. The Economist, which has dedicated a cover to you, stated that you speak like Lenin. Do you identify yourself in this depiction?

[Pope Francis]: I say only **that the Communists have stolen the flag. The flag of the poor is Christian.** Poverty is at the center of the Gospel. The poor are at the center of the Gospel. Let's take Matthew 25, the protocol on which we will be judged: I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was in prison, I was sick, naked. Or, let us look at the Beatitudes, another flag. The communists say that all this is communist. Yes, right, twenty centuries later. **Now when they speak one could say to them: but you are Christians.** (*Interview with Franca Giansoldati, June 29, 2014*)

[Scalfari] **Were you seduced by Communism?**

[Francis] Her materialism had no hold over me. But **learning about it through**

a courageous and honest person was helpful. I realized a few things, an aspect of the social, which I then found in the social doctrine of the Church. (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari*, October 1, 2013)

[Andrea Torielli] Some of the passages in the 'Evangelii Gaudium' attracted the criticism of ultraconservatives in the USA. As a Pope, what does it feel like to be called a 'Marxist'?

[Francis] The Marxist ideology is wrong. **But I have met many Marxists in my life who are good people, so I don't feel offended.**

[Andrea Torielli] The most striking part of the Exhortation was where it refers to an economy that 'kills'...

There is nothing in the Exhortation that cannot be found in the social Doctrine of the Church. I wasn't speaking from a technical point of view, what I was trying to do was to give a picture of what is going on. The only specific quote I used was the one regarding the 'trickle-down theories' which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and social inclusiveness in the world. The promise was that when the glass was full, it would overflow, benefitting the poor. But what happens instead, is that when the glass is full, it magically gets bigger nothing ever comes out for the poor. This was the only reference to a specific theory. I was not, I repeat, speaking from a technical point of view but according to the Church's social doctrine. This does not mean being a Marxist. (*Interview with Andrea Torielli*, December 14, 2013)

It's true that I was, as my whole family, a practicing Catholic. But my mind was not only occupied with religious enquiries, for I also had political concerns, even though they didn't go beyond an intellectual level. I read Nuestra Palabra y Propósitos [Our Word and Resolutions] and was enchanted with all of the articles of one of its conspicuous members – a well-known figure of the world of culture – Leónidas Barletta, **who helped me in my political formation.** But I was never a communist... ('The Jesuit. The story of Francis, The Argentine Pope'. Sergio Rubin and Francesca Ambrogetti, Editorial Vergar – Grupo Zeta. Buenos Aires/Madrid, 2013, p.481)

My authoritarian and quick manner of making decisions led me to have serious problems and to be accused of being ultraconservative. I lived a time of great interior crisis when I was in Cordova. To be sure, I have never been like Blessed Imelda [a goody-goody], **but I have never been a right-winger.** It was my authoritarian way of making decisions that created problems. (*Interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro*, September 21, 2013)

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I – THE DEVASTATING COMMUNIST DOCTRINE VERSUS THE DIVINE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

LEO XIII

Communism: a deadly plague that seeks to overthrow both human and divine laws

At the very beginning of Our pontificate, as the nature of Our apostolic office demanded, we hastened to point out in an encyclical letter addressed to you, venerable brethren, **the deadly plague that is creeping into the very fibres of human society and leading it on to the verge of destruction;** [...] You understand, venerable brethren, that We speak of **that sect of men** who, under various and almost barbarous names, are called **socialists, communists, or nihilists,** and who, spread over all the world, and bound together by the closest ties in a wicked confederacy, no longer seek the shelter of secret meetings, but, **openly and boldly marching forth in the light of day, strive to bring to a head what they have long been planning – the overthrow of all civil society whatsoever.** [...]

They leave nothing untouched or whole which by both human and divine laws has been wisely decreed for the health and beauty of life. [...] They debase the natural union of

man and woman, which is held sacred even among barbarous peoples; and its bond, by which the family is chiefly held together [...] Lured, in fine, by the greed of present goods, which is ‘the root of all evils, which some coveting have erred from the faith’ (1Tim 6:10) **they assail the right of property sanctioned by natural law;** and by a scheme of horrible wickedness, while they seem desirous of caring for the needs and satisfying the desires of all men, they strive to seize and hold in common whatever has been acquired either by title of lawful inheritance, or by labor of brain and hands, or by thrift in one’s mode of life. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod Apostolici Muneris*, December 28, 1878)

PIUS IX

Unspeakable doctrine opposed to the natural law

To this goal also tends the **unspeakable doctrine of Communism,** as it is called, a doctrine most opposed to the very natural law. For if this doctrine were accepted, the complete destruction of everyone’s laws, government, property, and even of human society itself would follow. (Denzinger-Hünermann 2786. Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, November 9, 1846)

Deceitful men who desire to eliminate entirely the doctrine and influence of the Catholic Church

And, not content with removing religion from public society, they wish even to banish religion itself from private families. For, teaching and professing **that most deadly error of communism and socialism**, they assert that 'domestic society or the family borrows the whole reason for its existence from the civil law alone; and, hence, all rights of parents over their children, especially the right of caring for their instruction and education, emanate from and depend wholly on the civil law.' **In these impious opinions and machinations these most deceitful men have this particular intention: that the saving doctrine and power of the Catholic Church be entirely eliminated from the instruction and training of youth [...].** (Denzinger-Hünemann 2891-2892. Pius IX, *Quanta cura*, December 8, 1864)

Pius XI

Communism seeks to destroy society altogether

Although We, therefore, deem it **superfluous to warn upright and faithful children** of the Church **regarding the impious and iniquitous character of Communism**, yet We cannot without deep sorrow contemplate the heedlessness of those who apparently make light of these impending dangers, and with sluggish inertia allow the widespread propagation of **doctrine which seeks by violence and slaughter to destroy society altogether**. All the more gravely to be condemned is the folly of those who neglect to remove or change the conditions that inflame the minds of peoples, and **pave the way for the overthrow and destruction of society**. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno*, no. 112, May 15, 1931)

Socialism cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church

That We, in keeping with Our fatherly solicitude, may answer their petitions, We make this pronouncement: Whether considered as a doctrine, or an historical fact, or a movement, Socialism, if it remains truly **Socialism**, even after it has yielded to truth and justice on the

points which we have mentioned, cannot be reconciled with the teachings of the Catholic Church because its concept of society itself is utterly foreign to Christian truth. [...]

Socialism, on the other hand, wholly ignoring and indifferent to this sublime end of both man and society, affirms that human association has been instituted for the sake of material advantage alone. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno*, nos. 117-118, May 15, 1931)

Enemies of all order shamelessly attempt against God

Furthermore – and this may be called the most perilous of all these evils – **the enemies of all order, whether they be called Communists** or by some other name, exaggerating the very grave straits of the economic crisis, in this great perturbation of morals, with extreme audacity, direct all their efforts to one end, seeking to **cast away every bridle from their necks, and breaking the bonds of all law both human and divine**, wage an atrocious war against all religion and against God Himself; **in this it is their purpose to uproot utterly all knowledge and sense of religion from the minds of men, even from the tenderest age**, for they know well that if once the Divine law and knowledge were blotted out from the minds of men there would now be nothing that they could not arrogate to themselves. And thus we now see with our own eyes – what we have not read of as happening anywhere before – **impious men, agitated by unspeakable fury, shamelessly liking up a banner against God and against all religion throughout the whole world**. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Caritate Christi compulsi*, May 3, 1932)

Despise of the light of evangelic wisdom, and revival of paganism

In some regions the evil had reached such a pitch that it seeks to destroy all private right of property, so that everything might be shared in common. [...]

[...] they despise the light of evangelic wisdom and endeavor to revive the errors of the pagans and their way of life. [...]

And while they cast scorn on the hope of heavenly reward, they incite men to seek, even by illicit means, false earthly happiness, and therefore drive them with brazen temerity

to the dissolution of the social order, causing disorder, cruel rebellions and even the conflagration of civil war. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ingravescentibus malis*, September 29, 1937)

Imminent danger aiming at upsetting the social order and the foundations of Christian civilization

This all too imminent danger, Venerable Brethren, as you have already surmised, is bolshevistic and atheistic Communism, which aims at upsetting the social order and at undermining the very foundations of Christian civilization. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 3, March 19, 1937)

Communism strips man of liberty, dignity and morality

Communism, moreover, strips man of his liberty, robs human personality of all its dignity, and removes all the moral restraints that check the eruptions of blind impulse. There is no recognition of any right of the individual in his relations to the collectivity; no natural right is accorded to human personality, which is a mere cog-wheel in the Communist system. In man's relations with other individuals, besides, Communists hold the principle of absolute equality, rejecting all hierarchy and divinely-constituted authority, including the authority of parents. What men call authority and subordination is derived from the community as its first and only font. Nor is the individual granted any property rights over material goods or the means of production, for inasmuch as these are the source of further wealth, their possession would give one man power over another. Precisely on this score, all forms of private property must be eradicated, for they are at the origin of all economic enslavement. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 10, March 19, 1937)

Dialectical and historical materialism advocated by Marx, and annihilation of all opposition

The doctrine of modern Communism, which is often concealed under the most seductive trappings, is in substance based on the principles of dialectical and historical materialism previously advocated by Marx, of

which the theoreticians of bolshevism claim to possess the only genuine interpretation. [...] **In such a doctrine, as is evident, there is no room for the idea of God;** there is no difference between matter and spirit, between soul and body; there is neither survival of the soul after death nor any hope in a future life. Insisting on the dialectical aspect of their materialism, the Communists claim that the conflict which carries the world towards its final synthesis can be accelerated by man. Hence they endeavor to sharpen the antagonisms which arise between the various classes of society. Thus the class struggle with its consequent violent hate and destruction takes on the aspects of a crusade for the progress of humanity. **On the other hand, all other forces whatever, as long as they resist such systematic violence, must be annihilated as hostile to the human race.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 9, March 19, 1937)

A cold-blooded struggle against all that is divine

This, unfortunately, is what we now behold. For the first time in history we are witnessing a struggle, **cold-blooded in purpose and mapped out to the least detail, between man and 'all that is called God'** (cf. Thess 2:4). Communism is by its nature anti-religious. It considers religion as 'the opiate of the people' because the principles of religion which speak of a life beyond the grave dissuade the proletariat from the dream of a Soviet paradise which is of this world. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 22, March 19, 1937)

Communist terrorism seeks to all moral sense

After all, **even the sphere of economics needs some morality**, some moral sense of responsibility, **which can find no place in a system so thoroughly materialistic as Communism.** Terrorism is the only possible substitute, and it is terrorism that reigns today in Russia, **where former comrades in revolution are exterminating each other.** Terrorism, having failed despite all to stem the tide of moral corruption, cannot even prevent the dissolution of society itself. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 23, March 19, 1937)

Pius XII

To cast out every notion of God – the aim of the supporters of communism

There are those who contend that the so-called system of evolution, not yet irrefutably demonstrated within the scope of the natural sciences, and **admitted imprudently and indiscreetly**, extends to the origin of all things, and who boldly entertain the monistic and pantheistic theory that the whole world is subject to continuous evolution. Indeed, **the supporters of communism gladly employ this theory, to bring out more efficaciously and defend their ‘dialectic materialism,’ casting out of mind every notion of God.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 3877. *Pius XII*, Encyclical *Humani generis*, August 12, 1950)

LEO XIII

The fear of God and reverence for divine laws are taken away leading to the greatest dangers and the overthrow of all things

Now, from the disturbing errors which We have described the **greatest dangers to States are to be feared.** For, the fear of God and reverence for divine laws being taken away, the authority of rulers despised, **sedition permitted and approved, and the popular passions urged on to lawlessness, with no restraint save that of punishment, a change and overthrow of all things will necessarily follow. Yea, this change and overthrow is deliberately planned and put forward by many associations of communists and socialists.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Humanum Genus*, no. 27, April 20, 1884)

II – INTRINSICALLY PERVERSE SYSTEM CONDEMNED BY THE CHURCH

Pius XI

The Communist system, with its authors and abettors condemned

We blame only the system, with its authors and abettors who considered Russia the best-prepared field for experimenting with a plan elaborated decades ago, and who from there

continue to spread it from one end of the world to the other. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 24, March 19, 1937)

Communism is intrinsically wrong and no one may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever

See to it, Venerable Brethren, that the Faithful do not allow themselves to be deceived! **Communism is intrinsically wrong, and no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever.** Those who permit themselves to be deceived into lending their aid towards the triumph of Communism in their own country, will be the first to fall victims of their error. And the greater the antiquity and grandeur of the Christian civilization in the regions where Communism successfully penetrates, so much more devastating will be the hatred displayed by the godless. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 58, March 19, 1937)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Formal prohibition to join or favor Communist Parties – latae sententiae excommunication

Questions:

1. Whether it is lawful to join Communist Parties or to favour them;
2. whether it is lawful to publish, disseminate, or read books, periodicals, newspapers or leaflets which support the teaching or action of Communists, or to write in them;
3. whether the faithful who knowingly and freely perform the acts specified in questions 1 and 2 may be admitted to the Sacraments;
4. whether the faithful who profess the materialistic and anti-Christian doctrine of the Communists, and particularly those who defend or propagate this doctrine, contract **ipso facto excommunication** specially reserved to the Apostolic See as apostates from the Catholic faith.

The Most Eminent and Most Reverend Fathers entrusted with the supervision of matters concerning the safeguarding of Faith and morals, having previously heard the opinion

of the Reverend Lords Consultors, decreed in the plenary session held on Tuesday (instead of Wednesday), June 28, 1949, that the answers should be as follows:

To 1. in the negative: because Communism is materialistic and anti-Christian; and the leaders of the Communists, although they sometimes profess in words that they do not oppose religion, do in fact show themselves, both in their teaching and in their actions, to be the enemies of God, of the true religion and of the Church of Christ;

to 2. in the negative: they are prohibited ipso iure (cf. Can. 1399 of the Codex Iuris Canonici);

to 3. in the negative, in accordance with the ordinary principles concerning the refusal of the Sacraments to those who are not disposed;

to 4. in the affirmative. (Replies confirmed by Pius XII on June 30) (Denzinger-Hünemann 3865. *Decree of the Holy Office*, July 1, 1949)

JOHN XXIII

No Catholic can subscribe even to moderate Socialism – opposition between Communism and Christianity is fundamental

Pope Pius XI further emphasized the fundamental opposition between Communism and Christianity, and made it clear that no Catholic could subscribe even to moderate Socialism. The reason is that Socialism is founded on a doctrine of human society which is bounded by time and takes no account of any objective other than that of material well-being. Since, therefore, it proposes a form of social organization which aims solely at production, it places too severe a restraint on human liberty, at the same time flouting the true notion of social authority. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 34, May 15, 1961)

III – COMMUNIST SOPHISMS ONLY ATTEMPT TO DECEIVE CATHOLICS

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Beware of false prophets

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. By their fruits you will know them. (Mt. 7:15-16)

After my departure savage wolves will come among you

Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, in which you tend the church of God that he acquired with his own blood. I know that after my departure **savage wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. And from your own group, men will come forward perverting the truth to draw the disciples away after them. So be vigilant and remember that for three years, night and day, I unceasingly admonished each of you with tears.** (Acts 20:28-31)

PIUS XI

The Catholic Religion is the only true obstacle to communism, which takes advantage of any possibility of approach and collaboration with the Catholic side

One could say that a **satanic preparation has revitalized, and with more strength, in neighboring Spain, that flame of hatred and ferocious persecution unambiguously reserved for the Church and the Catholic Religion, as being the only true obstacle to the eruption of those forces, which have already given evidence and proof of themselves in the pledges in the subversion of all order, from Russia to China, from Mexico to South America – tests and preparation, preceded and accompanied incessantly by a universal, assiduous, most competent propaganda for the conquest of the whole world by those absurd and disastrous ideologies [...]** It is not superfluous, but rather opportune and unfortunately necessary, and for Us Our duty , to **put all on**

guard against the insidiousness with which the emissaries of the subversive forces try to take advantage of any possibility of approach and collaboration with the Catholic side, distinguishing between ideology and practice, between ideas and action, between the economical order and moral order: an extremely dangerous insidiousness, cunningness, destined solely to deceive and disarm Europe and the World. (Pius XI. *Address La vostra presenza to Spanish refugees of the Civil War*, September 14, 1936)

A system that is subversive of social order, full of errors and sophisms, in opposition to reason and to Divine Revelation

Such, Venerable Brethren, is the new gospel which bolshevistic and atheistic Communism offers the world as the glad tidings of deliverance and salvation! It is a system full of errors and sophisms. It is in opposition both to reason and to Divine Revelation. It subverts the social order, because it means the destruction of its foundations; because it ignores the true origin and purpose of the State; because it denies the rights, dignity and liberty of human personality. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 14, March 19, 1937)

Partial truths astutely presented by the preachers of Communism to conceal repulsively crude and inhuman principles

By pretending to desire only the betterment of the condition of the working classes, by urging the removal of the very real abuses chargeable to the liberalistic economic order, and by demanding a more equitable distribution of this world's goods (objectives entirely and undoubtedly legitimate), the Communist takes advantage of the present world-wide economic crisis to draw into the sphere of his influence even those sections of the populace which on principle reject all forms of materialism and terrorism. And as every error contains its element of truth, the partial truths to which We have referred are astutely presented according to the needs of time and place, to conceal, when convenient, the repulsive crudity and inhumanity of Communistic principles and tactics. Thus the Communist ideal wins over many of the better minded members of the community.

These in turn become the apostles of the movement among the younger intelligentsia who are still too immature to recognize the intrinsic errors of the system. The preachers of Communism are also proficient in exploiting racial antagonisms and political divisions and oppositions. They take advantage of the lack of orientation characteristic of modern agnostic science in order to burrow into the universities, where they bolster up the principles of their doctrine with pseudo-scientific arguments. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 15, March 19, 1937)

The Communistic fallacy spreads because of the religious and moral misery

If we would explain the blind acceptance of Communism by so many thousands of workmen, we must remember that the way had been already prepared for it by the religious and moral destitution in which wage-earners had been left by liberal economics. Even on Sundays and holy days, labor-shifts were given no time to attend to their essential religious duties. No one thought of building churches within convenient distance of factories, nor of facilitating the work of the priest. On the contrary, laicism was actively and persistently promoted, with the result that we are now reaping the fruits of the errors so often denounced by Our Predecessors and by Ourselves. It can surprise no one that the Communistic fallacy should be spreading in a world already to a large extent de-Christianized. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 16, March 19, 1937)

A doctrine shrewdly adapted to the varying conditions of diverse peoples

This explanation is to be found in a propaganda so truly diabolical that the world has perhaps never witnessed it's like before. It is directed from one common center. It is shrewdly adapted to the varying conditions of diverse peoples. It has at its disposal great financial resources, gigantic organizations, international congresses, and countless trained workers. It makes use of pamphlets and reviews, of cinema, theater and radio, of schools and even universities. Little by little it penetrates into all classes of the people and even reaches the better-minded groups of the community, with

the result that few are aware of the poison which increasingly pervades their minds and hearts. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 17, March 19, 1937)

A powerful factor in the diffusion of Communism: the conspiracy of silence of a large section of the non-Catholic press

A third powerful factor in the diffusion of Communism is the conspiracy of silence on the part of a large section of the non-Catholic press of the world. We say conspiracy, because it is impossible otherwise to explain how a press usually so eager to exploit even the little daily incidents of life has been able to remain silent for so long about the horrors perpetrated in Russia, in Mexico and even in a great part of Spain; and that it should have relatively so little to say concerning a world organization as vast as Russian Communism. This silence is due in part to shortsighted political policy, and is favored by various occult forces which for a long time have been working for the overthrow of the Christian Social Order. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 18, March 19, 1937)

Communism has changed its tactics: it strives to entice the multitudes by trickery, hiding its real designs behind ideas like peace

In the beginning Communism showed itself for what it was in all its perversity; but very soon it realized that it was thus alienating the people. It has therefore changed its tactics, and strives to entice the multitudes by trickery of various forms, hiding its real designs behind ideas that in themselves are good and attractive. Thus, aware of the universal desire for peace, the leaders of Communism pretend to be the most zealous promoters and propagandists in the movement for world amity. Yet at the same time they stir up a class-warfare which causes rivers of blood to flow, and, realizing that their system offers no internal guarantee of peace, they have recourse to unlimited armaments. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 57, March 19, 1937)

Communists worm their way into Catholic circles using so-called 'humanitarianism' and 'charity'

Under various names which do not suggest Communism, they establish organizations and periodicals with the sole purpose of carrying their ideas into quarters otherwise inaccessible. They try perfidiously to worm their way even into professedly Catholic and religious organizations. Again, without receding an inch from their subversive principles, they invite Catholics to collaborate with them in the realm of so-called humanitarianism and charity; and at times even make proposals that are in perfect harmony with the Christian spirit and the doctrine of the Church. Elsewhere they carry their hypocrisy so far as to encourage the belief that Communism, in countries where faith and culture are more strongly entrenched, will assume another and much milder form. It will not interfere with the practice of religion. It will respect liberty of conscience. There are some even who refer to certain changes recently introduced into soviet legislation as a proof that Communism is about to abandon its program of war against God. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 57, March 19, 1937)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Communism: shame of our time – while claiming to bring them freedom keeps whole nations in servitude

Millions of our own contemporaries legitimately yearn to recover those basic freedoms of which they were deprived by totalitarian and atheistic regimes which came to power by violent and revolutionary means, precisely in the name of the liberation of the people. This shame of our time cannot be ignored: while claiming to bring them freedom, these regimes keep whole nations in conditions of servitude which are unworthy of mankind. Those who, perhaps inadvertently, make themselves accomplices of similar enslavements betray the very poor they mean to help. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on certain aspects of the 'Theology of Liberation,'* Ch. XI, no. 10, August 6, 1984)

IV – THE COMMUNIST ‘OPENNESS’ TOWARD CHRISTIANS IS INHUMAN PERSECUTION

Pius XI

Communism: openly hostile to the Church and to God Himself is incredibly cruel and inhuman when in power

One section of Socialism has undergone almost the same change that the capitalistic economic system, as We have explained above, has undergone. It has sunk into Communism. **Communism** teaches and seeks two objectives: Unrelenting class warfare and absolute extermination of private ownership. Not secretly or by hidden methods does it do this, but publicly, openly, and **by employing every and all means, even the most violent.** To achieve these objectives there is nothing which it does not dare, nothing for which it has respect or reverence; and **when it has come to power, it is incredible and portent like in its cruelty and inhumanity.** The horrible slaughter and destruction through which it has laid waste vast regions of eastern Europe and Asia are the evidence; **how much an enemy and how openly hostile it is to Holy Church and to God Himself** is, alas, too well proved by facts and fully known to all. Although We, therefore, deem it superfluous to warn upright and faithful children of the Church regarding the **impious and iniquitous character of Communism**, yet We cannot without deep sorrow contemplate the heedlessness of those who apparently make light of these impending dangers, and with sluggish inertia allow the widespread propagation of doctrine which seeks by violence and slaughter to destroy society altogether. All the more gravely to be condemned is the folly of those who neglect to remove or change the conditions that inflame the minds of peoples, and pave the way for the overthrow and destruction of society. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno*, no. 112, May 15, 1931)

Subversive sect that nourishes hatred against the Lord and His Christ in Spain, Mexico, Russia...

It has therefore caused Us great amazement

and profound anguish to learn that some, as if it were to justify the iniquitous proceedings against the Church, publicly alleged a necessity of defending the new Republic. From the foregoing, it appears so evident that the alleged motive was nonexistent, that we can only conclude the struggle against the Church in Spain is **not so much due to a misunderstanding of the Catholic Faith and its beneficial institutions, as of a hatred against the Lord and His Christ nourished by groups subversive to any religious and social order, as alas we have seen in Mexico and Russia.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Dilectissima Nobis*, no. 5, June 3, 1933)

The Communist persecution: daily writes new and glorious chapters to the Martyrology

The vast and most afflicted Russia, due to a true fury of hatred against God, has destroyed and continues still to destroy all that belongs to religion, especially the Catholic religion: **everything, except the unbreakable and true fidelity, admirable heroism that gives – one could well say everyday – new and most glorious chapters to the Martyrology.** (Pius XI. *Address Siamo ancora on the occasion of the inauguration of the World Exhibit of the Catholic Press*, May 12, 1936)

Communism strove by every possible means to destroy the Christian religion – assassinations and inhuman persecution

Meanwhile the sorry effects of this propaganda are before our eyes. Where Communism has been able to assert its power – and here We are thinking with special affection of the people of Russia and Mexico – **it has striven by every possible means, as its champions openly boast, to destroy Christian civilization and the Christian religion** by banishing every remembrance of them from the hearts of men, especially of the young. **Bishops and priests were exiled, condemned to forced labor, shot and done to death in inhuman fashion; laymen suspected of defending their religion were vexed, persecuted, dragged off to trial and thrown into prison.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 19, March 19, 1937)

Destruction, slaughter, hatred and savage barbarity that one would not have believed possible

Even where the scourge of Communism has not yet had time enough to exercise to the full its logical effects, as witness Our beloved Spain, it has, alas, found compensation in the fiercer violence of its attack. Not only this or that church or isolated monastery was sacked, but as far as possible every church and every monastery was destroyed. Every vestige of the Christian religion was eradicated, even though intimately linked with the rarest monuments of art and science. The fury of Communism has not confined itself to the indiscriminate slaughter of Bishops, of thousands of priests and religious of both sexes; it searches out above all those who have been devoting their lives to the welfare of the working classes and the poor. But the majority of its victims have been laymen of all conditions and classes. Even up to the present moment, masses of them are slain almost daily for no other offense than the fact that they are good Christians or at least opposed to atheistic Communism. And this fearful destruction has been carried out with a hatred and a savage barbarity one would not have believed possible in our age. No man of good sense, nor any statesman conscious of his responsibility can fail to shudder at the thought that what is happening today in Spain may perhaps be repeated tomorrow in other civilized countries. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 20, March 19, 1937)

These atrocities are the natural fruit of a system which lacks all inner restraint

Nor can it be said that these atrocities are a transitory phenomenon, the usual accompaniment of all great revolutions, the isolated excesses common to every war. No, they are the natural fruit of a system which lacks all inner restraint. Some restraint is necessary for man considered either as an individual or in society. Even the barbaric peoples had this inner check in the natural law written by God in the heart of every man. And where this natural law was held in higher esteem, ancient nations rose to a grandeur that still fascinates – more than it should – certain superficial students of human history. But tear the very idea of God from the hearts of men, and they

are necessarily urged by their passions to the most atrocious barbarity. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 21, March 19, 1937)

The whole Christian people are continually in danger of falling away from the faith or of suffering a most cruel death

For from all sides the cry of the peoples who are mourning comes up to us, and their princes or rulers have indeed stood up and met together in one against the Lord and against His Church (cf. Psalm 2:2). Throughout those regions indeed, we see that all rights both human and Divine are confounded. Churches are thrown down and overturned, religious men and sacred virgins are torn from their homes and are afflicted with abuse, with barbarities, with hunger and imprisonment; bands of boys and girls are snatched from the bosom of their mother the Church, and are induced to renounce Christ, to blaspheme and to attempt the worst crimes of lust; the whole Christian people, sadly disheartened and disrupted, are continually in danger of falling away from the faith, or of suffering the most cruel death. These things in truth are so sad that you might say that such events foreshadow and portend the ‘beginning of sorrows,’ that is to say of those that shall be brought by the man of sin, ‘who is lifted up above all that is called God or is worshipped’ (2 Thess 2:4). (Pius XI. *Encyclical Miserentissimus Redemptor*, no. 15, May 8, 1928)

JOHN PAUL II

Fidelity to Christ of the Ukrainian people in face of violent Communist persecution

In the first place I greet you, dear Brothers united by common faith in Christ who died and rose again. The violent Communist persecution did not succeed in eliminating the yearning for Christ and his Gospel from the spirit of the Ukrainian people, because this faith is part of its history and its very life. (John Paul II. *Meeting with representatives of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations*, Kyiv, June 24, 2001)

An intrepid witness during the Communist persecution

With the passage of time, Your Eminence, the eloquent witness that you have given to Christ stands out even more in the Church. Your name has crossed the threshold of your native land, touching and edifying the faithful in Europe and in the entire world. **Where bishops, priests, religious and laity continue to be put to the test by the regimes that suppress religious freedom and freedom of conscience, it is a sure source of consolation and encouragement to know that persons like you have persevered in their intrepid witness during the Communist persecution.** (John Paul II. *Letter to Cardinal Alexandru Todea*, May 28, 2002)

BENEDICT XVI

The wounds of Communism have not yet completely healed

Venerable Brothers, the Lord has chosen you to work in his vineyard in a society that only recently emerged from **the sad winter of persecution**. While **the wounds that Communism inflicted on your peoples have not yet completely healed**, the influence of a secularism that exalts the mirages of consumerism and makes man the measure of himself is growing. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the Bishops of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia on their ad limina visit*, June 23, 2006)

A hardened regime, but it could not make the Church bow down

Blessed Alojzije Stepinac responded with his priesthood, with the episcopate, with the sacrifice of his life: a unique 'yes' united to that of Christ. **His martyrdom signals the culmination of the violence perpetrated against the Church during the terrible period of communist persecution. Croatian Catholics, and in particular the clergy, were objects of oppression and systematic abuse, aimed at destroying the Catholic Church, beginning with its highest Authority in this place. That particularly difficult period was characterized by a generation of Bishops, priests and Religious who were ready to die rather than to betray Christ, the Church and the Pope.** The people saw that the priests never lost faith, hope and charity, and thus they remained always united. **This unity**

explains what is humanly inexplicable: that such a hardened regime could not make the Church bow down. (Benedict XVI. *Celebration of Vespers with Bishops, Priests, Religious and Seminarians and prayer at the tomb of Blessed Alojzije Viktor Stepinac*, June 5, 2011)

V – HELPING THE POOR IS NOT AN IDEOLOGICAL STANDARD, BUT RATHER A NORMAL TRAIT OF THE CHURCH'S CHARITY

LEO XIII

Socialists distort the Gospel to suit their own purposes

For, indeed, although **the socialists, stealing the very Gospel itself with a view to deceive more easily the unwary, have been accustomed to distort it so as to suit their own purposes**, nevertheless so great is the difference between their depraved teachings and the most pure doctrine of Christ that none greater could exist. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod apostolici muneris*, no. 5, December 28, 1878)

PIUS XI

Neither Socialism nor Communism would have existed if the nations had been faithful to the Church

It may be said in all truth that **the Church, like Christ, goes through the centuries doing good to all. There would be today neither Socialism nor Communism if the rulers of the nations had not scorned the teachings and maternal warnings of the Church.** On the bases of liberalism and laicism they wished to build other social edifices which, powerful and imposing as they seemed at first, all too soon revealed the weakness of their foundations, and today are crumbling one after another before our eyes, as everything must crumble that is not grounded on the one corner stone which is Christ Jesus. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 38, March 19, 1937)

‘Charity’ without justice is not charity but only its empty name and hollow semblance

But charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into constant account. The Apostle teaches that he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law and he gives the reason: For, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal . . . and if there be any other commandment, it is comprised in this word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Rom 13: 8- 9). According to the Apostle, then, all the commandments, including those which are of strict justice, as those which forbid us to kill or to steal, may be reduced to the single precept of true charity. From this it follows that a **‘charity’ which deprives the workingman of the salary to which he has a strict title in justice, is not charity at all, but only its empty name and hollow semblance.** The wage-earner is not to receive as alms what is his due in justice. And let no one attempt with trifling charitable donations to exempt himself from the great duties imposed by justice. **Both justice and charity often dictate obligations touching on the same subject-matter, but under different aspects;** and the very dignity of the workingman makes him justly and acutely sensitive to the duties of others in his regard. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 49, March 19, 1937)

JOHN PAUL II

To proclaim mercy is a part of the life of the Church – She is the trustee and dispenser of the Savior’s mercy

The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy – the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and of the Redeemer – and when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior’s mercy, of which she is the trustee and dispenser. (John Paul II. *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 13, November 30, 1980)

BENEDICT XV

The Church heals the wounds of society with a variety of good deeds because She

is the heir and guardian of the spirit of Jesus Christ

So too is it necessary that Jesus, of Whom the Samaritan was the figure, should lay His hands upon the wounds of society. This work, this duty the Church claims as her own as heir and guardian of the spirit of Jesus Christ – the Church whose entire existence is a marvelously varied tissue of all kinds of good deeds, the Church, **‘that real mother of Christians in the full sense of the word, who has such tenderness of love and charity for one’s neighbors that she can offer the best remedies for the different evils which afflict souls on account of their sins.’** That is why she ‘treats and teaches children with tenderness, young people with firmness, old people with great calm, taking account not only of the age but also the condition of soul of each’ (Augustine *de moribus Ecc. Cat. lib. I, c. 30*). It would be difficult to exaggerate the effect of many-sided Christian beneficence in softening the heart and thus facilitating the return of tranquility to the nations. (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Pacem Dei Munus*, no. 11-12, May 23, 1920)

CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS

Bishops ought to make every effort to expand and improve charitable activities

If a diocese is already engaged in charitable activities, the Bishop ought to make every effort to expand and improve them. If necessary, he will establish new means which correspond to the ever changing needs of his flock, particularly in the areas of services for children, young people, the elderly, the sick and the disabled, immigrants and refugees, for whom the Church’s charitable assistance must be ever accessible and ever available (Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 8). (Congregation for Bishops. *Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, no. 195, February 22, 2004)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Contribution for the poor in the early Church

Now, however, I am going to Jerusalem to minister to the holy ones.

For Macedonia and Achaia **have decided to make some contribution for the poor** among the holy ones in Jerusalem; **they decided to do it, and in fact they are indebted to them,** for if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to serve them in material blessings. (Rom 15:25-27)

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We are all equal – everyone!

When this is not acknowledged, that society is unjust

‘You will be like gods’ (Gen 3:5). When Eve fell into the temptation proposed by the serpent in the Garden of Eden, there were immediate and disastrous consequences for our first parents: expulsion from Paradise, loss of supernatural and preternatural gifts, and a life of suffering. The pretension of being ‘equal to God’ was the cause of all the evils that exist in the world. This same temptation is repeated in man’s interior even today. The illusion of not having superiors incites man to believe that tranquility comes from a total equality of wealth, position and responsibilities.

The Church, as a Mother, has never been indifferent to the needs of the poorest. Institutes of charity, born of her inexhaustible bounty, were dedicated not only to feeding those in need, but even more, to making them feel loved and appreciated. The Church has always instructed the prosperous to practice generosity, using their wealth to assist their neighbor. This concern of the superior for the inferior created mutual esteem and harmony between the different social classes – classes that were not closed in on themselves, but rather in continuous relations. Those benefitted were thankful for the help received from the wealthier, and desired their prosperity, while the latter, in turn, were moved to grant more favors due to the affection and gratitude expressed. In conclusion: where fraternal love reigns, justice exists, for everyone receives what he deserves. And where justice exists, solid peace is established. However, a fraternal love whereby some sacrifice themselves for others can only come from the love of God. On the contrary, when everyone wants to be equal, egoism reigns and we are led to ask: what is the true cause of injustice? What does the Church teach regarding social equality? Is radical equality really the solution to obtain peace?

FRANCIS

[Boy:] ‘But according to you, Pope, one day will we all be equal?’

[Francis:] This question can be answered in two ways: **we are all equal – everyone!** – but **this truth is not acknowledged**, this equality is not acknowledged, **and therefore some are** – let’s say the word, but between quotation marks – **happier than others**. But this is not a right! **We all have the same rights! When this is not acknowledged, that society is unjust. It isn’t based on justice.** (*Address to children of Italian schools participating in the encounter promoted by ‘La Fabbrica della Pace’, May 11, 2015*)

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I – INEQUALITY IS WILLED BY GOD HIMSELF

SACRED SCRIPTURE

God has designated diverse functions within the Church

Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? (1Cor 12:28-30)

‘You always have the poor with you’

You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me. (Jn 12:8)

The whole body builds itself up in love

The whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body’s growth and builds itself up in love. (Eph 4:16)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Diversity and inequality in created things are the intention of God Himself

The highest degree of perfection should not be

lacking in a work made by the supremely good workman. But the good of order among diverse things is better than any of the members of an order, taken by itself. For the good of order is formal in respect to each member of it, as the perfection of the whole in relation to the parts. It was not fitting, therefore, that God’s work should lack the good of order. And yet, without the diversity and inequality of created things, this good could not exist. To sum up: **The diversity and inequality in created things are not the result of chance**, nor of a diversity of matter, nor of the intervention of certain causes or merits, **but of the intention of God Himself, who wills to give the creature such perfection as it is possible for it to have.** Accordingly, in the Book of Genesis (Gen 1:31) it is said: ‘God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good,’ each one of them having been previously said to be good. For each thing in its nature is good, but all things together are very good, by reason of the order of the universe, which is the ultimate and noblest perfection in things. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book II, Ch. 45, no. 8-10)

BENEDICT XV

‘He himself made both small and great’ for the advantage of individuals and the community

Those who are have less and who are of a lower social position must therefore understand well this truth: that the **distinction of social classes**

proceeds from nature, and therefore from the very will of God, since 'He himself made both small and great' (Wis 6:7); and this works marvellously for the good of each individual and of the community. They should persuade themselves then that while they may better their conditions through effort and favored by fortune, there will always exist for them – as for all human beings – no small portions of suffering. Wherefore, if they wish to act wisely, they will not aspire to utopias beyond their reach, and will support with peace and moral strength the inevitable evils of this life, in the hope of the immortal goods. (Benedict XV. *Letter Soliti nos*, March 11, 1920)

PIUS XI

To preserve the diversity of classes is an attribute of a soundly constituted State

In view of this organized common effort towards peaceful living, Catholic doctrine vindicates to the State the dignity and authority of a vigilant and provident defender of those divine and human rights on which the Sacred Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church insist so often. **It is not true that all have equal rights in civil society. It is not true that there exists no lawful social hierarchy.** Let it suffice to refer to the Encyclicals of Leo XIII already cited, especially to that on State powers, (Encycl. *Diuturnum Illud*, June 20, 1881. *Acta Leonis XIII*, Vol. I, 210-22) and to the other on the Christian Constitution of States (Encycl. *Immortale Dei*, Nov. 1, 1885. *Acta Leonis XIII*, Vol. II, pp. 146-168). (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 32, March 19, 1937)

True social order comes from a strong bond between the various members

Because order, as Saint Thomas well explains, **is unity arising from the harmonious arrangement of many objects, a true, genuine social order demands that the various members of a society be united together by some strong bond.** This unifying force is present not only in the producing of goods or the rendering of services – in which the employers and employees of an identical Industry or Profession collaborate jointly – but also in that common good, **to achieve which all Industries and Professions together ought,**

each to the best of its ability, to cooperate amicably. And this unity will be the stronger and more effective, the more faithfully individuals and the Industries and Professions themselves strive to do their work and excel in it. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 84, May 15, 1931)

PIUS X

To preserve the diversity of classes is an attribute of a soundly constituted State

But in this respect the principles of Catholic doctrine have been defined, and the history of Christian civilization bears witness to their beneficent fruitfulness. Our Predecessor of happy memory re-affirmed them in masterly documents, and all Catholics dealing with social questions have the duty to study them and to keep them in mind. He taught, among other things, that 'Christian Democracy must **preserve the diversity of classes** which is assuredly the attribute of a **soundly constituted State**, and it must seek to give human society the form and character which God, its Author, has imparted to it.' **Our Predecessor denounced 'A certain Democracy which goes so far in wickedness as to place sovereignty in the people and aims at the suppression of classes and their leveling down.'** At the same time, Leo XIII laid down for Catholics a program of action, the only program capable of putting society back onto its centuries old Christian basis. [...] Further, they reject the doctrine recalled by Leo XIII on the essential principles of society; **they place authority in the people, or gradually suppress it and strive, as their ideal, to effect the leveling down of the classes. In opposition to Catholic doctrine, therefore, they are proceeding towards a condemned ideal.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Notre charge apostolique*, no. 9, August 15, 1910)

LEO XIII

Inequality of rights and power emanates from the God, the Author of nature

From the records of the Gospels **the equality of men consists in this**, that all have received the same nature, and are called to the same

highest dignity of the sons of God; and at the same time that, since the same end is established for all, each is to be judged individually according to the same law, to obtain punishments or rewards according to merit. **An inequality of right and power, however, emanates from the very author of nature**, ‘from whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named’ (Eph 3:15). But the souls of princes and subjects, according to Catholic doctrine and precepts, are so bound by mutual duties and rights that both the passion for ruling is tempered and the way of obedience is made easy, steadfast, and most noble. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3130-3131. *Leo XIII*, Encyclical *Quod Apostolici muneris*, December 28, 1878)

Socialists proclaim total equality of man; the Church recognizes inequalities

But also, Catholic wisdom most skillfully provides for public and domestic tranquility, supported by the precepts of divine law, through what it holds and teaches concerning the right of ownership and the distribution of goods which have been obtained for the necessities and uses of life. **For when Socialists proclaim the right of property to be a human invention repugnant to the natural equality of man**, and, seeking to establish community of goods, think that poverty is by no means to be endured with equanimity; and that the possessions and rights of the rich can be violated with impunity, **the Church, much more properly and practically, recognizes inequality among men**, who are naturally different in strength of body and of mind; also in the possession of goods, and it orders that right of property and of ownership, which proceeds from nature itself, be for everyone intact and inviolate; for it knows that theft and raping have been forbidden by God, the author and vindicator of every right, in such a way that one may not even look attentively upon (al.: covet) the property of another, and ‘that thieves and robbers, no less than adulterers and idolaters are excluded from the kingdom of heaven’ (cf. 1Cor 6:9 f). (Denzinger-Hünemann 3130-3131. *Leo XIII*, Encyclical *Quod Apostolici muneris*, December 28, 1878)

Most repugnant to reason: to endeavor to confine all within the same measure, to

attempt complete equality

In like manner, **no one doubts that all men are equal one to another**, so far as regards their **common origin and nature**, or the last end which each one has to attain, or the rights and duties which are thence derived. But, **as the abilities of all are not equal**, as one differs from another in the powers of mind or body, and as there are very many dissimilarities of manner, disposition, and character, **it is most repugnant to reason to endeavor to confine all within the same measure, and to extend complete equality to the institutions of civic life**. Just as a perfect condition of the body results from the conjunction and composition of its various members, which, though differing in form and purpose, make, by their union and the distribution of each one to its proper place, a combination beautiful to behold, firm in strength, and necessary for use; so, in the commonwealth, there is an almost infinite dissimilarity of men, as parts of the whole. If they are to be all equal, and each is to follow his own will, the State will appear most deformed; **but if, with a distinction of degrees of dignity, of pursuits and employments, all aptly conspire for the common good, they will present the image of a State both well constituted and conformable to nature**. (*Leo XIII*. *Encyclical Humanum genus*, no. 26, April 29, 1884)

Society cannot exist or be conceived of without differences and inequalities of condition

But although all citizens, without exception, can and ought to contribute to that common good in which individuals share so advantageously to themselves, yet it should not be supposed that all can contribute in the like way and to the same extent. No matter what changes may occur in forms of government, **there will ever be differences and inequalities of condition in the State. Society cannot exist or be conceived of without them**. **Some there must be who devote themselves to the work of the commonwealth**, who make the laws or administer justice, or whose advice and authority govern the nation in times of peace, and defend it in war. **Such men clearly occupy the foremost place in the State, and should be held in highest estimation**, for their work concerns most nearly and effectively the

general interests of the community. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Rerum novarum*, no. 34, May 15, 1891)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The ‘talents’ were not distributed equally – differences belong to God’s plan

On coming into the world, man is not equipped with everything he needs for developing his bodily and spiritual life. He needs others. **Differences appear** tied to age, physical abilities, intellectual or moral aptitudes, the benefits derived from social commerce, and the distribution of wealth (cf. GS 29 # 2). **The ‘talents’ are not distributed equally** (cf. Mt 25:14-30; Lk 19:27). **These differences belong to God’s plan, who wills that each receive what he needs from others, and that those endowed with particular ‘talents’ share the benefits with those who need them. These differences encourage and often oblige persons to practice generosity, kindness, and sharing of goods; they foster the mutual enrichment of cultures.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1936, 1937)

SAINT THERESE OF LISIEUX

Perfection consists in doing God’s Will, not in aspiring to equality

I often asked myself why God had preferences, why all souls did not receive an equal measure of grace. [...] Our Lord has deigned to explain this mystery to me. He showed me the book of nature, and **I understood that every flower created by Him is beautiful, that the brilliance of the rose and the whiteness of the lily do not lessen the perfume of the violet or the sweet simplicity of the daisy.** I understood that if all the lowly flowers wished to be roses, nature would lose its springtime beauty, and the fields would no longer be enamelled with lovely hues. **And so it is in the world of souls, Our Lord’s living garden. He has been pleased to create great Saints** who may be compared to the lily and the rose, but He has also created lesser ones, who must be content to be daisies or simple violets flowering at His Feet, and whose mission it is to gladden His Divine Eyes when He deigns to look down on them. **And**

the more gladly they do His Will the greater is their perfection. (Saint Therese of Lisieux. *The Story of a Soul*, Manuscript A, Ch. 1)

II – CHRISTIAN CHARITY FLOURISHES WITHIN INEQUALITY

BENEDICT XVI

The Marxist reproach of charity in the name of ‘justice’ is mistaken

Since the nineteenth century, an objection has been raised to the Church’s charitable activity, subsequently developed with particular insistence by Marxism: **the poor, it is claimed, do not need charity but justice.** Works of charity–almsgiving–are in effect a way for the rich to shirk their obligation to work for justice and a means of soothing their consciences, while preserving their own status and robbing the poor of their rights. Instead of contributing through individual works of charity to maintaining the status quo, we need to build a just social order in which all receive their share of the world’s goods and no longer have to depend on charity. **There is admittedly some truth to this argument, but also much that is mistaken.** It is true that the pursuit of justice must be a fundamental norm of the State and that the aim of a just social order is to guarantee to each person, according to the principle of subsidiarity, his share of the community’s goods. This has always been emphasized by Christian teaching on the State and by the Church’s social doctrine. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Deus caritas est*, no. 26, December 25, 2005)

JOHN PAUL II

Only love brings about unity in diversity – a society without classes is a utopia

I learned that a Christian youth ceases to be young, and has long ceased to be Christian when he allows himself be seduced by doctrines and ideologies that preach hatred and violence. **For a just society may not be constructed upon injustice.** A society – one that deserves the title of human – cannot be built with lack of respect and, even worse, the destruction of human liberty, denying individuals the most

fundamental liberties. [...] **I learned that a youth begins to age dangerously** when he lets himself be tricked by the easy and comfortable principle that ‘the end justifies the means’; **when he starts believing that the only hope to improve society is to promote conflict and hatred between social groups, in the utopia of a society without classes, that soon reveals itself as the creator of new classes.** I became convinced that **only love brings together that which is different and brings about unity in diversity.** The words of Christ ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you’ (Jn 13: 34), then seemed to me, beyond their incomparable theological profundity, to be the seed and principle of the only transformation radical to be appreciated by a young person. The seed and principle of the only revolution that does not betray man. Only true love erects. (John Paul II. *Mass for Brazilian youth in Belo Horizonte*, July 1, 1980)

JOHN XXIII

Whoever denies the differences among social classes contradicts the very laws of nature – whoever opposes their peaceful cooperation divides human society

The harmonious unity which must be sought among peoples and nations also needs ever greater improvement among the various classes of individuals. Otherwise mutual antagonism and conflict can result, as we have already seen. And the next step brings rioting mobs, wanton destruction of property, and sometimes even bloodshed. Meanwhile public and private resources diminish and are stretched to the danger point. On this point Pope Leo XIII made apt and appropriate comment: **‘God has commanded that there be differences of classes in the human community and that these classes, by friendly cooperation, work out a fair and mutual adjustment of their interests’** (Letter *Permoti Nos*). For it is quite clear that ‘as the symmetry of the human frame results from suitable arrangement of the various parts of the body, so in a body politic it is ordained by nature that... **the classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic.** Each needs the other: capital cannot do without labor, nor

labor without capital. Their mutual agreement will result in the splendor of right order’ (Encyclical letter *Rerum novarum*). **Anyone, therefore, who ventures to deny that there are differences among social classes contradicts the very laws of nature.** Indeed, whoever opposes peaceful and necessary cooperation among the social classes is attempting, beyond doubt, to disrupt and divide human society; he menaces and does serious injury to private interests and the public welfare. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Ad Petri cathedram*, no. 36-38, June 29, 1959)

All classes should regulate their mutual relations in accordance with the principle of Christian brotherhood

Finally, both workers and employers should regulate their mutual relations in accordance with the principle of human solidarity and Christian brotherhood. **Unrestricted competition in the liberal sense, and the Marxist creed of class warfare; are clearly contrary to Christian teaching and the nature of man.** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et Magistra*, no. 23, May 15, 1961)

BENEDICT XV

Brotherly love is not calculated to get rid of the differences of conditions and therefore of classes

When the twofold principle of cohesion of the whole body of society has been weakened, that is to say, the union of the members with one another by mutual charity and their union with their head by their dutiful recognition of authority, is it to be wondered at, Venerable Brethren, that human society should be seen to be divided as it were into two hostile armies bitterly and ceaselessly at strife? [...] Once they have been imbued with the fallacies of the agitators, to whose behests they are most docile, **who will ever make them see that it does not follow that because men are equal by their nature, they must all occupy an equal place in the community? And further, who will ever make them see that the position of each one is that which each by use of his natural gifts – unless prevented by force of circumstances – is able to make**

for himself? And so the poor who strive against the rich as though they had taken part of the goods of others, **not merely act contrary to justice and charity, but also act irrationally**, particularly as they themselves by honest industry can improve their fortunes if they choose. It is not necessary to enumerate the many consequences, **not less disastrous for the individual than for the community, which follow from this class hatred.** [...] But more especially – and **We do not hesitate to repeat it – by the help of every argument, supplied by the Gospels or by the nature of man himself**, or by the consideration of the interests of the individual and of the community, let us strive to exhort all men, that in virtue of the divine law of charity they should love one another with brotherly love. **Brotherly love is not calculated to get rid of the differences of conditions and therefore of classes – a result which is just as impossible as that in the living body all the members should have the same functions and dignity – but it will bring it to pass that those who occupy higher positions will in some way bring themselves down to those in a lower position, and treat them not only justly, for it is only right that they should, but kindly and in a friendly and patient spirit, and the poor on their side will rejoice in their prosperity and rely confidently on their help – even as the younger son of a family relies on the help and protection of his elder brother.** (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Ad beatissimi*, no. 12-13, November 1, 1914)

PIUS XII

Inequalities of culture, wealth, social position that have origin in the very nature of things are not an obstacle for an authentic spirit of community and fraternity

In a people worthy of this name, the citizen feels within himself the awareness of his personality, of his duties and his rights, of his own liberty united to the respect for the liberty and the dignity of others. **In a people worthy of this name, all of the inequalities, which have their origin not in caprice, but rather from the very nature of things, inequalities of culture, wealth, social position – without**

injury, naturally, to justice and mutual charity – do not constitute, in reality, any obstacle for the existence and prevalence an authentic spirit of community and fraternity. Moreover, **these natural inequalities, far from undermining in any way civil equality, confer to it its legitimate meaning**, that is, as regards the State, **each citizen has the right to live his own personal life with dignity in the position and conditions in which the designs and the dispositions of Providence have placed him.** (Pius XII. *Radio message Benignitas et humanitas for Christmas*, December 24, 1944)

Differences between men are ordered when there is fidelity to God

If social life implicates of itself an interior unity, it does not however exclude the **differences caused by reality and nature.** But, **when fidelity to God**, the supreme regulator of everything that refers to man is maintained, the similarities, as well as the differences of men find their adequate place in the absolute order of the being, of values and, consequently, also of morality. If, on the contrary, this foundation is shaken, among the different fields of culture a dangerous discontinuity is opened, uncertainty and transience will appear in the outlines, limits and values such that only merely external factors, and often blind instincts, come to determine later on, according to the dominant tendency of the moment, to whom will pertain the dominance of one or other trends. (Pius XII. *Radio message Con sempre nuova freschezza for Christmas*, December 24, 1942)

PIUS X

To consider every inequality as an injustice is not Catholic

Thus, to the Sillon, every inequality of condition is an injustice, or at least, a diminution of justice? **Here we have a principle that conflicts sharply with the nature of things, a principle conducive to jealousy, injustice, and subversive to any social order.** [...] Therefore, when he said that justice could be found in any of the three aforesaid forms of government, he was teaching that in this respect Democracy does

not enjoy a special privilege. The Sillonists who maintain the opposite view, either turn a deaf ear to the teaching of **the Church or form for themselves an idea of justice and equality which is not Catholic.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Notre charge apostolique*, August 15, 1910)

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

God made things with differences so that men are able to show love for their neighbors

Although I have given them in such a different way, that is to say not all to one, but to one, one virtue, and to another, another, [...] to one I will give principally love, to another justice, to another humility, to one a lively faith, [...] I use the word temporal for the things necessary to the physical life of man; all these I have given indifferently, and I have not placed them all in one soul, in order that man should, perforce, have material for love of his fellow. [...] but I wish that one should have need of the other, and that they should be My ministers to administer the graces and the gifts that they have received from Me. (Saint Catherine of Siena. *Dialogue*, Ch. 7)

III – THE EFFECTS OF UNNATURAL AND COMPULSORY EQUALITY

BENEDICT XVI

The socialization of means of production left behind a trail of appalling destruction

He [Marx] simply presumed that with the expropriation of the ruling class, with the fall of political power and the socialization of means of production, the new Jerusalem would be realized. Then, indeed, all contradictions would be resolved, man and the world would finally sort themselves out. Then everything would be able to proceed by itself along the right path, because **everything would belong to everyone** and all would desire the best for one another. [...] True, Marx had spoken of the interim phase of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessity which in time would automatically become redundant. This ‘intermediate phase’

we know all too well, **and we also know how it then developed, not ushering in a perfect world, but leaving behind a trail of appalling destruction.** Marx not only omitted to work out how this new world would be organized—which should, of course, have been unnecessary. [...] **He thought that once the economy had been put right,** everything would automatically be put right. His real error is materialism: man, in fact, is not merely the product of economic conditions, and **it is not possible to redeem him purely from the outside by creating a favourable economic environment.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spe Salvi*, no. 21, November 30, 2007)

JOHN PAUL II

Collectivism does not do away with alienation but rather increases it, adding to it a lack of basic necessities and economic inefficiency

Marxism criticized capitalist bourgeois societies, blaming them for the commercialization and alienation of human existence. This rebuke is of course **based on a mistaken and inadequate idea of alienation,** derived solely from the sphere of relationships of production and ownership, that is, giving them a materialistic foundation and moreover denying the legitimacy and positive value of market relationships even in their own sphere. **Marxism thus ends up by affirming that only in a collective society can alienation be eliminated.** However, the historical experience of socialist countries has **sadly demonstrated that collectivism does not do away with alienation but rather increases it,** adding to it a lack of basic necessities and economic inefficiency. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 41, May 1, 1991)

JOHN XXIII

Erroneous ideologies attempt to sow discord between social classes

Dear sons and daughters. It is here, in this splendor that emanates from the celestial model, that we must see what should be the attitude and disposition to execute and dedicate oneself to work, obligation and honor of the life of each man. **Erroneous ideologies,**

exalting on one hand an uncontrolled liberty, and on the other the suppression of the personality, seek to strip the worker of his grandeur, reducing him to an instrument of conflict or abandoning him to his own devices; **they seek to sow discord and conflict, in the confrontation between the different social classes**; an attempt is finally made to separate the working masses from God – who is the only protector and defender of the humble, and from whom we receive life, movement and existence – as though the condition of the workers exonerates them from the duty of knowing, honoring and serving him. [...] Dear sons and daughters, look confidently ahead, toward the path that opens up before you. **The Church counts on you to spread, from the workplace, the doctrine and the peace of Christ.** May work always be for you a noble mission of which only God can be the inspirer and recompense. **Within the reciprocal relations of social life, may true charity, mutual respect, and the desire for cooperation reign: a familial and fraternal ambience** according to the luminous teachings of the Epistle of Saint Paul read at mass today: ‘And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Whatever you do, do from the heart, as for the Lord and not for others, knowing that you will receive from the Lord the due payment of the inheritance; be slaves of the Lord Christ.’ (John XXIII. *Radio message to workers on the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker, May 1, 1960*)

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MORAL

FAMILY

LAW

LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

PIETY

SIN

SACRAMENTS

LIFE

Today I would like to focus our attention on another reality: how to take care of those who, after an irreversible failure of their matrimonial bond, have entered into a new union

When we priests prepare young couples for marriage, we know that one of the most important points that is to be made clear is regarding the indissolubility of the marriage bond, which is sealed when they contract matrimony. It's moving to witness the situation of those who, taking this notion so seriously that even after the misfortune of a separation, not always desired by one of the spouses, find the strength and courage to respect the matrimonial bond, in their awareness of the beauty existing in this testimony of fidelity to the Sacrament, the benefits of living in the state of grace and the sanctity of indissolubility as an image of the mystery of union between Christ and his Church.

The world scorns the immutability of the divine laws and preaches a relativistic doctrine which suggests that failure within a marriage is the same as a rupture in the matrimonial bond. The spouse who wishes to remain faithful, despite all, will have to put up with pressures on all sides, even from family members, who try to convince him or her that their marriage ended with separation and that they are free to form a new family. Those who give in to this proposal, perhaps have an easier life in certain aspects, but this attitude will end up bringing about other disastrous consequences on a personal level, as well as with respect to their eternal salvation, and even on the level of society itself.

If we are truly pastors who desire the salvation of our flock, we can't use terminology that contradicts the doctrine of the Church or that might give an erroneous idea about its teaching. That's why we became perplexed with Francis' recent affirmation, which refers to 'how to take care of those who, after an rupture of their matrimonial bond, have entered into a new union' Today we include a new study, in addition to the analyses made a few days ago regarding certain aspects of these declarations, with particular emphasis on the strange affirmation about a 'rupture of the matrimonial bond' to which Francis alluded. Could he be affirming that such a thing exists? Is it possible that the Pope sustains the idea that matrimony is not indissoluble? Because, that which can be ruptured, is not indissoluble.

To avoid confusions, the best thing to do is recall the lucid doctrine of Holy Mother Church regarding this fundamental aspect of matrimony.¹

FRANCIS

Today I would like to focus our attention on another reality: how to take care of those who, after an irreversible failure [the rupture] of their matrimonial bond, have entered into a new union. The Church is fully aware that such a situation is contrary to the Christian Sacrament. However, her gaze as a teacher always draws from a mother's heart; a heart which, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, always seeks the good

¹**Note:** The English translation available on the Vatican site, and linked below, has 'corrected' the words of the Pope, using 'after an irreversible failure of their matrimonial bond, have entered into a new union'. However, Francis' words are clearly "*tras la ruptura de su vínculo matrimonial han establecido una nueva convivencia*" – which translates in English as "after the **rupture** of their matrimonial bond have established a new union". And these clear words carried to the whole world by the press; obviously just as Francis wished, since he was delivering formal written address. The video could not be more clear (see: 10-11 sec). Besides, the Vatican translation uses the words 'baptized who have established a new relationship of cohabitation after the **failure of the marital sacrament**' later on in the same address, and refers to these situations of concubinage as 'wounded families'.

and the salvation of the people. This is why she feels obliged, ‘for the sake of truth’, to ‘exercise careful discernment of situations’. This is how Saint John Paul II expressed it in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (n. 84), giving as an example the difference between one subjected to separation compared to one who has caused it. This discernment has to be made. If we then also look at these new bonds through the eyes of the young sons and daughters – and the little ones watch – through the eyes of the children, we are aware of a greater urgency to foster a true welcome for these families in our communities. For this reason it is important that the style of the community, its language, its attitudes, always be attentive to people, starting with the little ones. They are the ones who suffer the most in these situations. After all, how can we encourage these parents to do everything possible to raise their children in the Christian life, to give them an example of committed and exercised faith, if we keep them at arm’s length from the life of the community, as if they are excommunicated? We must act in a way so as not to add even more to the burdens which the children in these situations already feel they have to bear! Unfortunately, the number of these children and youth is really large. It is important for them to feel the Church as loving mother to all, always ready to listen and to meet. In these decades, in truth, the Church has been neither insensitive nor lazy. Thanks to the in-depth analysis performed by Pastors, led and guided by my Predecessors, the awareness has truly grown **that it is necessary to have a fraternal and attentive welcome, in love and in truth, of the baptized who have established a new relationship of cohabitation after the failure of the marital sacrament; in fact, these persons are by no means excommunicated – they are not excommunicated! – and they should absolutely not be treated as such: they are still a part of the Church.** Pope Benedict XVI spoke about this question, calling for careful discernment and wise pastoral accompaniment, knowing that there are no ‘simple solutions’ (Speech at the Seventh World Meeting of Families, Milan, 2 June 2012, answer n. 5). Here the repeated call to Pastors to openly and consistently demonstrate the community’s willingness to welcome them and encourage them, so they may increasingly live and develop their membership in Christ and in the Church through prayer, by listening to the Word of God, by attending the liturgy, through the Christian education of their children, through charity and service to the poor, through the commitment to justice and peace. [...] **‘The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open’.... No closed doors! No closed doors! [...] Especially Christian families can cooperate with Him by taking care of wounded families, accompanying them in the life of faith of the community. Each one must do his part in taking on the attitude of the Good Shepherd, who knows each one of his sheep and excludes no one from his infinitive love!** (*General Audience*, August 5, 2015)

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I – A RATIFIED AND CONSUMMATED SACRAMENTAL MARRIAGE CAN NEVER BE DISSOLVED, NOT EVEN BY THE POWER OF THE ROMAN PONTIFF

JOHN PAUL II

Not even the Roman Pontiff can dissolve a ratified and consummated sacramental marriage – otherwise there is no absolutely indissoluble marriage

Today's meeting with you, members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota, is an appropriate setting for also speaking to the whole Church about the limits of the Roman Pontiff's power over ratified and consummated marriage, which 'cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death' (CIC, can. 1141; CCEO, can. 853). By its very nature this formulation of canon law is not only disciplinary or prudential, but corresponds to a doctrinal truth that the Church has always held. Nevertheless, there is an increasingly widespread idea that the Roman Pontiff's

power, being the vicarious exercise of Christ's divine power, is not one of those human powers referred to in the canons cited above, and thus it could be extended in some cases also to the dissolution of ratified and consummated marriages. In view of the doubts and anxieties this idea could cause, it is necessary to reaffirm that a ratified and consummated sacramental marriage can never be dissolved, not even by the power of the Roman Pontiff. The opposite assertion would imply the thesis that there is no absolutely indissoluble marriage, which would be contrary to what the Church has taught and still teaches about the indissolubility of the marital bond. (John Paul II. *Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, no. 6, January 21, 2000)

Neither Scripture nor Tradition recognizes any faculty of the Roman Pontiff for dissolving a ratified and consummated marriage

The Roman Pontiff in fact has the 'sacra potestas' to teach the truth of the Gospel, administer the sacraments and pastorally

govern the Church in the name and with the authority of Christ, but this power does not include per se any power over the divine law, natural or positive. Neither Scripture nor Tradition recognizes any faculty of the Roman Pontiff for dissolving a ratified and consummated marriage; on the contrary, the Church's constant practice shows the certain knowledge of Tradition that **such a power does not exist**. The forceful expressions of the Roman Pontiffs are only the faithful echo and authentic interpretation of the Church's permanent conviction. **It seems quite clear then that the non-extension of the Roman Pontiff's power to ratified and consummated sacramental marriages is taught by the Church's Magisterium as a doctrine to be held definitively, even if it has not been solemnly declared by a defining act.** This doctrine, in fact, has been explicitly proposed by the Roman Pontiffs in categorical terms, in a constant way and over a sufficiently long period of time. It was made their own and taught by all the Bishops in communion with the See of Peter, with the knowledge that it must always be held and accepted by the faithful. In this sense it was reaffirmed by the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Besides, **it is a doctrine confirmed by the Church's centuries-old practice, maintained with full fidelity and heroism, sometimes even in the face of severe pressures from the mighty of this world.** (John Paul II. *Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, no. 8, January 21, 2000)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power

The Lord Jesus insisted on the original intention of the Creator who willed that **marriage be indissoluble** (cf. Mt 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mk 10:9; Lk 16:18; 1Cor 7:10-11). He abrogates the accommodations that had slipped into the old Law (cf. Mt 19:7-9.) Between the baptized, **'a ratified and consummated marriage cannot be dissolved by any human power or for any reason other than death'**. (CIC, can. 1141) (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2382)

The marriage bond is an irrevocable reality and the Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom

The consent by which the spouses mutually give and receive one another is sealed by God himself (cf. Mk 10:9). From their covenant arises 'an institution, confirmed by the divine law,...even in the eyes of society' (GS 48 no.1). The covenant between the spouses is integrated into God's covenant with man: 'Authentic married love is caught up into divine love' (GS 48 no. 2). Thus **the marriage bond has been established by God himself in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved**. This bond, which results from the free human act of the spouses and their consummation of the marriage, **is a reality, henceforth irrevocable**, and gives rise to a covenant guaranteed by God's fidelity. **The Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom.** (cf. CIC, can. 1141). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1639-1640)

PIUS XI

A Christian marriage which is valid and has been consummated may not be destroyed by any human authority

'And so, whatever marriage is said to be contracted, either it is so contracted that it is really a true marriage, in which case it carries with it that enduring bond which by divine right is inherent in every true marriage; or it is thought to be contracted without that perpetual bond, and in that case there is no marriage, but an illicit union opposed of its very nature to the divine law, which therefore cannot be entered into or maintained'. (Pius VI, Rescript. ad Episc. Agriens., 11 July 1789). **And if this stability seems to be open to exception, however rare the exception may be, as in the case of certain natural marriages between unbelievers, or amongst Christians in the case of those marriages which though valid have not been consummated, that exception does not depend on the will of men nor on that of any merely human power, but on divine law, of which the only guardian and**

interpreter is the Church of Christ. However, not even this power can ever affect for any cause whatsoever a Christian marriage which is valid and has been consummated, for as it is plain that here the marriage contract has its full completion, so, by the will of God, there is also the greatest firmness and indissolubility which may not be destroyed by any human authority. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Casti connubii*, no. 34-35, December 31, 1930)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The Church cannot have any power over the reality of a conjugal union, which evokes in its own way the realism of the Incarnation

Why the church cannot dissolve a marriage that is *'ratum et consummatum'*: This Christological vision of Christian marriage allows one to understand why the Church cannot claim for herself the right to dissolve a marriage *ratum et consummatum*, i.e., a marriage that is sacramentally contracted in the Church and ratified by the spouses through the marriage act. In effect, the entire communion of life, which humanly speaking defines the marriage, evokes in its own way the realism of the Incarnation in which the Son of God becomes one with mankind in the flesh. In committing themselves to each other without reserve, the couple signifies by this act their effective transition to the conjugal life in which love becomes a sharing as absolute as possible of each other. They thus enter into the human behavior whose irrevocable character was recalled by Christ and which he made an image that reveals his own mystery. **The Church cannot have any power, then, over the reality of a conjugal union that has passed into the power of him whose mystery she must announce and not hinder.** (International Theological Commission. *Propositions on the doctrine of Christian marriage*, no. 13, 1977)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

If God has joined together, who can separate?

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate. (Mt 19:6)

CODE OF CANON LAW

Only death can dissolve marriage

A marriage that is *ratum et consummatum* can be dissolved by no human power and by no cause, except death. (Code of Canon Law, can. 1141)

II – THE SEPARATION OF THE COUPLE DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A RUPTURE OF THE MARRIAGE BOND

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Although separated, a couple remains nonetheless bound by the bond of marriage

While, on the contrary, now that the faithful must remember that even though separated as to bed and board, they remain none the less bound by the bond of marriage with no hope of marrying another, they are by this very fact rendered less prone to strife and discord. And even if it sometimes happens that husband and wife become separated, and are unable to bear the want of their partnership any longer, they are easily reconciled by friends and return to their common life. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2700)

PIUS XI

The bond of marriage cannot be loosed even in the case of separation

If therefore the Church has not erred and does not err in teaching this, and consequently it is certain that the bond of marriage cannot be loosed even on account of the sin of adultery, it is evident that all the other weaker excuses that can be, and are usually brought forward, are of no value whatsoever. And the objections brought against the firmness of the marriage bond are easily answered. For, in certain circumstances, imperfect separation of the parties is allowed, the bond not being severed. This separation, which the Church herself permits, and expressly mentions in her Canon Law in those canons which deal with the separation of the parties as to marital relationship and co-habitation, removes all the alleged inconveniences and dangers. It will be for the sacred law and, to some extent, also the

civil law, in so far as civil matters are affected, to lay down the grounds, the conditions, the method and precautions to be taken in a case of this kind in order to safeguard the education of the children and the well-being of the family, and to remove all those evils which threaten the married persons, the children and the State. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Casti connubii*, no. 89, December 31, 1930)

CLEMENT XIII

There is separation as regards cohabitation but not regarding the bond

If one of the faithful, previously dispensed, contracts marriage with an unbeliever, it is understood that it was contracted with the explicit condition that the unbeliever wishes to cohabit with the other without offense to the Creator. Therefore, if the unbeliever does not fulfill the cited condition, remedies that the law determines for these situations should be applied such that they be kept; otherwise they should separate as regards the bed and cohabitation, but not with respect to the bond. In consequence, in the hypothesis which is dealt with, **the faithful may not marry again, while the unfaithful spouse is still alive.** (Clement XIII. *Response Saepe contingit of the Holy Office to the Bishop of Cochín India*, August 1, 1759)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

If separated, either remain single or be reconciled

To the married, however, I give this instruction (not I, but the Lord): a wife should not separate from her husband – and if she does separate she must either remain single or become reconciled to her husband – and a husband should not divorce his wife. (1Cor 7: 10-11)

JOHN PAUL II

Example of Christian consistency: respect for the indissolubility of the marriage bond by those who have undergone divorce. These have no obstacle in receiving the Sacraments

The situation is similar for people who have undergone divorce, but, being well aware

that the valid marriage bond is indissoluble, refrain from becoming involved in a new union and devote themselves solely to carrying out their family duties and the responsibilities of Christian life. **In such cases their example of fidelity and Christian consistency takes on particular value as a witness before the world and the Church.** Here it is even more necessary for the Church to offer continual love and assistance, without there being any obstacle to admission to the sacraments. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 83, November 22, 1981)

III – THE ANNULMENT OF A MARRIAGE IS A RECOGNITION THAT NO MARRIAGE EVER EXISTED AND THEREFORE THERE IS NO RUPTURE OF THE MARRIAGE BOND

JOHN PAUL II

To declare the nullity of a marriage is that the marriage never existed – it does not conflict with the principle of indissolubility

Certainly, ‘the Church, after an examination of the situation by the competent ecclesiastical tribunal, can declare the nullity of a marriage, i.e., that the marriage never existed’, and in this case the parties ‘are free to marry, provided the natural obligations of a previous union are discharged’ (CCC, n. 1629). However, **declarations of nullity** for the reasons established by the canonical norms, especially for the lack or defects of marital consent (cf. CIC, can. 1095-1107), **cannot conflict with the principle of indissolubility.** (John Paul II. *Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, no. 4, January 21, 2000)

A declaration of nullity is not divorce under a different name

The indissolubility of marriage is a teaching that comes from Christ himself, and the first duty of pastors and pastoral workers is therefore to help couples overcome whatever difficulties arise. The referral of matrimonial cases to the tribunal should be a last resort. **Great care must be taken when explaining to the faithful what a declaration of nullity is, in order to avoid the danger of its being conceived as**

divorce under a different name. The tribunal exercises a ministry of truth: its purpose is 'to ascertain whether or not the facts exist that by natural, divine or ecclesiastical law invalidate the marriage, in order to be able to issue a true and just sentence concerning the alleged non-existence of the marriage bond' (Address to the Roman Rota, February 4, 1980, no. 2). The process leading to a **judicial decision about the alleged nullity of marriage should demonstrate** two aspects of the Church's pastoral mission. **First**, it should manifest clearly **the desire to be faithful to the Lord's teaching concerning the permanent nature of sacramental marriage.** Secondly, it should be inspired by genuine pastoral concern for those who seek the ministry of the tribunal in order to clarify their status in the Church. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of the United States of America, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico*, no. 4, October 17, 1998)

The declaration of the nullity of a marriage must be presented and effected in an ecclesial context that is totally favorable to the indissolubility of marriage

The attitude of the Church is, in contrast, favourable to convalidating, where possible, marriages that are otherwise null (cf. CIC, can. 1676; CCEO, can. 1362). **It is true that the declaration of the nullity of a marriage**, based on the truth acquired by means of a legitimate process, **restores peace to the conscience, but such a declaration** – and the same holds true for the dissolution of a marriage that is *ratum non consummatum* or a dissolution based upon the privilege of the faith – **must be presented and effected in an ecclesial context that is totally favourable to the indissolubility of marriage and to family founded upon it.** The spouses themselves must be the first to realize that only in the loyal quest for the truth can they find their true good, without excluding *a priori* the possible convalidation of a union that, although it is not yet a sacramental marriage, contains elements of good, for themselves and their children, that should be carefully evaluated in conscience before reaching a different decision. (John Paul II. *Address to the prelate auditors, officials and advocates of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, no.6, January 28, 2002)

The failure of conjugal life does not imply the invalidity of the marriage

Then what can one say to the argument which holds that the failure of conjugal life implies the invalidity of the marriage? Unfortunately, this erroneous assertion is sometimes so forceful as to become a generalized prejudice that leads people to seek grounds for nullity as a merely formal justification of a pronouncement that is actually based on the empirical factor of matrimonial failure. This unjust formalism of those who are opposed to the traditional favor *matrimonii* can lead them to forget that, **in accordance with human experience marked by sin, a valid marriage can fail because of the spouses' own misuse of freedom.** (John Paul II. *Address to the members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, no. 5, January 29, 2004)

BENEDICT XVI

The trial's aim with respect to matrimonial nullity is to declare the truth about the validity or invalidity of an actual marriage

At this point the second observation spontaneously arises: no trial is against the other party, as though it were a question of inflicting unjust damage. The purpose is not to take a good away from anyone but rather to establish and protect the possession of goods by people and institutions. In addition to this point, valid in every trial, there is another, more specific point **in the hypothesis of matrimonial nullity.** Here, the parties are not contending for some possession that must be attributed to one or the other. **The trial's aim is rather to declare the truth about the validity or invalidity of an actual marriage**, in other words, about a reality that establishes the institution of the family and deeply concerns the Church and civil society. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, January 28, 2006)

Avoid pseudo-pastoral claims aimed at satisfying subjective requests to arrive at a declaration of nullity

Charity without justice is not charity, but a counterfeit, because charity itself requires that objectivity which is typical of justice and which must not be confused with inhuman coldness.

In this regard, as my Predecessor, Venerable Pope John Paul II, said in his Address on the relationship between pastoral care and the law: 'The judge... must always guard against the risk of misplaced compassion, which could degenerate into sentimentality, itself pastoral only in appearance' (18 Jan 1990). **One must avoid pseudo-pastoral claims** that would situate questions on a purely horizontal plane, **in which what matters is to satisfy subjective requests to arrive at a declaration of nullity** at any cost, so that the parties may be able to overcome, among other things, obstacles to receiving the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. The supreme good of readmission to Eucharistic Communion after sacramental Reconciliation demands, instead, that due consideration be given to the authentic good of the individuals, inseparable from the truth of their canonical situation. **It would be a false 'good' and a grave lack of justice and love to pave the way for them to receive the sacraments nevertheless, and would risk causing them to live in objective contradiction to the truth of their own personal condition.** (Benedict XVI. *Address on the Occasion of the Inauguration of the Judicial Year of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, January 29, 2010)

The Roman Pontiff's discourses to the Roman Rota authoritatively teach the essential aspects of the reality of marriage

Thanks to this work, the concrete reality in causes of matrimonial nullity is objectively judged in light of criteria that constantly reaffirm the reality of matrimonial indissolubility, open to every man and woman in accordance with the plan of God, Creator and Saviour. Constant effort is needed to attain that unity of the criteria of justice which essentially characterizes the notion of jurisprudence itself and is a fundamental presupposition for its activity. In the Church, precisely because of her universality and the diversity of the juridical cultures in which she is called to operate, there is always a risk that 'local forms of jurisprudence' develop, *sensim sine sensu*, ever more distant from the common interpretation of positive law and also from the Church's teaching on matrimony. I hope that appropriate means may be studied to make *rotal jurisprudence* more and more manifestly unitive as well as

effectively accessible to all who exercise justice, in order to ensure its uniform application in all Church tribunals. **The value of interventions of the Ecclesiastical Magisterium on matrimonial and juridical issues, including the Roman Pontiff's Discourses to the Roman Rota, should also be seen in this realistic perspective. They are a ready guide for the work of all Church tribunals, since they authoritatively teach the essential aspects of the reality of marriage.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the members of the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, January 26, 2008)

IV – CLARIFICATION REGARDING THE PAULINE PRIVILEGE AND IN FAVOREM FIDEI

CODE OF CANON LAW

A marriage entered into by two non-baptized persons is dissolved by means of the Pauline Privilege in favor of the faith

A marriage entered into by two non-baptized persons is dissolved by means of the pauline privilege in favor of the faith of the party who has received baptism by the very fact that a new marriage is contracted by the same party, provided that the non-baptized party departs. (Code of Canon Law, can. 1143 §1)

JOHN PAUL II

The cases of the Pauline Privilege are relatively rare

I would like to quote in particular a statement of Pius XII: 'A ratified and consummated marriage is by divine law indissoluble, since it cannot be dissolved by any human authority (can. 1118); while other marriages, although intrinsically indissoluble, still do not have an absolute extrinsic indissolubility, but, under certain necessary conditions, can (it is a question, as everyone knows, of relatively rare cases) be dissolved not only by virtue of the Pauline privilege, but also by the Roman Pontiff in virtue of his ministerial power' (Address to the Roman Rota, 3 October 1941) With these words Pius XII gave an explicit interpretation of canon 1118, corresponding to the present canon 1141 of the Code of Canon Law, and to canon 853 of the Code of Canons

of the Eastern Churches, in the sense that the expression 'human power' also includes the Pope's ministerial or vicarious power, and he presented this doctrine as being peacefully held by all experts in the matter. In this context it would also be appropriate to quote the **Catechism of the Catholic Church, with the great doctrinal authority** conferred on it by the involvement of the whole Episcopate in its drafting and by my special approval. We read there: **'Thus the marriage bond has been established by God himself in such a way that a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved. This bond, which results from the free human act of the spouses and their consummation of the marriage, is a reality, henceforth irrevocable, and gives rise to a covenant guaranteed by God's fidelity. The Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom'** (n. 1640). (John Paul II. *Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, no. 7, January 21, 2000)

PIUS IX

A pagan married to an unfaithful pagan may make use of the Pauline Privilege in converting

Marriage between a Christian and a pagan should be avoided at all cost; however, if previous to the obtaining the dispensation of the disparity of cult from the Holy See, a marriage of this type occurs, it is known to be indissoluble with respect to the bond, and that there will only be a possibility of incurring separation of co-habitation, in the case that there exists canonical motives under the ecclesiastical judge. **Therefore, never, as long as the unfaithful husband lives, even if it be in concubinage, may the Christian woman contract a marriage. When, however, one refers to a pagan that is the spouse of a pagan who lives in concubinage, and who converts (the woman), then she may use the privilege**

granted in favor of the faith, after having made the interpellation (as before – for the dispensation), the other not wishing to convert or cohabit without offense to the Creator, and consequently does not renounce to continue living in concubinage – something that evidently cannot occur without an offense of the Creator. (Pius IX. *Instruction Propositis dubiis of the Holy Office to the Apostolic Vicar of Siangyang, China*, July 4, 1855)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The conditions for granting the dissolution of a marriage in favor of the faith

As it is noted, this Congregation has treated and long studied the question of the dissolution of marriage in favor of the faith. Now, finally, after a diligent examination of the problem, **Pope Paul VI granted his approval to these new norms, in which are articulated the conditions for granting the dissolution of a marriage in favor of the faith, whether on the part of the petitioner who is baptized whether converted or not. In order to validly grant the dissolution, three conditions are absolutely necessary:**

- a) **that one of the two spouses had not received baptism throughout the entire time of the conjugal life;**
- b) **that there was no exercise of marital life after the actual baptism received by the non-baptized party.**
- c) **that the person who is not-baptized or baptized outside the Catholic Church allows the Catholic party the freedom and the right to profess his or her own religion and also to baptize and educate the children as Catholics: this condition is to be guaranteed, as a precautionary measure.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on the dissolution of marriage in favor of the faith*, December 6, 1973)

It is necessary to have a fraternal and attentive welcome of the baptized who have established a new relationship of cohabitation after the failure of the marital sacrament; in fact, these persons are by no means excommunicated – they are not excommunicated! They are still a part of the Church. No closed doors! No closed doors!

Who has not passed through the sad situation of assisting a beloved one at their last moments? When finally he or she passes away, we continue to suffer as we contemplate their body, inert, but still loved... Death is cruel, for it is not satisfied to just take away life... if we fail to bury the body, a dangerous decay occurs, putting the health of the others at risk. We have no other solution than to quickly bury the remains of the one we loved so much. If there was a way of ridding our families and friends from the possibility of death, we would make all efforts to obtain it. Something like this also happens within the Church.

As a Mother of all the faithful, she has many children, some alive and others, unfortunately, dead... Not physically, but spiritually, and therefore, separated from Christ by mortal sin. This expulsion from the divine life of our souls reduces us to being dead members of the Church and excludes us from the divine benefits. Those who fall into the disgrace of dying in this state will eternally suffer the torments of hell.

The living members of the Church, brothers of the dead members, have the obligation to make every effort to rescue these souls from their unhappy state – especially those who publically live in mortal sin. In a society where the institution of the family is increasingly endangered, such a public state of sin is manifested with an emphasized virulence, with divorced persons that ‘marry’ again under civil law. It is patent doctrine of the Church that a new conjugal relationship after the first – and only – matrimonial bond constitutes adultery, and that adultery is a mortal sin.

Just as we would be willing to do anything to protect our families from a contagious illness, much more so should we keep them from being caught up in the claws of this terrible plague that has so many victims around the world. And, of course, with great charity, we should do all possible to rescue the souls that find themselves in such an unhappy situation. However, in this undertaking, it is necessary to act with delicacy, care and seriousness to avoid that in helping some to rise, many others do not end up falling... There are two problems: protecting the living members from mortal contagion and helping the dead so that they return to the true life of grace. The assistance given to the latter cannot endanger the former.

As always, the Church has responses about how to proceed in this difficult situation. However, just as in physical health, medicine is not always agreeable to take, even though its results are beneficial when applied with wisdom. Let us examine what the Magisterium teaches...

FRANCIS

Today I would like to focus our attention on another reality: how to take care of those who, after an irreversible failure [the rupture] of their matrimonial bond, have entered into a new union. The Church is fully aware that such a situation is contrary to the Christian Sacrament. However, her gaze as a teacher always draws from a mother’s heart; a heart which, enlivened by the Holy Spirit, always seeks the good

and the salvation of the people. This is why she feels obliged, ‘for the sake of truth’, to ‘exercise careful discernment of situations’. This is how Saint John Paul II expressed it in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (n. 84), giving as an example the difference between one subjected to separation compared to one who has caused it. This discernment has to be made. If we then also look at these new bonds through the eyes of the young sons and daughters — and the little ones watch — through the eyes of the children, we are aware of a greater urgency to foster a true welcome for these families in our communities. For this reason it is important that the style of the community, its language, its attitudes, always be attentive to people, starting with the little ones. They are the ones who suffer the most in these situations. After all, how can we encourage these parents to do everything possible to raise their children in the Christian life, to give them an example of committed and exercised faith, if we keep them at arm’s length from the life of the community, as if they are excommunicated? We must act in a way so as not to add even more to the burdens which the children in these situations already feel they have to bear! Unfortunately, the number of these children and youth is really large. It is important for them to feel the Church as loving mother to all, always ready to listen and to meet. In these decades, in truth, the Church has been neither insensitive nor lazy. Thanks to the in-depth analysis performed by Pastors, led and guided by my Predecessors, the awareness has truly grown **that it is necessary to have a fraternal and attentive welcome, in love and in truth, of the baptized who have established a new relationship of cohabitation after the failure of the marital sacrament; in fact, these persons are by no means excommunicated – they are not excommunicated! – and they should absolutely not be treated as such: they are still a part of the Church.** Pope Benedict XVI spoke about this question, calling for careful discernment and wise pastoral accompaniment, knowing that there are no ‘simple solutions’ (Address at the Seventh World Meeting of Families, Milan, 2 June 2012, answer n. 5). Here the repeated call to Pastors to openly and consistently demonstrate the community’s willingness to welcome them and encourage them, so they may increasingly live and develop their membership in Christ and in the Church through prayer, by listening to the Word of God, by attending the liturgy, through the Christian education of their children, through charity and service to the poor, through the commitment to justice and peace. [...] **‘The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open’... No closed doors! No closed doors! [...] Especially Christian families can cooperate with Him by taking care of wounded families,** accompanying them in the life of faith of the community. Each one must do his part in taking on the attitude of the Good Shepherd, who knows each one of his sheep and excludes no one from his infinitive love! (General Audience, August 5, 2015)¹

¹Note: The English translation available on the Vatican site, and linked below, has ‘corrected’ the words of the Pope, using ‘after an irreversible failure of their matrimonial bond, have entered into a new union’. However, Francis’ words are clearly “tras la ruptura de su vínculo matrimonial han establecido una nueva convivencia” – which translates into English as ‘after the rupture of their matrimonial bond have established a new union’. And these clear words carried to the whole world by the press; obviously just as Francis wished, since he is delivering formal written address. The video, included in our study on this subject, could not be more clear. (see: 10-11 sec)

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Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

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- ♦ The divorced 'remarried' cannot receive Eucharistic communion; the sacrament of Penance can be granted only under certain conditions

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I – THOSE WHO ENTER INTO A NEW RELATIONSHIP WHILE STILL BOUND BY A VALID MARRIAGE LIVE OUTSIDE OF THE GRACE OF GOD

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Adultery is always a mortal sin

Further, some sins are mortal in virtue of their species ['Ex genere,' genus in this case denoting the species], as murder and **adultery**. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 72, a. 5)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery

Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and the one who marries a woman divorced from her husband commits adultery. (Lk 16:18)

A wife should not separate from her husband; if she does, she must either remain single or become reconciled with him

To the married, however, I give this instruction (not I, but the Lord): a wife

should not separate from her husband – and if she does separate she must either remain single or become reconciled to her husband – and a husband should not divorce his wife. (1Cor 7:10-11)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The ‘remarried’ are in a situation of public and permanent adultery

Contracting a new union, [after a divorce] even if it is recognized by civil law, adds to the gravity of the rupture: **the remarried spouse is then in a situation of public and permanent adultery.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2384)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Couples who live together united by only a civil marriage live in a habitual state of mortal sin

Is it sufficient for a Christian to get only the civil marriage or contract?

For a Christian, it is not sufficient to get only the civil contract, because it is not a sacrament, and therefore **not a true marriage.**

In what condition would the spouses be who would live together united only by a civil marriage?

Spouses who would live together united by only a civil marriage would be in an **habitual state of mortal sin, and their union would always be illegitimate in the sight of God and of the Church.** (Catechism of Saint Pius X, The Sacrament of Marriage, no. 24-25)

PIUS IX

Any other union of man and woman among Christians, except the sacramental union, is nothing else than concubinage

Because no Catholic is ignorant or cannot know that **matrimony is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law**, instituted by Christ the Lord, and that for this reason, **there can be no marriage between the faithful without there being at one and the same time a sacrament**, and that, therefore, **any other union of man and woman among Christians, except the sacramental union,**

even if contracted under the power of any civil law, is nothing else than a disgraceful and death-bringing concubinage very frequently condemned by the Church, and, hence, that the sacrament can never be separated from the conjugal agreement. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2998 (1640). Pius IX. *Allocution Acerbissimum vobiscum*, September 27, 1857)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The ‘remarriage’ of persons divorced from a living, lawful spouse contravenes the plan and law of God

The remarriage of persons divorced from a living, lawful spouse contravenes the plan and law of God as taught by Christ. They are not separated from the Church, but they cannot receive Eucharistic communion. They will lead Christian lives especially by educating their children in the faith. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1665)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The repudiated may not unite with another person even for children

The sacrament demands the indissolubility of matrimony, and that the repudiated may not unite with another person not even for children. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *De Genesi ad litteram*, Book 9, Ch.7, no. 12)

PIUS X

They who refuse to be subject to the law of God are his enemies

Because they who refuse to be subject to the law of God are surely reputed the enemies of God. (Pius X. *Encyclical Communium rerum*, no. 21, April 21, 1909)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Anathema: those who deny that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved even after adultery of one of the married persons

If anyone says that the Church errs, inasmuch

as she has taught and still teaches that in accordance with evangelical and apostolic doctrine the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved because of adultery of one of the married persons, and that both, or even the innocent one, who has given no occasion for adultery, cannot during the lifetime of the other contract another marriage, and that he, who after the dismissal of the adulteress shall marry another, is guilty of adultery, and that she also, who after the dismissal of the adulterer shall marry another: let him be **anathema**. (Denzinger-Hünermann 1807. *Council of Trent*, Session XXIV, Doctrine concerning the Sacrament of Matrimony, November 11, 1563)

II – PEOPLE IN MORTAL SIN ARE DEAD MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH AND ENEMIES OF GOD; THEIR GOOD ACTIONS LACK VALUE

SACRED SCRIPTURE

God breaks with those who do not keep the commandments

But if you do not heed me and do not keep all these commandments, if you reject my precepts and spurn my decrees, **refusing to obey all my commandments and breaking my covenant**, then I, in turn, will give you your deserts. (Lev 26:14-16)

Those habitually guilty of sin are their own worst enemies

But those habitually guilty of sin are their own worst enemies. (Tob 12:10)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Anyone in mortal sin is a child of wrath and an enemy of God

But since all mortal sins, even those of thought, make men children of wrath (Eph 2,3) and enemies of God, it is necessary to ask pardon for all of them from God by an open and humble confession. (Denzinger-Hünermann 1680. *Council of Trent*, Session XIII, October 11, 1551)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Mortal sin turns one into a dead member of the Church

Who are the living members of the Church?

The living members of the Church are the just, and the just alone, that is, those who are actually in the grace of God.

And who are the dead members?

The dead members of the Church are the faithful in mortal sin. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, Ninth Article, no. 25-26)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God dwells in righteous bodies; and death in the sinner's body

God Himself dwells in righteous bodies. But the bodies of sinners are called sepulchres of the dead, because the sinner's soul is dead in his body; for that cannot be deemed to be alive, which does no spiritual or living act. (Saint Thomas Aquinas, citing Pseudo-Chrysostom. *in the Catena Aurea*, Matthew 23: 27-28)

Mortal sin excludes altogether the habit of grace

Venial sin does not preclude every act of grace whereby all venial sins can be removed; whereas mortal sin excludes altogether the habit of grace [...] (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 87, a. 4)

An adulterer destroys his own soul

First of all, because they destroy the soul: 'He who is an adulterer has no sense, for the folly of his heart shall destroy his own soul' (Prov 6:32). It says: 'for the folly of his heart,' which is whenever the flesh dominates the spirit. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *The Ten Commandments*, Article 8)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Those who are in mortal sin are without the grace of God and excluded from perfect communion in spiritual good

Do all the children of the Church share in this

communion of goods?

All Christians who are in the grace of God share in the communion of internal goods, while those who are in mortal sin do not participate in these goods.

Why do not those who are in mortal sin participate in these goods?

Because that which unites the faithful with God, and with Jesus Christ as His living members, rendering them capable of performing meritorious works for life eternal, is the grace of God which is the supernatural life of the soul; and hence as **those who are in mortal sin are without the grace of God, they are excluded from perfect communion in spiritual goods**, nor can they accomplish works meritorious towards life eternal. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, The Communion of Saints, no. 4-5)

JOHN PAUL II

Mortal sin is contempt for the divine law and a rejection of God's love for humanity and the whole of creation

Likewise, care will have to be taken not to reduce mortal sin to an act of 'fundamental option' -as is commonly said today- against God, intending thereby an explicit and formal contempt for God or neighbor. **For mortal sin exists also when a person knowingly and willingly, for whatever reason, chooses something gravely disordered.** In fact, such a choice already includes contempt for the divine law, a rejection of God's love for humanity and the whole of creation; **the person turns away from God and loses charity.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 17, December 2, 1984)

Sin has a twofold consequence

Because it offends the holiness and justice of God and scorns God's personal friendship with man, sin has a twofold consequence. In the first place, if it is grave, it involves deprivation of communion with God and, in consequence, **exclusion from a share in eternal life.** [...] In the second place, every sin, even venial, entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called

Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin, and this expiation removes whatever impedes full communion with God and with one's brothers and sisters. (John Paul II. *Incarnationis mysterium*, Bull of Indiction of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, no. 10, November 29, 1998)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Those who are bound in mortal sin do not share in spiritual fruit

The advantages of so many and such exalted blessings bestowed by Almighty God are enjoyed by those who lead a Christian life in charity, and are just and beloved of God. **As to the dead members; that is, those who are bound in the thralldom of sin and estranged from the grace of God, they are not so deprived of these advantages as to cease to be members of this body; but since they are dead members, they do not share in the spiritual fruit which is communicated to the just and pious.** (Catechism of Trent, Article IX, Second Part)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mortal sin causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell

Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. It results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1861)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

The efficacy of prayer depends on the state of grace

What is the first and best disposition to render our prayers efficacious? **The first and best disposition to render our prayers efficacious is to be in the state of grace; or if we are not in that state, to desire**

to put ourselves in it. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, Prayer, no. 14)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Prayer is not meritorious without sanctifying grace

Neither prayer nor any other virtuous act is meritorious without sanctifying grace. And yet even that prayer which impetrates sanctifying grace proceeds from some grace, as from a gratuitous gift, since the very act of praying is 'a gift of God,' as Augustine states (De Persever. xxiii). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 83, a.15)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain

Where does prayer come from? Whether prayer is expressed in words or gestures, it is the whole man who prays. But in naming the source of prayer, Scripture speaks sometimes of the soul or the spirit, but most often of the heart (more than a thousand times). According to Scripture, it is the heart that prays. If our heart is far from God, the words of prayer are in vain. [...]

Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2562. 2564)

III – WHAT ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED FOR THE DIVORCED WHO 'REMARRY'?

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Pastoral solutions may not stand in opposition to the statements of the Magisterium

A series of critical objections against the doctrine and praxis of the Church pertain to questions of a pastoral nature. Some say,

for example, that the language used in the ecclesial documents is too legalistic, that the rigidity of law prevails over an understanding of dramatic human situations. They claim that the human person of today is no longer able to understand such language, that Jesus would have had an open ear for the needs of people, particularly for those on the margins of society. They say that the Church, on the other hand, presents herself like a judge who excludes wounded people from the sacraments and from certain public responsibilities. One can readily admit that the Magisterium's manner of expression does not seem very easy to understand at times. It needs to be translated by preachers and catechists into a language which relates to people and to their respective cultural environments. The essential content of the Church's teaching, however, must be upheld in this process. It must not be watered down on allegedly pastoral grounds, because it communicates the revealed truth. Certainly, it is difficult to make the demands of the Gospel understandable to secularized people. But this pastoral difficulty must not lead to compromises with the truth. In his Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, John Paul II clearly rejected so-called pastoral solutions which stand in opposition to the statements of the Magisterium (cf. *ibid.* 56). Furthermore, concerning the position of the Magisterium as regards the question of divorced and remarried members of the faithful, it must be stressed that the more recent documents of the Church bring together the demands of truth with those of love in a very balanced way. If at times in the past, love shone forth too little in the explanation of the truth, so today the danger is great that in the name of love, truth is either to be silenced or compromised. Assuredly, the word of truth can be painful and uncomfortable. But it is the way to holiness, to peace, and to inner freedom. A pastoral approach which truly wants to help the people concerned must always be grounded in the truth. In the end, only the truth can be pastoral. 'Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' (Jn 8:32). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Concerning some objections to the Church's teaching on the reception of Holy Communion*, Introduction of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, no. 5, January 1, 1998)

JOHN PAUL II

The aim of pastoral action: lead to consistency between the choice of life and the faith professed

There are increasing cases of Catholics who for ideological or practical reasons, **prefer to contract a merely civil marriage, and who reject or at least defer religious marriage.** Their situation cannot of course be likened to that of people simply living together without any bond at all, because in the present case there is at least a certain commitment to a properly-defined and probably stable state of life, even though the possibility of a future divorce is often present in the minds of those entering a civil marriage. By seeking public recognition of their bond on the part of the State, such couples show that they are ready to accept not only its advantages but also its obligations. Nevertheless, **not even this situation is acceptable to the Church.** The aim of pastoral action will be to make these people understand the need for consistency between their choice of life and the faith that they profess, and to try to do everything possible to induce them to regularize their situation in the light of Christian principle. While treating them with great charity and bringing them into the life of the respective communities, the pastors of the Church will regrettably not be able to admit them to the sacraments. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 82, November 22, 1981)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

How shall we pray to God, and ask forgiveness of our sins, we who take no account of it? If we love our brothers, we must urge them to have pain for their sins

For the disease is not palsy only, but also our sin; and this more than that, by how much a soul is better than a body. Let us therefore now also draw nigh unto Him; let us entreat Him that He would brace our paralyzed soul, and leaving all things that pertain to this life, let us take account of the things spiritual only. Or if thou cleave unto these also, yet think of them after the other. **Neither must thou think lightly of it, because thou hast no pain in sinning; rather on this very account most of all do thou lament, that thou feelest not the**

anguish of thine offenses. For not because sin bites not, doth this come to pass, but because the offending soul is insensible. Regard with this view them that have a feeling of their own sins, how they wail more bitterly than such as are being cut, or burned; how many things they do, how many suffer, how greatly they mourn and lament, in order to be delivered from their evil conscience. They would not do any such thing, unless they were exceedingly pained in soul. The best thing then is, to avoid sin in the first instance: **the next to it, is to feel that we sin, and thoroughly amend ourselves. But if we have not this, how shall we pray to God, and ask forgiveness of our sins, we who take no account of these matters?** For when thou thyself who hast offended art unwilling to know so much as this very fact, that thou hast sinned; for what manner of offenses will thou entreat God for pardon? For what thou knowest not? And how wilt thou know the greatness of the benefit? [...] and how shall we by this very thing fail to provoke Him so much the more? **For not so much sinning, as sinning without even pain, causes in Him indignation and wrath.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 14 on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, no. 5)

Do all things unto them that sin and are remiss: warning, teaching, exhorting, admonishing and advising

Knowing this, then, let us also not intermit to do all things unto them that sin and are remiss, warning, teaching, exhorting, admonishing, advising, though we profit nothing. For Christ indeed foreknew that the traitor was incorrigible, yet nevertheless He ceased not to supply what could be done by Himself, as well admonishing as threatening and bewailing over him. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 80 on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, no. 3)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

In all things, we should seek that the sinner be loosened from sin

But, like a vessel that has lost its rudder is tossed at the mercy of the storm, so man, when by sin he has forfeited the aid of Divine grace, no longer acts as he wills, but as the Devil wills. And if God, by the mighty arm of His mercy, do not loose him, he will abide till

death in the chain of his sins. **Therefore He saith to His disciples, 'Loose them,'** that is, by your teaching and miracles, for all the Jews and Gentiles were loosed by the Apostles; 'and bring them to me,' that is, convert them to My glory. (Saint Thomas Aquinas citing Pseudo-Chrysostom. *Catena Aurea*, Mt 21:1-9)

PIUS X

Charity does not lie in the toleration of error

Catholic doctrine tells us that the **primary duty of charity does not lie in the toleration of false ideas**, however sincere they may be, **nor in the theoretical or practical indifference towards the errors and vices in which we see our brethren plunged, but in the zeal for their intellectual and moral improvement as well as for their material well-being.** Catholic doctrine further tells us that love for our neighbor flows from our love for God, Who is Father to all, and goal of the whole human family; and in Jesus Christ whose members we are, to the point that in doing good to others we are doing good to Jesus Christ Himself. (Pius X. *Encyclical Notre charge apostolique*, August 15, 1910)

He who preaches only with complacent language harms others

Another way to do harm is that of those who speak of religious matters as if they were to be considered according to the norms and convenience of this passing life, forgetting the eternal life to come: **they speak brilliantly of the benefits that the Christian religion has bequeathed to humanity, but not of the obligations it demands; they preach the charity of Jesus Christ our Savior, but say nothing of his justice. The fruit that such preaching produces is insignificant, because any worldly man who hears it becomes convinced that he is a good Christian, and that he has no need to change his life, as long as he says: I believe in Jesus Christ.**

What kind of fruits do such preachers expect to reap? They certainly have no intention other than that of gaining at any cost the favor of their listeners, flattering them, and, as long as they see the church full, they do not care if the souls of the faithful remain empty. **Consequently,**

they do not even mention sin, the four last things, or any other important topic. Rather, to obtain acclaim and applause, they use complacent language, with eloquence more fitting for worldly speeches than an apostolic and sacred sermon. Against such preachers, Saint Jerome wrote (*Ad Nep.*): **'When you teach in the church, you should not merely provoke the acclamation of the congregation, but rather, compunction: may the tears of your listeners be your praise.'** (Pius X. *Motu proprio Sacrorum antistitum*, September 1, 1910)

The truth is not subject to the vicissitudes of the times. The fatal illusion of the prudence of the flesh

Venerable Brethren, how mistaken are those who think they are doing service to the Church, and producing fruit for the salvation of souls, when by a kind of prudence of the flesh [...] **under the fatal illusion that they are thus able more easily to win over those in error, but really with the continual danger of being themselves lost.** The truth is one, and it cannot be halved; it lasts forever, and is not subject to the vicissitudes of the times. 'Jesus Christ, today and yesterday, and the same for ever' (Heb 13:8). (Pius X. *Encyclical Iucunda sane*, no. 25-26, March 12, 1904)

God demands an account of all; not only of the evil they do but also of the correction of evil

It behooves Us, too, Us especially, to inculcate that other saying so noble and so paternal of Anselm: **'Whenever I hear anything of you displeasing to God and unbecoming to yourselves, and fail to admonish you, I do not fear God nor love you as I ought'** [...] then, We should imitate Anselm by renewing Our prayers, counsels, admonitions 'that you think over these things carefully and if your conscience warns you that there is something to be corrected in them that you hasten to make the correction' (Epist., lib. iv. epist. 32). **For nothing is to be neglected that can be corrected, since God demands an account from all not only of the evil they do but also of the correction of evil which they can correct.** And the more power men have to make the necessary correction the more vigorously does He require them, according to the power

mercifully communicated to them, to think and act rightly. (Pius X. *Encyclical Communionum rerum*, no. 26, April 21, 1909)

BENEDICT XVI

The sinner must be made to perceive that he has cut himself off from the communion of the Church

The Gospel text [...] tells us that brotherly love also involves a sense of mutual responsibility. For this reason if my brother commits a sin against me I must treat him charitably and first of all, speak to him privately, pointing out that what he has said or done is wrong. This approach is known as ‘fraternal correction’: it is not a reaction to the offence suffered but is motivated by love for one’s brethren. St Augustine comments: ‘Whoever has offended you, in offending you, has inflicted a serious injury upon himself; and would you not care for a brother’s injury?... You must forget the offence you have received but not the injury of one of your brethren (Discourse 82, 7). And what if my brother does not listen to me? In today’s Gospel Jesus points to a gradual approach: first, speak to him again with two or three others, the better to help him realize what he has done; if, in spite of this, he still refuses to listen, it is necessary to tell the community; and if he refuses to listen even to the community, he must be made to perceive that he has cut himself off by separating himself from the communion of the Church. All this demonstrates that we are responsible for each other in the journey of Christian life; each person, aware of his own limitations and shortcomings, is called to accept fraternal correction and to help others with this specific service. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, September 4, 2011)

The Church’s tradition has included ‘admonishing sinners’ among the spiritual works of mercy; we must not remain silent before evil

The Scriptures tell us: ‘Rebuke the wise and he will love you for it. Be open with the wise, he grows wiser still, teach the upright, he will gain yet more’ (Prov 9:8ff). Christ himself commands us to admonish a brother who is

committing a sin (cf. Mt 18:15). The verb used to express fraternal correction – *elenchein* – is the same used to indicate the prophetic mission of Christians to speak out against a generation indulging in evil (cf. Eph 5:11). The Church’s tradition has included ‘admonishing sinners’ among the spiritual works of mercy. It is important to recover this dimension of Christian charity. We must not remain silent before evil. I am thinking of all those Christians who, out of human regard or purely personal convenience, adapt to the prevailing mentality, rather than warning their brothers and sisters against ways of thinking and acting that are contrary to the truth and that do not follow the path of goodness. Christian admonishment, for its part, is never motivated by a spirit of accusation or recrimination. It is always moved by love and mercy, and springs from genuine concern for the good of the other. As the Apostle Paul says: ‘If one of you is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should set that person right in a spirit of gentleness; and watch yourselves that you are not put to the test in the same way’ (Gal 6:1). In a world pervaded by individualism, it is essential to rediscover the importance of fraternal correction, so that together we may journey towards holiness. [...] The Apostle Paul encourages us to seek ‘the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another’ (Rom 14:19) for our neighbour’s good, ‘so that we support one another’ (15:2), seeking not personal gain but rather ‘the advantage of everybody else, so that they may be saved’ (1Cor 10:33). This mutual correction and encouragement in a spirit of humility and charity must be part of the life of the Christian community. (Benedict XVI. *Message for Lent 2012*, no. 1-3, November 3, 2011)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Fraternal correction is an act of charity

The correction of the wrongdoer is a remedy which should be employed against a man’s sin. Now a man’s sin may be considered in two ways, first as being harmful to the sinner, secondly as conducing to the harm of others, by hurting or scandalizing them, or by being detrimental to the common good, the justice of which is disturbed by that man’s sin, Consequently the correction

of a wrongdoer is twofold, one which applies a remedy to the sin considered as an evil of the sinner himself. **This is fraternal correction properly so called, which is directed to the amendment of the sinner.** Now to do away with anyone's evil is the same as to procure his good: and to procure a person's good is an act of charity, whereby we wish and do our friend well. Consequently fraternal correction also is an act of charity, because thereby we drive out our brother's evil, viz. sin, the removal of which pertains to charity rather than the removal of an external loss, or of a bodily injury, in so much as the contrary good of virtue is more akin to charity than the good of the body or of external things. **Therefore fraternal correction is an act of charity rather than the healing of a bodily infirmity, or the relieving of an external bodily need.** There is another correction which applies a remedy to the sin of the wrongdoer, considered as hurtful to others, and especially to the common good. This correction is an act of justice, whose concern it is to safeguard the rectitude of justice between one man and another. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 33, a.1)

The good physician removes the very root of the illness

The good physician removes the external symptoms of a malady; and, furthermore, **he even removes the very root of the illness**, so that there will be no relapse. So **also the Lord wishes us to avoid the beginnings of sins [...].** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *The Ten Commandments*, Article 7)

He who is not punished now bodily, shall be punished in the future life

Secondly, they deprive one of life; for **one guilty of such should die according to the Law**, as we read in Leviticus (20:10) and Deuteronomy (22:22). **Sometimes the guilty one is not punished now bodily**, which is to his disadvantage since punishment of the body may be borne with patience and is conducive to the remission of sins; but nevertheless he shall be punished in the future life. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *The Ten Commandments*, Article 8)

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

When a man is not conscious of sin, and is not adverted, how can he be cured?

For as in bodily diseases there are many of which the affected are not sensible, but they rather put faith in the opinion of their physicians, than trust their own insensibility; so also in the diseases of the soul, **though a man is not conscious of sin in himself, yet ought he to trust to those who are able to have more knowledge of their own sins.** (Saint Basil the Great cited by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea in Lk 22:21-23*)

JOHN XXIII

Saint John Vianney always had 'poor sinners' in his mind and before his eyes: 'If we had the faith to see a soul in mortal sin, we would die of fright'

Saint John M. Vianney always had 'poor sinners,' as he called them, in his mind and before his eyes, with the constant hope of seeing them turn back to God and weep for the sins they had committed. This was the object of all his thoughts and cares, and of the work that took up almost all his time and efforts. From his experience in the tribunal of Penance, in which he loosed the bonds of sin, he understood just how much malice there is in sin and what terrible devastation it wreaks in the souls of men. **He used to paint it in hideous colors: 'If we'—he asserted—'had the faith to see a soul in mortal sin, we would die of fright.'** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Sacerdotii nostri primordia*, no. 90-91, August 1, 1950)

JOHN PAUL II

How many people live indifferently and accommodate themselves to a worldly mentality and to the gratification of sin! The gate to eternal life is open to all, but it is narrow

Lent encourages believers to take seriously Jesus' exhortation: **'Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many'** (Mt 7:13). What is this 'wide

gate' and 'easy way' that Jesus refers to? **It is the gate of moral self-sufficiency; the way of intellectual pride. How many people, even amongst Christians, live indifferently and accommodate themselves to a worldly mentality and to the gratification of sin!** Lent is an appropriate time to analyze one's own life, in order to renew with greater decisiveness our participation in the sacraments, to make firmer resolutions for a new life, endeavoring, as Jesus taught, to pass through the narrow gate and difficult way that leads to eternal life (cf. Mt 7:14). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, February 16, 1994)

Sin requires reparation

The expiatory sacrifice of the cross makes us understand the gravity of sin. **In the eyes of God, sin is never without importance.** The Father loves mankind, and is profoundly offended by their transgressions or rebellions. Even though he is disposed to pardon, **He, for the good and honor of man himself, requires reparation.** But it is precisely here that the divine generosity is shown in a more surprising manner. The Father gives to humanity His own Son to offer this reparation. With this he shows the abysmal gravity of sin, since it requires the highest reparation possible, that which comes from His own Son. At the same time, it reveals the infinite grandeur of his love, since **He is the first, with the gift of his Son, that carries the weight of the reparation.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2, April 20, 1983)

BENEDICT XVI

For Jesus, good is good and evil is evil

To avoid any misunderstanding, it should be noted that Jesus' mercy was not expressed by putting moral law in parentheses. For Jesus, good is good and evil is evil. Mercy does not change the connotations of sin but consumes it in a fire of love. This purifying and healing effect is achieved if within the person there is a corresponding love which implies recognition of God's law, sincere repentance and the resolution to start a new life. The sinful woman in the Gospel was pardoned greatly because she loved greatly. In Jesus, God comes to give love to us and to ask love of us. (Benedict XVI. *Homily during the pastoral visit to Assisi on*

the Eighth Centenary of the Conversion of Saint Francis, June 17, 2007)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The Lord desires that the sinner change his life

'Neither do I condemn you;' by whom, perhaps, you feared to be condemned, because in me you have not found sin. 'Neither will I condemn you.' What is this, O Lord? **Do You therefore favor sins?** Not so, evidently. Mark what follows: 'Go, henceforth sin no more.' Therefore the Lord did also condemn, but condemned sins, not man. For if **He were a patron of sin, He would say, Neither will I condemn you; go, live as you will:** be secure in my deliverance; how much soever you will sin, I will deliver you from all punishment even of hell, and from the tormentors of the infernal world. **He said not this.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Tractate 33 on the Gospel of Saint John*, no. 6)

IV – PEOPLE WHO PUBLICALLY LIVE OUTSIDE OF THE STATE OF GRACE DO NOT DESERVE THE SAME CONSIDERATION AS THOSE WHO LIVE IN CONFORMITY WITH THE LAW OF GOD

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

There is as great a difference between the righteous and sinners, as there is materially between heaven and earth

And most suitable is such a similitude, so that spiritually there may be seen to be as great a difference between the righteous and sinners, as there is materially between heaven and earth. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon on the Mount*, Book II, ch. 5, no. 17)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Out of charity, we ought to love more those who are nearer to God

Therefore we ought to love some neighbors more than others? [...] Our neighbors are not all equally related to God; some are nearer to Him, by reason of their greater goodness, and

those we ought, out of charity, to love more than those who are not so near to Him. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 26, a. 6)

Pius X

Jesus' heart overflowed with gentleness for the souls of good-will, but had holy indignation against the profaners of the House of God

Further, whilst Jesus was kind to sinners and to those who went astray, He did not respect their false ideas, however sincere they might have appeared. He loved them all, but He instructed them in order to convert them and save them. Whilst He called to Himself in order to comfort them, those who toiled and suffered, it was not to preach to them the jealousy of a chimerical equality. Whilst He lifted up the lowly, it was not to instill in them the sentiment of a dignity independent from, and rebellious against, the duty of obedience. Whilst His heart overflowed with gentleness for the souls of good-will, He could also arm Himself with holy indignation against the profaners of the House of God, against the wretched men who scandalized the little ones, against the authorities who crush the people with the weight of heavy burdens without putting out a hand to lift them. He was as strong as he was gentle. He reproved, threatened, chastised, knowing, and teaching us that fear is the beginning of wisdom, and that it is sometimes proper for a man to cut off an offending limb to save his body. (Pius X. *Encyclical Notre Charge Apostolique*, August 15, 1910)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Certain ecclesial functions may only be exercised by people of exemplary Christian life

There are other ecclesial functions, that presuppose a testimony of exacting Christian life, that also may not be held by the divorced who have undergone another civil marriage: liturgical service (lector, extraordinary Eucharistic minister), Catechetical service (religion teacher, catechist for first

communion or confirmation), participation as a member of the diocesan pastoral or parochial council. The members of these councils should be fully inserted into the ecclesial and sacramental life, and lead, moreover, a life that is in accordance with the moral principles of the Church. Canon Law establishes that, for pastoral and diocesan council, – and this is true also for the parochial Councils – that ‘No one except members of the Christian faithful outstanding in firm faith, good morals, and prudence is to be designated to a pastoral council’ (CIC, can. 512, §3). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Concerning some objections to the Church's teaching on the reception of Holy Communion, Introduction of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger*, January 1, 1998)

The divorced ‘remarried’ cannot receive Eucharistic communion; the sacrament of Penance can be granted only under certain conditions

This view contradicts Catholic teaching that excludes the possibility of remarriage after divorce: ‘Today there are numerous Catholics in many countries who have recourse to civil divorce and contract new civil unions. In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ – ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery’ (Mk 10:11-12) –, the Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid, if the first marriage was. If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God's law. Consequently, they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists. For the same reason, they cannot exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities. Reconciliation through the sacrament of Penance can be granted only to those who have repented for having violated the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ, and who are committed to living in complete continence’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1650). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Notification on the book ‘Just Love’. A framework for Christian sexual ethics by Sr. Margaret A. Farley*, R.S.M, March 30, 2012)

PIUS XI

Those who lack the interior virtues are not prepared for the apostolate

Those who lack or do not practice the interior virtues [...] may not be considered sufficiently prepared or armed against the dangers and battles of life, nor able to dedicate themselves to the apostolate; rather, just as a 'a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal' (1Cor 13:1), they either do not benefit in any way, or perhaps even damage the very cause which they seek to sustain and defend, as has notoriously occurred, and not on only one occasion, in the past. (Pius XI. *Apostolic Letter Singulare illud*, June 13, 1926)

PIUS X

If those dedicated to the Catholic cause do not have real piety, they will not arouse others to do good

Therefore, all who are called upon to direct or dedicate themselves to the Catholic cause, must be sound Catholics, firm in faith, solidly instructed in religious matters, truly submissive to the Church and especially to this supreme Apostolic See and the Vicar of Jesus Christ. They must be men of real piety, of manly virtue, and of a life so chaste and fearless that they will be a guiding example to all others. If they are not so formed it will be difficult to arouse others to do good and practically impossible to act with a good intention. (Pius X. *Encyclical Il fermo proposito*, no. 11, June 11, 1905)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY

More necessary than the number of Christians is the authenticity of the Christian life

Men will not believe in Christ and will not take His Gospel seriously if they do not find signs of his presence. Especially today there is a necessity of finding him and of somehow seeing him. 'The men and women of our own day – John Paul II observed – often perhaps unconsciously, ask believers not only to 'speak' of Christ, but in a certain sense to 'show' him' (*Novo Millennio*

Ineunte, 16). Christ can be seen in miracles; but even more so he can be seen in the saints, not only in those heroic and extraordinary saints, but also in the ordinary saints who tend toward sanctity as a 'high standard of ordinary Christian living' (NMI, 31) and are not content with 'a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity' (ibid.). Today, more than ever, there is a lack of exemplary Christians, of united Christian families, of feverous ecclesial communities. To resolve the crisis of the family – which is a crisis of matrimony, of natality and education, that results in the disunion and exhaustion of society – the most important pastoral mission is to form in each parish groups of families that are a living gospel. To evangelize our secularized world and the people that ignore our faith, the authenticity of the Christian life is more necessary than the number of Christians. It is though a few that many are challenged, and can orient themselves toward eternal life, even though on this earth they do not arrive at being fully inserted in the Church. What is more important is that there exist lit fires to enlighten and warm the night. (Pontifical Council for the Family. *Homily of Cardinal Ennio Antonelli at the closing mass of the Help the Family Today Congress*, December 12, 2010)

BENEDICT XVI

Today more than ever the witness of the family founded on the marriage of a man and a woman is necessary

Today more than ever the witness and public commitment of all the baptized is necessary to reaffirm the dignity and the unique, irreplaceable value of the family founded on the marriage of a man and a woman open to life, and also of human life in all of its stages. Legal and administrative measures must be promoted that support families with their inalienable rights, necessary if they are to continue to carry out their extraordinary mission. The witnesses given at yesterday's celebration show that today too the family can stand firm in the love of God and renew humanity in the new millennium. I wish to express my closeness and to assure my prayers for all the families that bear witness to fidelity in especially difficult circumstances. I encourage the many families who, at times living in the

midst of setbacks and misunderstandings, set an example of generosity and trust in God, in the hope that they will not lack the assistance they need. I am also thinking of the families who are suffering because of poverty, sickness, marginalization or emigration and, most especially, of Christian families that are being persecuted for their faith. The Pope is very close to all of you and accompanies you in your daily efforts. (Benedict XVI. *Address at the Closing Mass of the Sixth World Day of Families held in Mexico City*, January 18, 2009)

SACRED SCRIPTURES

If anyone does not obey our word as expressed in this letter, do not associate with him

But you, brothers, do not be remiss in doing good. **If anyone does not obey our word as expressed in this letter, take note of this person not to associate with him, that he may be put to shame.** Do not regard him as an enemy but admonish him as a brother. (2Thess 3:13-15)

The punishment of the unfaithful will extend to the children

So also with the woman who is unfaithful to her husband and offers as heir her son by a stranger. First, she has disobeyed the law of the Most High; secondly, she has wronged her husband; Thirdly, in her wanton adultery she has borne children by another man. Such a woman will be dragged before the assembly, and her punishment will extend to her children; Her children will not take root; her branches will not bring forth fruit. She will leave an accursed memory; her disgrace will never be blotted out. **Thus all who dwell on the earth shall know, and all who inhabit the world shall understand, That nothing is better than the fear of the Lord, nothing more salutary than to obey his commandments.** (Sir 23:22-27)

PIUS X

Those who direct the Catholic cause must be sound Catholics

To carry it out right one must have divine

grace, and the apostle receives it only if he is united to Christ. **Only when he has formed Jesus Christ in himself shall he more easily be able to restore Him to the family and society.** Therefore, **all who are called upon to direct or dedicate themselves to the Catholic cause, must be sound Catholics,** firm in faith, solidly instructed in religious matters, **truly submissive to the Church** and especially to this supreme Apostolic See and the Vicar of Jesus Christ. They must be men of real piety, of manly virtue, and of a life so chaste and fearless that they will be a guiding example to all others. (Pius X. *Encyclical Il fermo proposito*, no. 11, June 11, 1905)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

The good physician uses disagreeable remedies to save the life of his patients

Is not a confessor too severe, who defers absolution because he does not believe the penitent is well enough disposed?

A confessor who defers absolution because he does not believe the penitent well enough disposed, **is not too severe; on the contrary, he is very charitable and acts as a good physician who tries all remedies, even those that are disagreeable and painful, to save the life of his patient.** (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 102)

JOHN PAUL II

The difficult demands of Jesus may not be ignored: 'from now on do not sin anymore'

Between the customs of a secularized society and the requirements of the Gospel, a profound rift is being created. **There are many who wish to participate in ecclesial life, but do not find any relation between the world in which they live and Christian principles.** It is believed that the Church, merely due to rigidity, adheres firmly to its norms; and that this contrasts with the mercy that Jesus gives us the example in the Gospel. The difficult demands of Jesus, his words: **'Go and from now on do not sin anymore'** (Jn 8:11), are ignored. Often, we fall back on personal conscience, forgetting however, that this

conscience is as an eye that does not possess light in itself, but only when it looks toward the authentic source of light. (John Paul II. *Address to the German Episcopal Conference*, no. 6, November 17, 1980)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

A good counsel from God in His mercy: 'Make straight your ways and your doings'

This same declaration does Esaias make: 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? saith the Lord. I am full.' (Is 1:10) And **when He had repudiated holocausts, and sacrifices, and oblations**, as likewise the new moons, and the sabbaths, and the festivals, and all the rest of the services accompanying these, **He continues, exhorting them to what pertained to salvation: 'Wash you, make you clean, take away wickedness from your hearts from before mine eyes: cease from your evil ways, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow; and come, let us reason together, saith the Lord.'** [...] **But inasmuch as God is merciful, He did not cut them off from good counsel.** For after He had said by Jeremiah, 'To what purpose bring ye Me incense from Saba, and cinnamon from a far country? Your whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices are not acceptable to Me;' He proceeds: 'Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah. These things saith the Lord, the God of Israel, **Make straight your ways and your doings, and I will establish you in this place. Put not your trust in lying words, for they will not at all profit you, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the lord, it is (here).'**' (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against heresies*, Book 4, ch. 17, no. 1-2)

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Many young adults prefer to live together without getting married.

It's necessary to draw near to them

It is no novelty that the enemies of the Holy Church try to manipulate the words of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in favor of their own illegitimate interests. After all, the influence of pastors over souls is considered excessive by those who would like a world without God. Thus, they try to deviate it from its true objective. In the last few decades, it has become increasingly common to see this attempted with the teachings of the Popes. With God's help, however, the truth has always triumphed; clear statements have shed light on this era in which the distinction between good and evil seems ever more blurred. Brave pronouncements, such as those of Paul VI, John Paul II, or more recently, Benedict XVI, have disregarded the world's scorn and gone against the tide of generalized relativism.

Catholics have heartily welcomed these pronouncements, for we are really in need of convictions based on the immortal rock of the Church's faith.

One of the topics that most requires this clarity is that of family morals, frequently attacked on all fronts. Consequently, it is highly beneficial to learn how to avoid imprecise expressions...Let us examine the teachings we have received in this regard; on one hand from Pope Francis, and on the other from the former Pontiffs.

FRANCIS

A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the topic of divorced people. It is an aspect that will, without a doubt, be debated. But, for me, **the new customs of today's young people are another important problem. Young people aren't getting married.** It is the culture of the age. **Many young adults prefer to live together without getting married. What should the Church do? Cast them out? Or, on the contrary, draw near to them, hold on to them and try to bring God's word to them?** (*Interview with Joaquín Morales Solá of the Argentine daily La Nación, at the Domus Sanctae Marthae, October 5, 2014 – English*)

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SACRED SCRIPTURE

Do not conform yourselves to this age

Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect. (Rom 12:2)

JOHN PAUL II

The danger of blurring the boundaries between the Church and world and the duty to announce the truth without ambiguity

The underlying question concerns the relationship between the Church and the world. This question was fundamental to the Second Vatican Council and it remains fundamental to the life of the Church more than thirty years later. The answer we give to this question will determine the answer we give to a range of other important and practical questions. **The advanced secularization of society brings with it a tendency to blur the boundaries**

between the Church and the world. Certain aspects of the prevailing culture are allowed to condition the Christian community in ways which the Gospel does not permit. There is sometimes an unwillingness to challenge cultural assumptions as the Gospel demands. This often goes hand in hand with **an uncritical approach to the problem of moral evil, and a reluctance to recognize the reality of sin** and the need for forgiveness. This attitude embodies **a too optimistic view of modernity, together with an uneasiness about the Cross** and its implications for Christian living. **The past is too easily dismissed, and the horizontal is so stressed that the sense of the supernatural grows weak. A distorted respect for pluralism leads to a relativism which questions the truths taught by faith and accessible to human reason;** and this in turn leads to **confusion about what constitutes true freedom. All this causes uncertainty about the distinctive contribution which the Church is called to make in the world.** In speaking of the Church's dialogue with the world, Pope Paul VI used the phrase *colloquium salutis*; not just dialogue for its own sake, but

a dialogue which has its source in the Truth and seeks to communicate the Truth that frees and saves. **The colloquium salutis requires that the Church be different precisely for the sake of dialogue.** The unfailing source of this difference is the power of the Paschal Mystery which we proclaim and communicate. It is in the Paschal Mystery that we discover **the absolute and universal truth** – the truth about God and about the human person – **which has been entrusted to the Church and which She offers to the men and women of every age.** We Bishops must never lose confidence in the call we have received, the call to a humble and tenacious *diakonia* of that truth. **The Apostolic faith and the Apostolic mission which we have received impose a solemn duty to speak that truth at every level of our ministry.** (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Australia on their ad limina visit*, no. 3, December 14, 1998)

The Church's motherhood can never be separated from her teaching mission – She should never hide true morality

The Church's teaching, and in particular her **firmness in defending the universal and permanent validity of the precepts prohibiting intrinsically evil acts, is not infrequently seen as the sign of an intolerable intransigence,** particularly with regard to the enormously complex and conflict-filled situations present in the moral life of individuals and of society today; this intransigence is said to be in contrast with the Church's motherhood. The Church, one hears, is lacking in understanding and compassion. **But the Church's motherhood can never in fact be separated from her teaching mission,** which she must always carry out as the faithful Bride of Christ, who is the Truth in person. 'As Teacher, she never tires of proclaiming the moral norm... **The Church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this norm.** In obedience to the truth which is Christ, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of the human person, **the Church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will, without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection'** (*Familiaris Consortio*, Nov. 22, 1981 – AAS 74 (1982):120). In fact, genuine understanding and compassion must mean love for the person, for his true good, for his authentic freedom. **And this does not result, certainly, from**

concealing or weakening moral truth, but rather from proposing it in its most profound meaning as an outpouring of God's eternal Wisdom, which we have received in Christ, and as a service to man, to the growth of his freedom and to the attainment of his happiness. (Cf. *Ibid.*, 34: *loc. cit.*, 123-1 Z5.) (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis Splendor*, no. 95, August 6, 1993)

The solution for moral relativism is found in the integrity of Jesus Christ's message

The powerful forces of the media and the entertainment industry are aimed largely at young people, who find themselves the target of competing ideologies which seek to condition and influence their attitudes and actions. **Confusion is created as youth are beset by moral relativism and religious indifferentism.** How can they come to grips with the question of truth and the requirements of consistency in moral behaviour when **modern culture teaches them to live as though absolute values did not exist, or tells them to be content with a vague religiosity?** The widespread loss of the transcendent sense of human existence leads to failure in moral and social life. Your task, dear Brothers, is to show the tremendous relevance for contemporary men and women — and for the younger generation — of Jesus Christ and his Gospel: for it is here that the deepest human aspirations and needs find fulfillment. **The saving message of Jesus Christ needs to be heard anew in all its freshness and power,** so that it can be fully experienced and savoured! (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Scotland on their ad limina visit*, March 4, 2003)

The best pastoral proposal for the family presupposes doctrinal clarity and nonconformity with opinions in vogue

A pastoral proposal for the family in crisis presupposes, as a preliminary requirement, doctrinal clarity, effectively taught in moral theology about sexuality and the respect for life. The opposing opinions of theologians, priests and religious that the media promote on pre-marital relations, birth control, the admission of divorced persons to the sacraments, homosexuality and artificial insemination, the use of abortion practices or euthanasia, show

the degree of uncertainty and confusion that disturb and end by deadening the consciences of so many of the faithful. **At the root of the crisis one can perceive the rupture between anthropology and ethics, marked by a moral relativism according to which the human act is not evaluated with reference to the permanent, objective principles proper to nature created by God, but in conformity with a merely subjective reflection** on what is the greatest benefit for the individual's life project. Thus a semantic evolution is produced in which homicide is called 'induced death', infanticide, 'therapeutic abortion', and adultery becomes a mere 'extra-marital adventure'. **No longer possessing absolute certainty in moral matters, the divine law becomes an option among the latest variety of opinions in vogue.** (John Paul II. *Address to the Brazilian Bishops from the 'East Region II' on their ad limina visit*, no. 6, November 16, 2002)

In face of de facto free unions there is an urgency for pastoral ministry that seeks regularization

De facto free unions: this means unions without any publicly recognized institutional bond, either civil or religious. This phenomenon, which is becoming ever more frequent, cannot fail to concern pastors of souls, also because it may be based on widely varying factors, the consequences of which may perhaps be containable by suitable action. Some people consider themselves almost forced into a free union by difficult economic, cultural or religious situations, on the grounds that, if they contracted a regular marriage, they would be exposed to some form of harm, would lose economic advantages, would be discriminated against, etc. In other cases, however, one encounters people who scorn, rebel against or reject society, the institution of the family and the social and political order, or who are solely seeking pleasure. Then there are those who are driven to such situations by extreme ignorance or poverty, sometimes by a conditioning due to situations of real injustice, or by a certain psychological immaturity that makes them uncertain or afraid to enter into a stable and definitive union. In some countries, traditional customs presume that the true and proper marriage will take place only after a period of cohabitation and the birth of the first child.

Each of these elements presents the Church with arduous pastoral problems, by reason of the serious consequences deriving from them, both religious and moral (the loss of the religious sense of marriage seen in the light of the Covenant of God with His people; deprivation of the grace of the sacrament; grave scandal), and also social consequences (the destruction of the concept of the family; the weakening of the sense of fidelity, also towards society; possible psychological damage to the children; the strengthening of selfishness).

The pastors and the ecclesial community should take care to become acquainted with such situations and their actual causes, case by case. They should make tactful and respectful contact with the couples concerned, and enlighten them patiently, correct them charitably and show them the witness of Christian family life, in such a way as to smooth the path for them to regularize their situation. But above all there must be a campaign of prevention, by fostering the sense of fidelity in the whole moral and religious training of the young, instructing them concerning the conditions and structures that favor such fidelity, without which there is no true freedom; they must be helped to reach spiritual maturity and enabled to understand the rich human and supernatural reality of marriage as a sacrament. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 81, November 22, 1981)

BENEDICT XV

Jesus' mercy was not expressed by putting moral law in parentheses; mercy does not change the nature of sin and demands correspondence

To avoid any misunderstanding, it should be noted that **Jesus' mercy was not expressed by putting moral law in parentheses. For Jesus, good is good and evil is evil. Mercy does not change the connotations of sin but consumes it in a fire of love.** This purifying and healing effect is achieved if within the person there is a **corresponding love which implies recognition of God's law**, sincere repentance and the resolution to start a new life. The sinful woman in the Gospel was pardoned greatly because she loved greatly. In Jesus, God comes to give

love to us and to ask love of us. (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, June 17, 2007)

PIUS X

Neutrality before the onslaughts of the world is cowardice

It is for you, therefore, venerable brethren, whom Divine Providence has constituted to be the pastors and leaders of the Christian people, **to resist with all your strength this most fatal tendency of modern society to lull itself in a shameful indolence while war is being waged against religion, seeking a cowardly neutrality made up of weak schemes and compromises to the injury of divine and human rights, to the oblivion of Christ's clear sentence: 'He that is not with me is against me' (Mt 12:30).** (Pius X. *Encyclical Communionium rerum*, no. 31, April 21, 1909)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Inescapable obligation of forming young people according to true conjugal morals

Especially in the heart of their own families, young people should be aptly and seasonably instructed in the dignity, duty and work of married love. Trained thus in the cultivation of chastity, they will be able at a suitable age to enter a marriage of their own after an honorable courtship. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 49)

LEO XIII

The Church, always and everywhere, used her power to preserve the sanctity of marriage

Christ, therefore, having renewed marriage to such and so great excellence, commended and entrusted all the discipline bearing upon these matters to His Church. The Church, always and everywhere, has so used her power with reference to the marriages of Christians that men have seen clearly how it belongs to her as of native right; not being made hers by any human grant, but given divinely to her by the will of her Founder. Her constant and watchful care in guarding marriage, by the preservation

of its sanctity, is so well understood as to not need proof. That **the judgment of the Council of Jerusalem reprobated licentious and free love** (cf. Acts 15:29). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum divinae sapientiae*, no. 13, February 10, 1880)

Marriage was instituted by the authority and command of God; Christ gave to His Church legislative and judicial power with regard to the bond of union

Let special care be taken that the people be well instructed in the precepts of Christian wisdom, so that they may always remember that **marriage was not instituted by the will of man, but, from the very beginning, by the authority and command of God; that it does not admit of plurality of wives or husbands; that Christ, the Author of the New Covenant, raised it from a rite of nature to be a sacrament, and gave to His Church legislative and judicial power with regard to the bond of union.** On this point the very greatest care must be taken to instruct them, **lest their minds should be led into error by the unsound conclusions of adversaries who desire that the Church should be deprived of that power.** In like manner, all ought to understand clearly that, if there be **any union of a man and a woman among the faithful of Christ which is not a sacrament, such union has not the force and nature of a proper marriage.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum divinae sapientiae*, no. 39-40, February 10, 1880)

PIUS IX

Any union other than matrimony, even if contracted under the civil law, is nothing else than concubinage

Because no Catholic is ignorant or cannot know that matrimony is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, instituted by Christ the Lord, and that for that reason, there can be no marriage between the faithful without there being at one and the same time a sacrament, and that, therefore, **any other union of man and woman among Christians, except the sacramental union, even if contracted under the power of any civil law, is nothing else than a disgraceful and death-bringing concubinage very frequently**

condemned by the Church, and, hence, that the sacrament can never be separated from the conjugal agreement. (Denzinger 1600. Pius IX, *Allocution Acerbissimum vobiscum*, September 27, 1857)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE FOR THE FAITH

Union outside marriage profanes the temple of the Holy Spirit

Through marriage, in fact, the love of married people is taken up into that love which Christ irrevocably has for the Church (cf. Eph 5:25-32), **while dissolute sexual union defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit** which the Christian has become (sexual intercourse outside marriage is formally condemned 1Cor 5:1, 6:9, 7:2, 10:8, Eph 5:5, 1Tim 1:10; Heb 13:4; and with explicit reasons 1Cor 6:12-20). **Sexual union therefore is only legitimate if a definitive community of life has been established between the man and the woman. This is what the Church has always understood and taught** (cf. Innocent IV, 'Sub catholica professione; Pius II, Propos damn in Ep Cum sicut accepimus; decrees of the Holy Office, Sept 24th, 1665, DS 2045; March 2nd, 1679, DS 2148 Pius XI, Casti Connubii, Dec 31st, 1930) and she finds a profound agreement with her doctrine in men's reflection and in the lessons of history. (Congregation for the Doctrine for the Faith. *Declaration Persona humana*, no. VII, December 29, 1975)

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To be a good Catholic it isn't necessary to have children like rabbits. God gave the means to be responsible

Within any society, people encounter certain difficulties in carrying out their activities, for differences of criteria naturally demand a mutual benevolence toward others, so that obstacles may be overcome and a common objective be achieved. As such, marriage also requires significant renunciations in the interests of a greater good. However, since it was elevated by Christ as a Sacrament, the difficulties encountered in the attainment of its high objectives, which include mutual support in fidelity and the Christian education of the children, are clearly overcome with the help of divine grace. Nonetheless, Catholic families are in need of real support so as not to succumb to discouragement in a world that seems to conspire against all that God and the Holy Church ask of them! Even more so in our days, widely dominated by materialism and hedonism, having a large family has become a true form of heroism.

How, then, would couples who have been blessed by God with many children, having sacrificed themselves entirely for love of them, feel when the one to whom they owe religious obedience employs an inopportune expression, implying that to be good Catholics it is not necessary to have children like rabbits? Or who claims that it is irresponsible to have so many children because 'God gives the means' for the contrary? Does the 'responsible parenthood' of which the Church speaks, refer to the limitation of offspring? Always? Let's recall some points of the Church's teachings regarding this topic...

FRANCIS

[Journalist]: You spoke of the great numbers of children in the Philippines, and about how happy you were that there are so many children. But according to several polls, the majority of Philipinos think that the enormous growth of the Philippino population is one of the most important reasons for the immense poverty in the country. In the Philippines, on average, one woman gives birth to more than three children in her lifetime, and the Catholic position regarding contraception appears to be one of the few questions on which a great number of people in the Philippines do not agree with the Church. What are your thoughts on that?

[Francis]: I believe that **the number of three per family**, which you mentioned, **is important**, according to the experts, **for maintaining the population**. Three per couple. When it is below this level, you have the other extreme, as for example in Italy, where I have heard — I don't know if it is true — that in 2024 there will be no money left to pay pensioners. Population decrease. **That is why the key phrase for responding is one which the Church constantly uses, as I do: it is 'responsible parenthood'**. How does this work? With dialogue. Each person with his or her pastor has to try to exercise this responsible parenthood. **The example I mentioned just now, about the woman who was expecting her eighth child and already had seven caesarean births: this is a form of irresponsibility.** [Some might say:] 'No, I trust in God'. **'But, look, God gives you the means, be responsible'**. Some people believe that — pardon my language — **in order to be good Catholics, we should be like rabbits**. No. Responsible parenthood. This is clear and it is the reason why in the Church there are marriage groups, there are experts in this area, there are pastors, and people are trying. And I know of any number of solutions which are licit and have helped for this. You did well to ask me this. (*In-flight press conference from the Philippines to Rome, January 19, 2015*)

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- ♦ Gardens where religious vocations and sanctity flourish

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ Large families are a sign of God's blessing

Benedict XVI

- ♦ Example of generosity and confidence in God
 - ♦ It was beautiful to listen to the testimonies of couples about their large families – the problem of Europe penetrated my soul
-

IV – Particulars about 'Birth Control' and 'Responsible Parenthood'

Pius XII

- ♦ To avoid the primary duty of matrimony without a grave reason is a sin against the very nature of married life

- ♦ Matrimony is an institution at the service of life
- ♦ Accept with happiness and gratitude the number of children it pleases God to send

John XXIII

- ♦ The transmission of human life is sacred – it is not permitted to use means which are allowable in the propagation of plant and animal life

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ Couples who accept a large family merit special mention

Paul VI

- ♦ Responsible exercise of parenthood: couples must recognize their duties toward God
- ♦ Using the divine gift outside of its purpose is to contradict nature

John Paul II

- ♦ Even for family morality, the Magisterium is the only authentic guide
- ♦ Systematic campaigns to control birth based on a distorted view of the demographic problem
- ♦ Parents are partners in a divine undertaking

I – CHILDREN, A BLESSING OF THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

GREGORY XVI

Matrimony is a Sacrament and subject to the laws of the Church

Recalling that matrimony is a sacrament and therefore subject to the Church, let them consider and observe the laws of the Church concerning it. Let them take care lest for any reason they permit that which is an obstruction to the teachings of the canons and the decrees of the councils. They should be aware that those marriages will have an unhappy end which are entered upon contrary to the discipline of the Church or without God's favor or because of concupiscence alone, with no thought of the sacrament and of the mysteries signified by it. (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari Vos*, no. 12, August 15, 1832)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

The blessings of marriage: children, fidelity and the Sacrament

The faithful should also be shown that there are three blessings of marriage: children,

fidelity and the Sacrament. These are blessings which to some degree compensate for the inconveniences referred to by the Apostle in the words: Such shall have tribulation of the flesh, and they lead to this other result that sexual intercourse, which is sinful outside of marriage, is rendered right and honorable. **The first blessing, then, is a family, that is to say, children born of a true and lawful wife.** So highly did the Apostle esteem this blessing that he says: The woman shall be saved by bearing children.' (Catechism of Trent, 2700)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Having offspring can never be a sin

That which is good about matrimony, and that, due to which matrimony is good, could never be a sin. Now this is threefold, faithfulness, offspring, and the Sacrament. Faithfulness demands not having relations with another man or woman; the offspring demands that it be lovingly welcomed, kindly nourished, religiously educated; the Sacrament demands indissolubility of marriage and that the man or woman divorced be not joined to another even for the sake of offspring. This is as it were the rule of marriages by which rule either fruitfulness is made seemly, or the perverseness of incontinence is brought to order. (Saint

Augustine of Hippo. *De Genesis ad litteram*, Book. 9, no. 12)

The Holy Family: paradigm of the blessings of matrimony

All of the blessings of matrimony are concentrated in the parents of Christ: the offspring, fidelity and the sacrament. The offspring, in very person of the Lord Jesus; fidelity, because there was no adultery; the sacrament, because it was not ruptured by divorce. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, Book. I, no. 13)

II – THE VOCATION OF THE FAMILY IS TO BEGET CHILDREN FOR EARTH AND FOR HEAVEN

SACRED SCRIPTURE

God commanded the first couple to be fruitful

God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: **‘Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.’** (*Gen 1:27-28*)

Offspring, a gift from God

Lo, sons are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior are the sons of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them! He shall not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate. (*Ps 127: 3-5*)

LEO XIII

The noble mission of the family to bring forth children for the Church

It is for these reasons that marriage is ‘a great sacrament’; (*Eph 5:32*) ‘honorable in all,’ (*Heb 13:4*) holy, pure, and to be revered as a type and symbol of most high mysteries. Furthermore, the Christian perfection and completeness of marriage are not comprised in those points only which have been mentioned. For, first, there has been vouchsafed to the marriage union a higher and nobler purpose than was

ever previously given to it. By the command of Christ, **it not only looks to the propagation of the human race, but to the bringing forth of children for the Church**, ‘fellow citizens with the saints, and the domestics of God’ (*Eph 2:19*); so that ‘a people might be born and brought up for the worship and religion of the true God and our Saviour Jesus Christ’ (*Catechism of Trent, Chapter 8*). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae*, no. 9-10, February 10, 1880)

PIUS XI

God’s purpose for instituting the family; the generation and formation of offspring

Education is essentially a social and not a mere individual activity. Now there are three necessary societies, distinct from one another and yet harmoniously combined by God, into which man is born: two, namely the family and civil society, belong to the natural order; the third, the Church, to the supernatural order. In the first place comes **the family, instituted directly by God for its peculiar purpose, the generation and formation of offspring**; for this reason it has priority of nature and therefore of rights over civil society. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 11-12, December 31, 1929)

How great a boon children are is clear from a consideration of man’s sublime end

Thus **amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place**. And indeed the Creator of the human race Himself, Who in His goodness wishes to use men as His helpers in the propagation of life, taught this when, instituting marriage in Paradise, He said to our first parents, and through them to all future spouses: ‘Increase and multiply, and fill the earth’ (*Gen 1:28*). As Saint Augustine admirably deduces from the words of the holy Apostle Saint Paul to Timothy (*Tim 5:14*) when he says: ‘The Apostle himself is therefore a witness that marriage is for the sake of generation: ‘I wish,’ he says, ‘young girls to marry.’ And, as if someone said to him, ‘Why?’ he immediately adds: ‘To bear children, to be mothers of families’ (Saint Augustine, *De bono coniug.*, ch.

24, no. 32). **How great a boon of God this is, and how great a blessing of matrimony is clear from a consideration of man's dignity and of his sublime end.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Casti connubii*, no. 10-11, December 31, 1930)

Parents are destined to engender members for the Church of Christ

But **Christian parents** must also understand that they are **destined not only to propagate and preserve the human race on earth**, indeed not only to educate any kind of worshippers of the true God, **but children who are to become members of the Church of Christ, to raise up fellow-citizens of the Saints, and members of God's household**, that the worshippers of God and Our Savior may daily increase. [...] **since it is theirs to offer their offspring to the Church** in order that by this most fruitful Mother of the children of God they may be regenerated through the laver of Baptism unto supernatural justice and finally be made living members of Christ. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Casti connubii*, no. 13-14, December 31, 1930)

III – THE BENEFITS AND IMPORTANCE OF LARGE FAMILIES

PIUS XII

Large families are a guarantee of physical and moral health for society

Large families, far from being a 'social malady,' are a guarantee of the health of a people, both moral and physical. (Pius XII. *Address to the Association of Large Families in Rome*, January 20, 1958)

Gardens where religious vocations and sanctity flourish

Large families are the most splendid flowerbeds in the garden of the Church; within them, as in favorable soil, happiness flourishes and sanctity ripens. [...] Many times, and with good reason, **it has been emphasized that it is a prerogative of large families to be the cradle of saints**; we can cite, among others, the family of Saint Louis, the King of France, composed of ten children, that of Saint Catherine of Siena, from a family of twenty-five, Saint Robert

Bellarmino from a family of twelve, and Saint Pius X from a family of ten. Each vocation is a secret of Providence; but concerning the parents, from these facts that we can conclude that the number of children does not impede their eminent and faultless education; that the number of children, in this matter, in no way diminishes the quality, whether in regard to physical values or the spiritual ones. (Pius XII. *Address to the Association of Large Families in Rome*, no. 3, January 20, 1958)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Large families are a sign of God's blessing

So the Church, which 'is on the side of life' (*Familiaris consortio*, no. 30) teaches that 'each and every marriage act must remain open 'per se' to the transmission of life' (*Humanae vitae*, no. 11). [...] **Called to give life, spouses share in the creative power and fatherhood of God** (cf. Eph 3:14, Mt 23:9). 'Married couples should regard it as their proper mission to transmit human life and to educate their children; they should realize that they are thereby cooperating with the love of God the Creator and are, in a certain sense, its interpreters. They will fulfill this duty with a sense of human and Christian responsibility.' (*Gaudium et spes*, no. 50, 2). [...] **Sacred Scripture and the Church's traditional practice see in large families a sign of God's blessing** and the parents' generosity. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2366-2367, 2373)

BENEDICT XVI

Example of generosity and confidence in God

I wish to express my closeness and to assure my prayers for all the families that bear witness to fidelity in especially difficult circumstances. I encourage large families who, at times living in the midst of setbacks and misunderstandings, **set an example of generosity and trust in God**, in the hope that they will not lack the assistance they need. (Benedict XVI. *Address by video conference at the conclusion of the Mass closing the Sixth World Day of Families held in Mexico City*, January 18, 2009)

It was beautiful to listen to the testimonies of couples about their large families – the problem of Europe penetrated my soul

The visit to Valencia, Spain was under the banner of the theme of marriage and the family. **It was beautiful to listen**, before the people assembled from all continents, **to the testimonies of couples – blessed by a numerous throng of children** – who introduced themselves to us and spoke **of their respective journeys in the Sacrament of Marriage and in their large families**. They did not hide the fact that they have also had difficult days, that they have had to pass through periods of crisis. Yet, precisely through the effort of supporting one another day by day, precisely through accepting one another ever anew in the crucible of daily trials, living and suffering to the full their initial ‘yes’, precisely on this Gospel path of ‘losing oneself, they had matured, rediscovered themselves and become happy. Their ‘yes’ to one another in the patience of the journey and in the strength of the Sacrament with which Christ had bound them together, had become a great ‘yes’ to themselves, their children, to God the Creator and to the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Thus, from the witness of these families a wave of joy reached us, not a superficial and scant gaiety that is all too soon dispelled, but a joy that developed also in suffering, a joy that reaches down to the depths and truly redeems man. **Before these families with their children**, before these families in which the generations hold hands and the future is present, **the problem of Europe, which it seems no longer wants to have children, penetrated my soul.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the members of the Roman Curia at the traditional exchange of Christmas Greetings*, December 22, 2006)

IV – PARTICULARS ABOUT BIRTH CONTROL AND RESPONSIBLE PARENTHOOD

PIUS XII

To avoid the primary duty of matrimony without a grave reason is a sin against the very nature of married life

Therefore, to **embrace the matrimonial state**, to use continually the faculty proper to such

a state and lawful only therein, **and, at the same time, to avoid its primary duty without a grave reason, would be a sin against the very nature of married life.** [...] the will to avoid the fecundity of their union, while continuing to satisfy to the full their sensuality, can only be the result of a false appreciation of life and of motives foreign to sound ethical principles. (Pius XII. *Address to participants in the Congress of the Italian Catholic Union of Obstetricians*, October 29, 1951)

Matrimony is an institution at the service of life

We have taken advantage, throughout the last few years, of all occasions to manifest one or other essential point of the mentioned family morals, and more recently to show it as a whole; not only refuting the errors that corrupt it, but also showing plainly their meaning, their reason, their importance, their value for the happiness of the spouses, the children and of the entire family, for the stability and greater social good of the domestic home, and even for the State and the Church itself. **At the center of this doctrine, matrimony appears as an institution at the service of life.** (Pius XII. *Speech to the participants of the National Congress of the Family Front and the Federations about the Family*, November 27, 1951)

Accept with happiness and gratitude the number of children it pleases God to send

If the sincere purpose of **allowing the Creator to undertake his work freely** is lacking [in matrimony], human egoism will always discover new sophisms and deviations in order to, if possible, stifle the conscience and perpetuate abuses. Now, the value of the testimony of parents of large families not only consists of rejecting without hesitation, and with the strength of the facts, all intentional compromise between the law of God and the egoism of man, but also in the **promptness of accepting with happiness and gratitude the inestimable gifts of God, who are the children, and in the number that pleases Him.** (Pius XII. *Speech to the participants of the National Congress of the Family Front and the Federations about the Family*, November 27, 1951)

JOHN XXIII

The transmission of human life is sacred – it is not permitted to use certain means which are allowable in the propagation of plant and animal life

The transmission of human life is the result of a personal and conscious act, and, as such, is subject to the all-holy, inviolable and immutable laws of God, which no man may ignore or disobey. He is not therefore permitted to use certain ways and means which are allowable in the propagation of plant and animal life. Human life is sacred – all men must recognize that fact. From its very inception it reveals the creating hand of God. Those who violate His laws not only offend the divine majesty and degrade themselves and humanity, they also sap the vitality of the political community of which they are members. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 193-194, May 15, 1961)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Couples who accept a large family merit special mention

Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained toward the begetting and educating of children. [...] Thus, trusting in divine Providence and refining the spirit of sacrifice, married Christians glorify the Creator and strive toward fulfillment in Christ when with a generous human and Christian sense of responsibility they acquit themselves of the duty to procreate. **Among the couples who fulfil their God-given task in this way, those merit special mention who with a gallant heart and with wise and common deliberation, undertake to bring up suitably even a relatively large family.** (Vatican Council II. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 50, December 7, 1965)

PAUL VI

Responsible exercise of parenthood: couples must recognize their duties toward God

The question of human procreation, like every other question which touches human life,

involves more than the limited aspects specific to such disciplines as biology, psychology, demography or sociology. It is **the whole man and the whole mission to which he is called** that must be considered: **both its natural, earthly aspects and its supernatural, eternal aspects.** [...] Marriage, then, is far from being the effect of chance or the result of the blind evolution of natural forces. It is in reality the wise and provident institution of God the Creator, whose purpose was to effect in man His loving design. Responsible parenthood, as we use the term here, has one further essential aspect of paramount importance. It concerns the objective moral order which was established by God, and of which a right conscience is the true interpreter. In a word, **the exercise of responsible parenthood requires that husband and wife, keeping a right order of priorities, recognize their own duties toward God, themselves, their families and human society.** From this it follows that **they are not free to act as they choose in the service of transmitting life,** as if it were wholly up to them to decide what is the right course to follow. On the contrary, **they are bound to ensure that what they do corresponds to the will of God the Creator.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Humanae vitae*, no. 7-10, July 25, 1968)

Using the divine gift outside of its purpose is to contradict nature

The Church, nevertheless, in urging men to the observance of the precepts of the natural law, which it interprets by its constant doctrine, teaches that each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life. [...] Hence to **use this divine gift while depriving it, even if only partially, of its meaning and purpose, is equally repugnant to the nature of man and of woman.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Humanae Vitae*, nos. 11-13, July 25, 1968)

JOHN PAUL II

Even for family morality, the Magisterium is the only authentic guide

The Church is certainly aware of the many complex problems which couples in many countries face today in their task of transmitting life in a responsible way. She also recognizes

the serious problem of population growth in the form it has taken in many parts of the world and its moral implications. However, she holds that consideration in depth of all the aspects of these problems offers a new and stronger confirmation of the importance of the authentic teaching on birth regulation reposed in the Second Vatican Council and in the Encyclical *Humanae vitae*. [...] A united effort by theologians in this regard, **inspired by a convinced adherence to the Magisterium, which is the one authentic guide for the People of God** is particularly urgent for reasons that include the close link between Catholic teaching on this matter and the view of the human person that the Church proposes: **doubt or error in the field of marriage or the family involves obscuring to a serious extent the integral truth about the human person**, in a cultural situation that is already so often confused and contradictory. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 31, November 22, 1981)

Systematic campaigns to control birth based on a distorted view of the demographic problem

In the face of the so-called culture of death, the family is the heart of the culture of life. Human ingenuity seems to be directed more towards limiting, suppressing or destroying the sources

of life – including recourse to abortion, which unfortunately is so widespread in the world – than towards defending and opening up the possibilities of life. **The Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis* denounced systematic anti-childbearing campaigns** which, **on the basis of a distorted view of the demographic problem** and in a climate of ‘absolute lack of respect for the freedom of choice of the parties involved’, often subject them ‘to intolerable pressures ... in order to force them to submit to this new form of oppression’ (25:1. c., 544). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 39, May 1, 1991)

Parents are partners in a divine undertaking

Thus, **a man and woman** joined in matrimony **become partners in a divine undertaking**: through the act of procreation, **God’s gift is accepted and a new life opens to the future**. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Evangelium vitae*, no. 43, March 25, 1995)

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I do not have the recipe. How can we go on in a culture that doesn't care about the family, where marriage is not preferred?

The crisis affecting the institution of the family in today's society is amply recognized by all. Faced with this situation, Catholics who want to remain faithful to the teachings of the Church, naturally seek in the Church the correct path and true solutions they need. However, it is disconcerting to hear certain affirmations being pronounced...has the Church renounced her task as Mother and Teacher of the faithful? Does the Magisterium have something to say in response to the concerns brought up by so many families?

FRANCIS

What can we do in this active secularization? What can we do with ideological colonialization? **How can we go on in a culture that doesn't care about the family, where marriage is not preferred? I do not have the recipe**, the Church understands this and the Lord inspired the convocation of the Synod on the Family, with its many problems, [...] **The period of engagement has lost its sacred sense of respect. Today, being engaged and living together are practically the same thing.** Not always, because there are some beautiful examples.... How can we help an engagement mature? [...] **Everything is in crisis, and I ask you to pray a lot. I do not have the recipe for this.** But the testimony of love, the testimony of how to solve problems is important. (*Address during visit to Naples: Meeting with young people on the Caracciolo seafront, March 21, 2015*)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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JOHN PAUL II

The Church has the decisive answer to every one of man's questions

Consequently the decisive answer to every one of man's questions, his religious and moral questions in particular, is given by Jesus Christ, or rather is Jesus Christ himself [...] Jesus Christ, the 'light of the nations', shines upon the face of his Church, which he sends forth to the whole world to proclaim the Gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15). Hence **the Church, as the People of God among the nations**, (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 9) while attentive to the new challenges of history and to mankind's efforts to discover the meaning of life, **offers to everyone the answer which comes from the truth about Jesus Christ and his Gospel.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 2, August 6, 1993)

In the field of conjugal morality the Church is Teacher and Mother

In the field of conjugal morality the Church is Teacher and Mother and acts as such. As Teacher, she never tires of proclaiming the moral norm that must guide the responsible transmission of life. The Church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this norm. **In obedience to the truth which is Christ**, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of

the human person, **the Church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will, without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 33, November 22, 1981)

There is no situation that cannot be adequately confronted by a genuine Christian life

Human frailty grows if the divorce mentality dominates, something that the Council denounced with such vigour because it leads so often to separations and definitive break-ups. Even a bad education for sexuality harms the life of the family. When there is lacking an integral preparation for marriage that respects the gradual stages of the maturation of the engaged couple (cf. *Familiaris consortio*, n. 66), in the family this lessens the possibility of defence. **There is no difficult situation that cannot be adequately confronted when one cultivates a genuine atmosphere of Christian life.** Love itself, wounded by sin, is still a redeemed love (cf. CCC, n. 1608). It is clear that, **if sacramental life is weak, the family yields more easily to snares because it is deprived of any defences.** (John Paul II. *Address to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family*, no. 3, October 18, 2002)

The Church has learned the right path for the family from Christ Himself

The Church knows the path by which the family can reach the heart of the deepest truth about itself. The Church has learned this path at the school of Christ and the school of history interpreted in the light of the Spirit. She does not impose it but she feels an urgent need to propose it to everyone without fear and indeed with great confidence and hope, although she knows that the Good News includes the subject of the Cross. But it is through the Cross that the family can attain the fullness of its being and the perfection of its love. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 86, November 22, 1981)

The Church's task to announce the truth with respect to matrimony

Faced with the difficulties and the resources of the family today, the Church feels called to renew the awareness of the responsibility that it received from Christ with respect to the precious gift of matrimony and the family: the task of announcing it in its truth, of celebrating it in its mystery and of living it within daily existence by those who 'God calls to serve him in matrimony.' (John Paul II. *Address to the representatives of the Episcopal Conferences on the 20th year of the Encyclical Humanae vitae*, November 7, 1988)

It is a serious pastoral omission to not proclaim the truth about marriage and the family

I am aware of your commitment to defending and promoting this institution which has its origin in God and in his plan of salvation (cf. *Familiaris consortio*, n. 49). Today we are seeing a trend, very widespread in certain areas, which is tending to reduce its true nature. Indeed, there is no lack of attempts, in public opinion and in civil legislation, to make equivalent to the family mere *de facto* unions or to recognize as such same-sex unions. These and other anomalies lead us with pastoral firmness to proclaim the truth about marriage and the family. Not to do so would be a serious pastoral omission that would lead people into error, especially those who have the important responsibility of making decisions for

the common good of the nation. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Brazil (Leste II) on their ad limina visit*, no. 4, November 16, 2002)

Rediscovering the original divine plan for the family is of decisive importance

Today it is more urgent than ever [...] to rediscover the value of the family, as a community based on the indissoluble matrimony of one man and one woman who in love establish their existence together and open themselves to the gift of life. [...] The rediscovery of this original divine plan is of decisive importance, within the crises that humanity is passing through in our times. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 2, December 26, 1993)

Marriage and the family are ordained to Christ and need His graces

Illuminated by the faith that gives her an understanding of all the truth concerning the great value of marriage and the family and their deepest meaning, the Church. [...] The Church is deeply convinced that only by the acceptance of the Gospel are the hopes that man legitimately places in marriage and in the family capable of being fulfilled. Willed by God in the very act of creation (cf. Gen 1-2), marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfillment in Christ (cf. Eph 5) and have need of His graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin (cf. GS 47; John Paul II, *Apoptropinquat Iam*) and restored to their 'beginning' (cf. Mt 19:4), that is, to full understanding and the full realization of God's plan. At a moment of history in which the family is the object of numerous forces that seek to destroy it or in some way to deform it, and aware that the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family, the Church perceives in a more urgent and compelling way her mission of proclaiming to all people the plan of God for marriage and the family. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 3, November 22, 1981)

Christ: the solution to protect the family from a destructive 'anti-civilization'

The family constitutes the fundamental 'cell'

of society. But **Christ**—the ‘vine’ from which the ‘branches’ draw nourishment—is **needed so that this cell will not be exposed to the threat of a kind of cultural uprooting** which can come both from within and from without. Indeed, although there is on the one hand the ‘civilization of love’, there continues to exist on the other hand the possibility of a **destructive ‘anti-civilization’**, as so many present trends and situations confirm. (John Paul II. *Letter to families Gratissimam sane*, no. 13, February 2, 1994)

Urgent need of a broad catechetical effort to strengthen families

Hence **there is urgent need of a broad catechetical effort regarding the Christian ideal of conjugal communion and family life** [...] Also required is a serious preparation of young people for marriage, one which clearly presents Catholic teaching on this sacrament at the theological, anthropological and spiritual levels. [...] Families **should not fail to set time aside for prayer**, in which spouses are united with each other and with their children. There is a need to encourage shared spiritual moments such as **participating in the Eucharist** on Sundays and Holy Days, **receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation**, daily prayer in the family and practical signs of charity. **This will strengthen fidelity in marriage and unity in families.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in America*, no. 46, January 22, 1999)

BENEDICT XVI

To safeguard the family one often has to swim against the tide of prevalent culture

In today’s world, where certain erroneous concepts concerning the human being, freedom and love are spreading, **we must never tire of presenting anew the truth about the family institution, as God has desired it since creation.** [...] In our day it is especially the stability of the family that is at risk; **to safeguard it one often has to swim against the tide of the prevalent culture**, and this demands patience, effort, sacrifice and the ceaseless quest for mutual understanding. Today, **however, it is possible for husbands and wives to overcome their difficulties** and remain faithful to their vocation with recourse to **God’s support, with prayer**

and participating devotedly in the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family*, May 13, 2006)

Be committed Christians: a culture favorable to the family flows from faith lived with courage

This pastoral commitment is made more urgent by **the growing crisis of married life and the declining birth rate.** [...] It is within the complexity of these situations that you are called to promote the Christian meaning of life **through the explicit proclamation of the Gospel**, brought with gentle pride and great joy to the various milieus of daily life. **From faith lived with courage**, today as in the past, flows a rich culture of love for life, from conception until its natural end, the promotion of human dignity, of **the elevation of the importance of the family based on faithful marriage and open to life**, and of the commitment to justice and solidarity. **The cultural changes taking place are asking you to be committed Christians.** (Benedict XVI. *Pastoral Visit to Aquileia and Venice: Address to the Preparatory Assembly for the Second Ecclesial convention of Aquileia*, May 7, 2011)

The duty of Pastors: presenting the extraordinary value of marriage

Your duty as Pastors consists in presenting in its full richness **the extraordinary value of marriage**, which as a natural institution is a ‘patrimony of humanity’. Moreover, its elevation to the loftiest dignity of a sacrament must be seen with gratitude and wonder. [...] Today, it is necessary to **proclaim with renewed enthusiasm that the Gospel of the family is a process of human and spiritual fulfilment in the certainty that the Lord is always present with his grace.** This proclamation is often distorted by false concepts of marriage and the family that do not respect God’s original plan. In this regard, **people have actually reached the point of suggesting new forms of marriage**, some unknown to popular cultures **in that its specific nature is altered.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants of the Meeting of Presidents of Latin American Episcopal Commissions for the Family and Life*, no. 4, December 3, 2005)

PAUL VI

Like Her divine Founder, the Church is destined to be a 'sign of contradiction' - She cannot act differently toward men than did the Redeemer

It is to be anticipated that perhaps not everyone will easily accept this particular teaching. **There is too much clamorous outcry against the voice of the Church**, and this is intensified by modern means of communication. **But it comes as no surprise to the Church that she, no less than her divine Founder, is destined to be a 'sign of contradiction'** (Lk 2:34). She does not, because of this, evade the duty imposed on her of proclaiming humbly but firmly the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical. [...] In preserving intact the whole moral law of marriage, the Church is convinced that she is contributing to the creation of a truly human civilization. [...] **The Church, in fact, cannot act differently toward men than did the Redeemer.** She knows their weaknesses, she has compassion on the multitude, she welcomes sinners. **But at the same time she cannot do otherwise than teach the law. For it is in fact the law of human life restored to its native truth and guided by the Spirit of God** (cf. Rom 8). (Paul VI. *Encyclical Humanae vitae*, no. 18. 19, July 25, 1969)

PIUS XII

The formula: instruct the faithful well concerning matrimony

Consequently, since everything must be referred to the law and mind of God, **in order to bring about the universal and permanent restoration of marriage, it is indeed of the utmost importance that the faithful should be well instructed concerning matrimony**; both by word of mouth and by the written word, **not cursorily but often and fully, by means of plain and weighty arguments**, so that these truths will strike the intellect and will be deeply engraved on their hearts. Let them realize and diligently reflect upon the great wisdom, kindness and bounty God has shown towards the human race, not only by the institution of marriage, but also, and quite as much, by upholding it with sacred laws; still more, in wonderfully raising it to the dignity

of a Sacrament by which such an **abundant fountain of graces has been opened to those joined in Christian wedlock**, that these may be able to serve the noble purposes of wedlock for their own welfare and for that of their children, of the community and also for that of human relationship. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Casti connubii*, no. 105, December 31, 1930)

LEO XIII

The family can only be restored to its due dignity by those laws established in the Church by her Divine Founder

This family Christian training sadly undermined in these our times, cannot possibly be restored to its due dignity, save by those laws under which it was established in the Church by her Divine Founder Himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by raising to the dignity of a sacrament the contract of matrimony, in which He would have His own union with the Church typified, not only made the marriage tie more holy, but, in addition, provided efficacious sources of aid for parents and children alike, so that, by the discharge of their duties one to another, they might with greater ease attain to happiness both in time and in eternity. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilio*, no. 14, April 21, 1878)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Christ alone gives spouses strength and grace to 'receive' the original meaning of marriage and live it

By coming to restore the original order of creation disturbed by sin, he himself gives the strength and grace to live marriage in the new dimension of the Reign of God. It is by following Christ, renouncing themselves, and taking up their crosses that spouses will be able to 'receive' the original meaning of marriage and live it with the help of Christ (Mt 19:11). This grace of Christian marriage is a fruit of Christ's cross, the source of all Christian life. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1615)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

However great the difficulties, Bishops must instruct the faithful in moral teaching

It is up to the Bishops to instruct the faithful in the moral teaching concerning sexual morality, however great may be the difficulties in carrying out this work in the face of ideas and practices generally prevailing today. This traditional doctrine must be studied more deeply. It must be handed on in a way capable of properly **enlightening the consciences of those confronted with new situations**. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Persona humana, Declaration on certain questions regarding sexual ethics*, no. 13, December 29, 1975)

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In those times, it was not possible to drink a little water before Mass.

It was Pope Pius XII who saved us from this dictatorship!

When the Queen of Sheba heard of the great wisdom of Solomon, she allowed no obstacle to impede her in undertaking the difficult journey to meet this great monarch, despite the fact that prolonged expeditions at the time were perilous adventures. She made all these efforts just to encounter an earthly king, and to observe his wisdom. Impressed with all she had seen and heard in Jerusalem, and after presenting the richest of gifts to the king of Israel, she returned to her country, filled with admiration (cf. 2Chron 9:1-12).

Each one of us also has the opportunity to meet daily with a King ‘who is greater than Solomon’ (Mt 12:42), and far more powerful and wise, for he is the King of kings. How much more should we – who are more fortunate and blessed in our encounter than the Queen of Sheba – be willing to make all possible efforts and sacrifices to prepare ourselves? For this reason, Holy Mother Church, who never establishes laws above our capacity, has instituted certain norms throughout the centuries so that we might present ourselves in a more worthy manner in our encounter with this august King, so as to demonstrate our respect and veneration for Him.

By any chance, could the precepts that Holy Mother Church has wisely adapted according to the necessities of each epoch be considered a dictatorial burden? Or rather, are they a didactic way of forming the faithful in the respect due to the Sacrament of the Altar?

FRANCIS

I remember it as if it were today. I prepared for a year [for my First Communion] with a very kind nun and two catechists. [...] **In those times, it was not possible to drink a little water before Mass, nothing – not even a drop of water. It was Pope Pius XII who saved us from this dictatorship!** (*Visit to the Roman Parish of San Giuseppe all’Aurelio, December 14, 2014*)

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I – THE EUCHARISTIC FAST: A DICTATORSHIP OR A MARK OF HONOR?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Since we are judged by the Lord we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. [...] If we discerned ourselves, we would not be under judgment; but since we are judged by (the) Lord, we are being disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. Therefore, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that your meetings may not result in judgment. The other matters I shall set in order when I come. (1Cor 11:26-34)

PIUS XII

The Eucharistic fast pays due honor to our Divine Redeemer and fosters piety towards the first and loftiest nourishment

Abstinence from food and drink is in accord with that supreme reverence we owe to the supreme majesty of Jesus Christ when we are going to receive Him hidden under the veils of the Eucharist. And moreover, when we receive His precious Body and Blood before we take any food, we show clearly that this is the first and loftiest nourishment by which our soul is fed and its holiness increased. [...] Not only does the Eucharistic fast pay due honor to our Divine Redeemer, it fosters piety also; and hence it can help to increase in us those most salutary fruits of holiness which Christ, the Source and Author of all good, wishes us who are enriched by His Grace to bring forth. Moreover, everyone with experience will recognize that, by the very laws of human nature, when the body is not weighted down by food the mind more easily is lifted up and is by a more ardent virtue moved to meditate upon that hidden and transcendent Mystery that works in the soul, as in a temple, to the increase of divine charity. (Pius XII. *Apostolic constitution Christus Dominus*, January 6, 1953)

The Pope strongly exhorts the observation of the old and venerable form of the Eucharistic fast

In the early part of 1953 [January 6] We issued the Apostolic Constitution *Christus Dominus*, by which We eased the rigor of the law on the Eucharistic fast so that the faithful could receive Holy Communion more frequently and more easily fulfill the precept of hearing Holy Mass on holy days. [...] **Having taken into consideration the considerable changes which have occurred in working and office hours and in all social life, We deemed it advisable to comply with the insistent requests of the Bishops and have therefore decreed:** [...] Priests and faithful, before Holy Mass or Holy Communion respectively, must abstain for three hours from solid foods and alcoholic liquids, for one hour from non-alcoholic liquids. Water does not break the fast. [...] **We strongly exhort priests and faithful who are able to do so to observe the old and venerable form of the Eucharistic fast before Mass and Holy Communion.** All those who will make use of these concessions must compensate for the good received by becoming shining examples of a Christian life and principally with works of penance and charity. (Pius XII. *Moto proprio Sacram Communionem*, March 19, 1957)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

For the honor of so great a Sacrament, the Body of the Lord should take precedence over all other food

If the authority of Scripture has decided which of these methods is right, there is no room for doubting that we should do according to that which is written; and our discussion must be occupied with a question, not of duty, but of interpretation as to the meaning of the divine institution. In like manner, if the universal Church follows any one of these methods, there is no room for doubt as to our duty; for it would be the height of arrogant madness to discuss whether or not we should comply with it. [...] it is clear that when the disciples first received the body and blood of the Lord, they had not been fasting. **Must we therefore censure the universal Church because the sacrament is everywhere partaken of by persons fasting?**

Nay, verily, for from that time it pleased the Holy Spirit to appoint, for the honour of so great a sacrament, that the body of the Lord should take the precedence of all other food entering the mouth of a Christian; and it is for this reason that the custom referred to is universally observed. For the fact that the Lord instituted the sacrament after other food had been partaken of, **does not prove that brethren should come together to partake of that sacrament after having dined or supped,** or imitate those whom the apostle reprov'd and corrected for not distinguishing between the Lord's Supper and an ordinary meal. The Saviour, indeed, in order to commend the depth of that mystery more affectingly to His disciples, was pleased to impress it on their hearts and memories by making its institution His last act before going from them to His Passion. And therefore He did not prescribe the order in which it was to be observed, reserving this to be done by the apostles, through whom He intended to arrange all things pertaining to the Churches. **Had He appointed that the sacrament should be always partaken of after other food, I believe that no one would have departed from that practice.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Letter 54 to Januarius*, nos. 6-8)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF

LEGISLATIVE TEXTS

It is understandable that the Church establish a series of norms for the most exalted of all the Sacraments

Since the Eucharist is the most exalted of all the Sacraments – as in It, not only is divine grace received, but also the very Author of grace – **it is understandable that the universal law of the Church establish a series of norms, some even of divine right,** not only to protect and regulate the exercising of this right but also to limit it, when so **required by the due veneration to the Body and Blood of Christ,** the proper formation of consciences and the common good of the ecclesial society. (Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts. *The Eucharist in the juridical order of the Church*, no.1, November 12, 2005)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

When our works are for Christ's sake, nothing is burdensome

Let us then be obedient to His sayings; let us not oppose ourselves, nor be contentious; for first of all, even antecedently to their rewards, **these injunctions have their pleasure and profit in themselves.** And if to the more part they seem to be burdensome. and the trouble which they cause, great; have it in thy mind that thou art doing it for Christ's sake, and the pain will be pleasant. For if we maintain this way of reckoning at all times, we shall experience nothing burdensome, but great will be the pleasure we reap from every quarter; for our toil will no longer seem toil, but by how much it is enhanced, so much the sweeter and pleasanter doth it grow. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily on Saint Matthew*, 16, no. 14)

II – WHY DOES THE CHURCH PROMULGATE LAWS?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

To keep the law is a great oblation

To keep the law is a great oblation, and he who observes the commandments sacrifices a peace offering. (Sir 35:1)

LEO XIII

One who embraces the Christian faith is by that very fact a subject of the Church

Considering that forthwith upon salvation being brought out for mankind, Jesus Christ laid upon His Apostles the injunction to 'preach the Gospel to every creature', He imposed, it is evident, upon all men the duty of learning thoroughly and believing what they were taught. This duty is intimately bound up with the gaining of eternal salvation: 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be condemned' (Mk 16:16). **But the man who has embraced the Christian faith, as in duty bound, is by that very fact a subject of the Church as one of the children born of her, and becomes a**

member of that greatest and holiest body, which it is the special charge of the Roman Pontiff to rule with supreme power, under its invisible head, Jesus Christ. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Sapientiae Christianae*, January 10, 1890)

PIUS XII

Christ conferred a triple power on His Apostles and their successors

And as to govern human society signifies to lead men to the end proposed by means that are expedient, just and helpful (cf. STh, I, q. 22, a. 1-4), it is easy to see how our Savior, model and ideal of good Shepherds (cf. Jn 10:1-18; 1Pet 5:1-5), performs all these functions in a most striking way. **While still on earth, He instructed us by precept, counsel and warning** in words that shall never pass away, and will be spirit and life (cf. Jn 6:63) to all men of all times. Moreover He conferred a triple power on His Apostles and their successors, to teach, to govern, to lead men to holiness, making this power, defined by special ordinances, rights and obligations, the fundamental law of the whole Church. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici corporis Christi*, no. 37-38, June 29, 1943)

The pernicious error of those who dream of an imaginary Church – where charity is opposed to juridical form – is condemned

For this reason We deplore and condemn the pernicious error of those who dream of an imaginary Church, a kind of society that finds its origin and growth in charity, to which, somewhat contemptuously, they oppose another, which they call juridical. But this distinction which they introduce is false: for they fail to understand that the reason which led our Divine Redeemer to give to the community of man He founded the constitution of a Society, perfect of its kind and containing all the juridical and social elements – namely, that He might perpetuate on earth the saving work of Redemption (Vat. Council I, Sess. IV, *Const. de Eccl.*, prol.), – was also the reason why He willed it to be enriched with the heavenly gifts of the Paraclete. The Eternal Father indeed willed it to be the 'kingdom of the Son of his predilection' (Col 1:13); but it was to be a real kingdom in which all believers should make Him the entire

offering of their intellect and will (Vat. Council I, Sess. III, *Const. de fide Cath.*, Cap. 3), and humbly and obediently model themselves on Him, Who for our sake ‘was made obedient unto death’ (Phil 2:8). There can, then, be no real opposition or conflict between the invisible mission of the Holy spirit and the juridical commission of Ruler and Teacher received from Christ, since they mutually complement and perfect each other – as do the body and soul in man – [...] And if at times there appears in the Church something that indicates the weakness of our human nature, it should not be attributed to her juridical constitution, but rather to that regrettable inclination to evil found in each individual, which its Divine Founder permits even at times in the most exalted members of His Mystical Body, for the purpose of testing the virtue of the Shepherds no less than of the flocks, and that all may increase the merit of their Christian faith. For, as We said above, Christ did not wish to exclude sinners from His Church; hence if some of her members are suffering from spiritual maladies, that is no reason why we should lessen our love for the Church, but rather a reason why we should increase our devotion to her members. Certainly the loving Mother is spotless in the Sacraments by which she gives birth to and nourishes her children; in the faith which she has always preserved inviolate; in her sacred laws imposed on all; in the evangelical counsels which she recommends; in those heavenly gifts and extraordinary grace through which with inexhaustible fecundity (cf. Vat. Council, Sess. III, *Const. de fide Cath.*, Cap 3), she generates hosts of martyrs, virgins and confessors. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici corporis Christi*, no. 65-66, June 29, 1943)

The practical observance of the same laws is an external manifestation of the union of the members of Christ’s Mystical Body

Our union in and with Christ is first evident from the fact that, since Christ wills His Christian community to be a Body which is a perfect Society, its members must be united because they all work together towards a single end. The nobler the end towards which they strive, and the more divine the motive which actuates this collaboration, the higher, no doubt, will be the union. Now the end in

question is supremely exalted; the continual sanctifying of the members of the Body for the glory of God and of the Lamb that was slain. [...] Now since its Founder willed this social body of Christ to be visible, the cooperation of all its members must also be externally manifest through their profession of the same faith and their sharing the same sacred rites, through participation in the same Sacrifice, and the practical observance of the same laws. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici corporis Christi*, no. 68-69, June 29, 1943)

PIUS X

Christ made the Church the depositary of His doctrine and His laws

Now the way to reach Christ is not hard to find: it is the Church. Rightly does Chrysostom inculcate: ‘The Church is thy hope, the Church is thy salvation, the Church is thy refuge’ (*Hom. de capto Euthropio*, no. 6). It was for this that Christ founded it, gaining it at the price of His blood, and made it the depositary of His doctrine and His laws, bestowing upon it at the same time an inexhaustible treasury of graces for the sanctification and salvation of men. (Pius X. *Encyclical Supremi apostolatus*, no. 9, October 4, 1903)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

What we hold on authority is held as approved by the Apostles themselves or by the plenary Councils

Our Lord Jesus Christ has appointed to us a ‘light yoke’ and an ‘easy burden,’ as He declares in the Gospel (Mt 11:30) in accordance with which He has bound His people under the new dispensation together in fellowship by sacraments, which are in number very few, in observance most easy, and in significance most excellent, as baptism solemnized in the name of the Trinity, the communion of His body and blood, and such other things as are prescribed in the canonical Scriptures, with the exception of those enactments which were a yoke of bondage to God’s ancient people, suited to their state of heart and to the times of the prophets, and which are found in the five books of Moses. As to those other things which we hold on the

authority, not of Scripture, but of tradition, **and which are observed throughout the whole world, it may be understood that they are held as approved and instituted either by the apostles themselves, or by plenary Councils, whose authority in the Church is most useful, e.g. the annual commemoration, by special solemnities, of the Lord's passion, resurrection, and ascension, and of the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven, and whatever else is in like manner observed by the whole Church wherever it has been established.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Letter 54 to Januarius*, Ch.1, no. 1)

BONIFACE I

Ecclesiastic discipline took origin from the office of Saint Peter

The institution of the universal Church that sprang forth took her origin from the dignified office of blessed Peter, in which her government and pre-eminence rest. In fact, from this source flowed the **ecclesiastical discipline for all the Churches** while the cultivation of religion was already growing. (Denzinger-Hünemann 233. *Boniface I*, Epistle *Retro maioribus tuis*, to Rufus, bishop of Thessaly, March 11, 422)

ZOSIMUS

The Roman Church is fortified by human and divine laws

Although the tradition of the Fathers has attributed such great authority to the Apostolic See that no one would dare to disagree wholly with its judgment, **and it has always preserved this judgment by canons and rules, and current ecclesiastical discipline up to this time by its laws pays the reverence which is due to the name of PETER**, from whom it has itself descended . . . ; since therefore PETER the head is of such great authority and he has confirmed the subsequent endeavors of all our ancestors, so that **the Roman Church is fortified . . . by human as well as by divine laws**, and it does not escape you that we rule its place and also hold power of the name itself, nevertheless you know, dearest brethren, and as priests you ought to know. (Denzinger-Hünemann 221. *Pope Saint Zosimus*, Letter

Quamvis Patrum traditio, to the African bishops, March 21, 418)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The body of rules, commandments, and virtues proceed from faith in Christ

The Magisterium of the Pastors of the Church in moral matters is ordinarily exercised in catechesis and preaching, with the help of the works of theologians and spiritual authors. **Thus from generation to generation**, under the aegis and vigilance of the pastors, **the 'deposit' of Christian moral teaching has been handed on**, a deposit composed of a characteristic body of rules, commandments, and virtues proceeding from faith in Christ and animated by charity. Alongside the Creed and the Our Father, the basis for this catechesis has traditionally been the Decalogue which sets out the principles of moral life valid for all men. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2033)

JOHN PAUL II

The Code of Canon Law is founded on the juridical-legislative heritage of Revelation and Tradition

A second question arises concerning the very nature of **the Code of Canon Law**. To reply adequately to this question, **one must mentally recall the distant patrimony of law contained in the books of the Old and New Testament from which is derived, as from its first source, the whole juridical – legislative tradition of the Church**. Christ the Lord, indeed, did not in the least wish to destroy the very rich heritage of the Law and of the Prophets which was gradually formed from the history and experience of the People of God in the Old Testament, but He brought it to completion (cf. Mt 5:17), in such wise that in a new and higher way it became part of the heritage of the New Testament. Therefore, although Saint Paul, in expounding the Paschal Mystery, **teaches that justification is not obtained by the works of the Law, but by means of faith** (cf. Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16), **he does not thereby exclude the binding force of the Decalogue** (cf. Rom 13:28, Gal 5:13-25, 6:2), **nor does he deny the importance of discipline in the Church**

of God (cf. 1Cor:5-6). Thus the writings of the New Testament enable us to understand still more the importance itself of discipline and make us see better how it is more closely connected with the saving character of the evangelical message itself. [...] A second question arises concerning the very nature of the Code of Canon Law. To reply adequately to this question, one must mentally recall the distant patrimony of law contained in the books of the Old and New Testament from which is derived, as from its first source, the whole juridical – legislative tradition of the Church. The Code, as the principal legislative document of the Church, founded on the juridical – legislative heritage of Revelation and Tradition, is to be regarded as an indispensable instrument to ensure order both in individual and social life, and also in the Church's activity itself. Therefore, besides containing the fundamental elements of the hierarchical and organic structure of the Church as willed by her divine Founder, or as based upon apostolic, or in any case most ancient, tradition, and besides the fundamental principles which govern the exercise of the threefold office entrusted to the Church itself, the Code must also lay down certain rules and norms of behavior. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution Sacrae disciplinae leges*, January 25, 1983)

The Code of Canon Law is extremely necessary for the Church: by their very nature canonical laws must be observed

In actual fact the Code of Canon Law is extremely necessary for the Church. Since, indeed, it is organized as a social and visible structure, it must also have norms: in order that its hierarchical and organic structure be visible; in order that the exercise of the functions divinely entrusted to her, especially that of sacred power and of the administration of the sacraments, may be adequately organized; [...] Finally, the canonical laws by their very nature must be observed. The greatest care has therefore been taken to ensure that in the lengthy preparation of the Code the wording of the norms should be accurate, and that they should be based on a solid juridical, canonical and theological foundation. (John Paul II. *Apostolic constitution Sacrae disciplinae leges*, January 25, 1983)

BENEDICT XVI

The Code of Canon Law contains the norms for the good of the person and of the communities of the whole Mystical Body

The Congress that is being celebrated on this important anniversary treats a theme of great interest because it highlights the close link that exists between canon law and Church life in accordance with the desire of Jesus Christ. On this occasion I am therefore anxious to reaffirm a fundamental concept that imbues canon law. The *ius ecclesiae* is not only a body of norms formulated by the Ecclesial Legislator for this special people who form the Church of Christ. It is, in the first place, the authoritative declaration on the part of the Ecclesial Legislator of the duties and rights that are based in the sacraments and are therefore born from the institution by Christ himself. This series of juridical realities treated by the Code forms a wonderful mosaic in which are portrayed the faces of all the faithful, lay people and Pastors and all the communities, from the universal Church to the particular Churches. [...] Moreover, the Code of Canon Law contains the norms formulated by the Ecclesial Legislator for the good of the person and of the communities of the whole Mystical Body which is the Holy Church. [...] The Church thus recognizes in her laws the nature as well as the means and pastoral function for pursuing her own end, which – as is well known – is the achievement of the 'salus animarum'. (Benedict XVI. *Address on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law*, January 25, 2008)

The laws of the Church set us free to adhere to Jesus

Since canon law outlines the rules necessary for the People of God to orient themselves effectively to their own end, one understands how important it is that this law be loved and observed by all the faithful. Church law is first and foremost *lex libertatis*: a law that sets us free to adhere to Jesus. It is therefore necessary to be able to present to the People of God, to the new generations and to all who are called to make canon law respected, its

concrete bond with the life of the Church, in order to safeguard the delicate interests of the things of God and to protect the rights of the weakest, of those who have no other means by which to make their presence felt, and also in defence of those delicate 'goods' which every member of the faithful has freely received – the gift of faith, of God's grace, first of all –, which the Church cannot allow to be deprived of adequate protection on the part of the Law. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants in the Study Congress on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the Code of Canon Law*, January 25, 2008)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The obligatory character of laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee growth in love of God and neighbor

The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. **The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2041)

Personal conscience and reason should not be set in opposition to the moral law or the Magisterium of the Church

At the same time **the conscience of each person should avoid confining itself to individualistic considerations in its moral judgments of the person's own acts.** As far as possible conscience should take account of the good of all, as expressed in the moral law, natural and revealed, and consequently in the law of the Church and in the authoritative teaching of the Magisterium on moral questions. **Personal conscience and reason should not be set in opposition to the moral law or the Magisterium of the Church.** Thus a true filial spirit toward the Church can develop among Christians. It is the normal flowering of the baptismal grace which has begotten us in the womb of the Church and made us members of the Body of Christ. In her motherly care,

the Church grants us the mercy of God which prevails over all our sins and is especially at work in the sacrament of reconciliation. With a mother's foresight, she also lavishes on us day after day in her liturgy the nourishment of the Word and Eucharist of the Lord. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2039-2040)

Even if they concern disciplinary matters these decrees call for docility in charity

The authority of the Magisterium extends also to the specific precepts of the natural law, because their observance, demanded by the Creator, is necessary for salvation. In recalling the prescriptions of the natural law, the Magisterium of the Church exercises an essential part of its prophetic office of proclaiming to men what they truly are and reminding them of what they should be before God. The law of God entrusted to the Church is taught to the faithful as the way of life and truth. The faithful therefore have the right to be instructed in the divine saving precepts that purify judgment and, with grace, heal wounded human reason. **They have the duty of observing the constitutions and decrees conveyed by the legitimate authority of the Church. Even if they concern disciplinary matters, these determinations call for docility in charity.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2036-2037)

PIUS IX

See to it with firmness that the holy laws of the Church are observed

See to it with similar firmness that the most holy laws of the Church are observed, for it is by these laws that virtue, religion and piety particularly thrive and flourish. It is an act of great piety to expose the concealments of the impious and to defeat there the devil himself, whose slaves they are (Saint Leo, sermon 8.4). Therefore We entreat you to use every means of revealing to your faithful people the many kinds of plot, pretense, error, deceit and contrivance which our enemies use. This will turn them carefully away from infectious books. Also exhort them unceasingly to flee from the sects and societies of the impious as from the presence of a serpent, earnestly avoiding everything which is at variance with

the wholeness of faith, religion and morality. Therefore, **never stop preaching the Gospel, so that the Christian people may grow in the knowledge of God by being daily better versed in the most holy precepts of the Christian law; as a result, they may turn from evil, do good, and walk in the ways of the Lord.** (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 21, November 9, 1846)

LEO XIII

Hallowed in the minds of Christians is the very idea of authority; a just and due reverence to the laws abides in them from a consciousness of duty

Hence, they who blame, and call by the name of sedition, this steadfastness of attitude in the choice of duty have not rightly apprehended the force and nature of true law. We are speaking of matters widely known, and which we have before now more than once fully explained. **Law is of its very essence a mandate of right reason, proclaimed by a properly constituted authority, for the common good.** But true and legitimate authority is void of sanction, unless it proceed from God, the supreme Ruler and Lord of all. The Almighty alone can commit power to a man over his fellow men; nor may that be accounted as right reason which is in disaccord with truth and with divine reason; nor that held to be true good which is repugnant to the supreme and unchangeable good, or that wrests aside and draws away the wills of men from the charity of God. **Hallowed, therefore, in the minds of Christians is the very idea of public authority, in which they recognize some likeness and symbol as it were of the Divine Majesty, even when it is exercised by one unworthy. A just and due reverence to the laws abides in them, not from force and threats, but from a consciousness of duty; 'for God hath not given us the spirit of fear' (2Tim 1:7).** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Sapientiae christianae*, no. 8-9, January 10, 1890)

PIUS XI

The dereliction of the eternal principles of an objective morality is a sin

The conscientious observation of the ten

commandments of God and **the precepts of the Church (which are nothing but practical specifications of rules of the Gospels)** is for every one an unrivaled school of personal discipline, moral education and formation of character, a school that is exacting, but not to excess. A merciful God, who as Legislator, says – Thou must! – also gives by His grace the power to will and to do. **To let forces of moral formation of such efficacy lie fallow, or to exclude them positively from public education, would spell religious under-feeding of a nation. To hand over the moral law to man's subjective opinion, which changes with the times, instead of anchoring it in the holy will of the eternal God and His commandments, is to open wide every door to the forces of destruction. The resulting dereliction of the eternal principles of an objective morality, which educates conscience and ennobles every department and organization of life, is a sin against the destiny of a nation, a sin whose bitter fruit will poison future generations.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge*, no. 29, March 14, 1937)

LEO XIII

The civilization which conflicts with the laws of the Church is worthless

That kind of civilization which conflicts with the doctrines and laws of holy Church is nothing but a worthless imitation and meaningless name. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili dei consilio*, no. 6, April 21, 1878)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Laws are not hard and grievous – they proceed from one and the same providential care

See you not, how the commandments, so far from coming of cruelty, come rather of abounding mercy? And if on account of these you call the Lawgiver grievous, and hard to bear with; [...] how the God of the old covenant, whom they call cruel, will be found mild and meek: and He of the new, whom they acknowledged to be good, will be hard and grievous, according to their madness? Whereas we say, that **there is but one and the same**

Legislator of either covenant, who dispensed all justly and adapted to the difference of the times the difference between the two systems of law. Therefore neither are the first commandments cruel, nor the second hard and grievous, but all of one and the same providential care. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 16 on Saint Matthew*, no. 8)

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Nothing of yearning for a monolithic body of doctrine – the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God ‘are very few’

‘A text taken out of context is often a pretext’ the saying goes... As we know, an author’s words may easily be manipulated when only partially quoted. It is possible, in such cases, to give it a totally new meaning or even a meaning opposite to the original.

In this sense, the citations of Saint Thomas Aquinas in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* have drawn our attention. It is a good idea to examine each one of the affirmations of Aquinas in their original context, with the objective of analyzing the fidelity and concordance of the application made to his line of thought.

What pretext did Francis have in using the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas?

FRANCIS

Differing currents of thought in philosophy, theology and pastoral practice, if open to being reconciled by the Spirit in respect and love, can enable the Church to grow, since all of them help to express more clearly the immense riches of God’s word. **For those who long for a monolithic body of doctrine guarded by all and leaving no room for nuance, this might appear as undesirable and leading to confusion. But in fact such variety serves to bring out and develop different facets of the inexhaustible riches of the Gospel.** (44) [Note 44: Saint Thomas Aquinas noted that the multiplicity and variety ‘were the intention of the first agent’, who wished that ‘what each individual thing lacked in order to reflect the divine goodness would be made up for by other things’, since the Creator’s goodness ‘could not be fittingly reflected by just one creature’ (S. Th., I, q. 47, a. 1). Consequently, **we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships** (cf. S. Th., I, q. 47, a. 2, ad 1; q. 47, a. 3). **By analogy, we need to listen to and complement one another in our partial reception of reality and the Gospel.** (*Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium*, no. 40, November 24, 2013)

In her ongoing discernment, the Church can also come to see that certain customs not directly connected to the heart of the Gospel, even some which have deep historical roots, are no longer properly understood and appreciated. Some of these customs may be beautiful, but they no longer serve as means of communicating the Gospel. We should not be afraid to re-examine them. At the same time, the Church has rules or precepts which may have been quite effective in their time, but no longer have the same usefulness for directing and shaping people’s lives. **Saint Thomas Aquinas pointed out that the precepts which Christ and the apostles gave to the people of God ‘are very few’** (S. Th., I-II, q. 107, a. 4). Citing Saint Augustine, he noted that the precepts subsequently enjoined by the Church should be insisted upon with moderation ‘so as not to burden the lives of the faithful’ and make our religion a form of servitude, whereas ‘God’s mercy has willed that we should be free’ (Ibid). This warning, issued many centuries ago, is most timely today. It ought to be one of the criteria to be taken into account in considering a reform of the Church and her preaching which would enable it to reach everyone. (*Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii gaudium*, no. 43, November 24, 2013)

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John Paul II

- ♦ The necessity and duty of practicing all of the immutable commandments of the Law of God in their entirety, should not be mitigated before the faithful.
- ♦ Rather than reducing the number of precepts, it is necessary to have a correct visualization of their worth to better understand that they serve to make us free in the service of God and free from the slavery of sin.

I – SHOULD CATHOLIC DOCTRINE BE MONOLITHIC OR MAY IT BE VARIED IN ITS LINES OF HUMAN THOUGHT?

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Context of the first citation of Aquinas: His words refer strictly to the ontological field, not to the logical, ideological, philosophical or theological fields.

It is part of the best agent to produce an effect which is best in its entirety; but this does not mean that He makes every part of the whole the best absolutely, but in proportion to the whole; in the case of an animal, for instance, its goodness would be taken away if every part of it had the dignity of an eye. **Thus, therefore, God also made the universe to be best as a whole, according to the mode of a creature; whereas He did not make each single creature best, but one better than another.** And therefore we find it said of each creature, ‘God saw the light that it was good’ (Gen 1:4); and in like manner of each one of the rest. But of all together it is said, ‘God saw all the things that He had made, and they were very good’ (Gen 1:31). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 47, a. 2, ad 2 – cf. I, q. 47, a. 1 and I, q. 47, a. 3)

The reason why the ontological meaning of Saint Thomas’ words should not be applied to the theological field – even through analogy – is due to the fact that the criteria of sacred doctrine is not human but divine.

It was necessary for man’s salvation that there should be a knowledge revealed by God besides philosophical science built up by human reason. Firstly, indeed, because man is directed to God, as to an end that surpasses

the grasp of his reason [...] But the end must first be known by men who are to direct their thoughts and actions to the end. Hence it was necessary for the salvation of man that certain truths which exceed human reason should be made known to him by divine revelation. Even as regards those truths about God which human reason could have discovered, it was necessary that man should be taught by a divine revelation; because the truth about God such as reason could discover, would only be known by a few, and that after a long time, and with the admixture of many errors. Whereas man’s whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth. **Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation. It was therefore necessary that besides philosophical science built up by reason, there should be a sacred science learned through revelation.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica* I, q. 1, a. 1)

Since theology – which constitutes the greatest wisdom – may not irrationally contain a fusion of truth and error, different lines of thought may not be reconciled.

Truth must consequently be the ultimate end of the whole universe, and the consideration of the wise man aims principally at truth. So it is that, according to His own statement, divine Wisdom testifies that He has assumed flesh and come into the world in order to make the truth known: ‘For this was I born, and for this came I into the world, that I should give testimony to the truth’ (Jn 18:37). The Philosopher himself establishes that first philosophy is the science of truth, not of any truth, but of that truth which is the origin of all truth, namely, which belongs to the first principle whereby all things are. The

truth belonging to such a principle is, clearly, the source of all truth; for things have the same disposition in truth as in being. **It belongs to one and the same science, however, both to pursue one of two contraries and to oppose the other. Medicine, for example, seeks to effect health and to eliminate illness. Hence, just as it belongs to the wise man to meditate especially on the truth belonging to the first principle and to teach it to others, so it belongs to him to refute the opposing falsehood.** Appropriately, therefore, is the twofold office of the wise man shown from the mouth of Wisdom in our opening words: to meditate and speak forth of the divine truth, which is truth in person (Wisdom touches on this in the words my mouth shall meditate truth), and to refute the opposing error (which Wisdom touches on in the words and my lips shall hate impiety). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 1, Ch. 1)

Contrary to certain relativistic tendencies of our days, Saint Thomas firmly countered and rejected any line of thought not inspired by Revelation or faithful to it

For these ‘secrets of divine Wisdom’ (Job 11:6) the divine Wisdom itself, which knows all things to the full, has deigned to reveal to men. It reveals its own presence, as well as the truth of its teaching and inspiration, by fitting arguments; and in order to confirm those truths that exceed natural knowledge, it gives visible manifestation to works that surpass the ability of all nature. [...] When these arguments were examined, through the efficacy of the abovementioned proof, and not the violent assault of arms or the promise of pleasure, and (what is most wonderful of all) in the midst of the tyranny of the persecutors, an innumerable throng of people, both simple and most learned, flocked to the Christian faith. In this faith there are truths preached that surpass every human intellect; the pleasures of the flesh are curbed; it is taught that the things of the world should be spurned. Now, for the minds of mortal men to assent to these things is the greatest of miracles, just as it is a manifest work of divine inspiration that, spurning visible things, men should seek only what is invisible. [...] **On the other hand, those who founded sects committed to erroneous doctrines proceeded in a way that is opposite to this, The point is**

clear in the case of Muhammad. He seduced the people by promises of carnal pleasure to which the concupiscence of the flesh goes us. His teaching also contained precepts that were in conformity with his promises, and he gave free rein to carnal pleasure. In all this, as is not unexpected, he was obeyed by carnal men. As for proofs of the truth of his doctrine, he brought forward only such as could be grasped by the natural ability of anyone with a very modest wisdom. Indeed, the truths that he taught he mingled with many fables and with doctrines of the greatest falsity. He did not bring forth any signs produced in a supernatural way, which alone fittingly gives witness to divine inspiration; for a visible action that can be only divine reveals an invisibly inspired teacher of truth. On the contrary, Muhammad said that he was sent in the power of his arms—which are signs not lacking even to robbers and tyrants. What is more, no wise men, men trained in things divine and human, believed in him from the beginning, Those who believed in him were brutal men and desert wanderers, utterly ignorant of all divine teaching, through whose numbers Muhammad forced others to become his followers by the violence of his arms. Nor do divine pronouncements on the part of preceding prophets offer him any witness. On the contrary, he perverts almost all the testimonies of the Old and New Testaments by making them into fabrications of his own, as can be seen by anyone who examines his law. It was, therefore, a shrewd decision on his part to forbid his followers to read the Old and New Testaments, lest these books convict him of falsity. It is thus clear that those who place any faith in his words believe foolishly. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 1, Ch. 6)

To seek reconciliation between different lines of thought, which are necessarily opposed to each other in at least one aspect – so that they are in fact diverse – is to impede the ability of grasping the truth.

That which we hold by faith as divinely revealed, therefore, cannot be contrary to our natural knowledge. Again. **In the presence of contrary arguments our intellect is chained, so that it cannot proceed to the knowledge of the truth. If, therefore, contrary knowledge**

were implanted in us by God, our intellect would be hindered from knowing truth by this very fact. Now, such an effect cannot come from God. And again. What is natural cannot change as long as nature does not. Now, it is impossible that contrary opinions should exist in the same knowing subject at the same time. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book 1, Ch. 7)

II – WERE THOMAS AQUINAS AND AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO CONTRARY TO THE PRECEPTS ADDED TO THE NEW LAW BY THE CHURCH?

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The context of the second citation of Aquinas: It evolves as a comparison between the New and Old Law; it is not a question of a vindication of greater rights or fewer duties. Saint Thomas Aquinas explains that the New Law is lighter than the Old because it added few precepts to the natural law.

A twofold difficulty may attach to works of virtue with which the precepts of the Law are concerned. One is on the part of the outward works, which of themselves are, in a way, difficult and burdensome. And in this respect the Old Law is a much heavier burden than the New: since the Old Law by its numerous ceremonies prescribed many more outward acts than the New Law, which, in the teaching of Christ and the apostles, added very few precepts to those of the natural law; although afterwards some were added, through being instituted by the holy Fathers. Even in these Augustine says that moderation should be observed, lest good conduct should become a burden to the faithful. For he says in reply to the queries of Januarius (Ep. lv) that, 'whereas God in His mercy wished religion to be a free service rendered by the public solemnization of a small number of most manifest sacraments, certain persons make it a slave's burden; so much so that the state of the Jews who were subject to the sacraments of the Law, and not to the presumptuous devices of man, was more tolerable'. The other difficulty attaches to works of virtue as to interior acts: for instance, that a virtuous deed be done with promptitude and pleasure. It is this difficulty that virtue

solves: because to act thus is difficult for a man without virtue: but through virtue it becomes easy for him. In this respect the precepts of the New Law are more burdensome than those of the Old; because the New Law prohibits certain interior movements of the soul, which were not expressly forbidden in the Old Law in all cases, although they were forbidden in some, without, however, any punishment being attached to the prohibition. Now this is very difficult to a man without virtue: thus even the Philosopher states (Ethic. v, 9) that it is easy to do what a righteous man does; but that to do it in the same way, viz. with pleasure and promptitude, is difficult to a man who is not righteous. Accordingly we read also (1Jn 5:3) that 'His commandments are not heavy': which words Augustine expounds by saying that 'they are not heavy to the man that loveth; whereas they are a burden to him that loveth not.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q. 107, a. 4)

The intention of Aquinas in using the doctrine of Augustine is to point out the essence of the New Law, which consists principally in grace and secondarily in the ordered precepts to receive and make use of them.

'Each thing appears to be that which preponderates in it,' as the Philosopher states (Ethic. ix, 8). Now that which is preponderant in the law of the New Testament, and whereon all its efficacy is based, is the grace of the Holy Ghost, which is given through faith in Christ. Consequently the New Law is chiefly the grace itself of the Holy Ghost, which is given to those who believe in Christ. This is manifestly stated by the Apostle who says (Rom 3:27): 'Where is . . . thy boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith': for he calls the grace itself of faith 'a law.' And still more clearly it is written (Rom 8:2): 'The law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death.' Hence Augustine says (De Spir. et Lit. XXIV) that 'as the law of deeds was written on tables of stone, so is the law of faith inscribed on the hearts of the faithful': and elsewhere, in the same book (XXI): 'What else are the Divine laws written by God Himself on our hearts, but the very presence of His Holy Spirit?' Nevertheless the New Law contains certain things that dispose us to receive the

grace of the Holy Ghost, and pertaining to the use of that grace: such things are of secondary importance, so to speak, in the New Law; and the faithful need to be instructed concerning them, both by word and writing, both as to what they should believe and as to what they should do. Consequently we must say that the New Law is in the first place a law that is inscribed on our hearts, but that secondarily it is a written law. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q. 106, a. 1)

Neither Augustine of Hippo nor Thomas Aquinas are diminishing the importance of the precepts of the New Law; they are merely seeking to demonstrate that these are not its essence, since they do not have the capacity to justify man.

As stated above (Article [1]), there is a twofold element in the Law of the Gospel. There is the chief element, viz. the grace of the Holy Ghost bestowed inwardly. And as to this, the New Law justifies. Hence Augustine says (De Spiritu et Littera xvii): 'There,' i.e. in the Old Testament, 'the Law was set forth in an outward fashion, that the ungodly might be afraid'; 'here,' i.e. in the New Testament, 'it is given in an inward manner, that they may be justified.' The other element of the Evangelical Law is secondary: namely, the teachings of faith, and those commandments which direct human affections and human actions. And as to this, the New Law does not justify. Hence the Apostle says (2Cor 3:6) 'The letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth': and Augustine explains this (De Spir. et Lit. xiv, xvii) by saying that the letter denotes any writing external to man, even that of the moral precepts such as are contained in the Gospel. Wherefore the letter, even of the Gospel would kill, unless there were the inward presence of the healing grace of faith. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q. 106, a. 2)

The fact that the essence of the New Law is grace – through which man is justified – does not mean that certain exterior acts should not be prohibited for the good of the faithful.

The New Law consists chiefly in the grace of the Holy Ghost, which is shown forth by faith that worketh through love. Now men become

receivers of this grace through God's Son made man, Whose humanity grace filled first, and thence flowed forth to us. Hence it is written (Jn 1:14): 'The Word was made flesh,' and afterwards: 'full of grace and truth'; and further on: 'Of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace.' Hence it is added that 'grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.' Consequently it was becoming that the grace flows from the incarnate Word should be given to us by means of certain external sensible objects; and that from this inward grace, whereby the flesh is subjected to the Spirit, certain external works should ensue. Accordingly external acts may have a twofold connection with grace. In the first place, as leading in some way to grace. Such are the sacramental acts which are instituted in the New Law, e.g. Baptism, the Eucharist, and the like. In the second place there are those external acts which ensue from the promptings of grace: and herein we must observe a difference. For there are some which are necessarily in keeping with, or in opposition to inward grace consisting in faith that worketh through love. Such external works are prescribed or forbidden in the New Law; thus confession of faith is prescribed, and denial of faith is forbidden; for it is written (Mt 10:32,33) '(Every one) that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father . . . But he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father.' On the other hand, **there are works which are not necessarily opposed to, or in keeping with faith that worketh through love. Such works are not prescribed or forbidden in the New Law, by virtue of its primitive institution; but have been left by the Lawgiver, i.e. Christ, to the discretion of each individual. And so to each one it is free to decide what he should do or avoid; and to each superior, to direct his subjects in such matters as regards what they must do or avoid.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica I-II*, q. 108. a. 1)

Consequently, not only are the ecclesiastical precepts added to the New Law appropriate, but it is also the duty of the prelates to require that these laws – referring to the spiritual order – be observed.

Just as it belongs to the secular authority to make legal precepts which apply the natural

law to matters of common weal in temporal affairs, so it belongs to ecclesiastical superiors to prescribe by statute those things that concern the common weal of the faithful in spiritual goods. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 147, a. 3)

III – IS A REFORM OF THE CHURCH THAT SEEKS TO REDUCE ITS PRECEPTS APPROPRIATE?

CODE OF CANON LAW

The Code of Canon Law may be modified and reformed, but its higher purpose should not be forgotten.

The salvation of souls [...] must always be the supreme law in the Church. (Code of Canon Law, Can. 1752)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The current commandments of the Church already request the bare minimum of the faithful with respect to the practice of virtue and thus attainment of eternal life; it therefore seems untimely to reduce them further.

The precepts of the Church are set in the context of a moral life bound to and nourished by liturgical life. The obligatory character of these positive laws decreed by the pastoral authorities is meant to guarantee to the faithful the indispensable minimum in the spirit of prayer and moral effort, in the growth in love of God and neighbor. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2041)

JOHN PAUL II

Neither should the necessity and duty of practicing all of the immutable commandments of the Law of God in their entirety be mitigated in the eyes of the faithful.

The faithful are obliged to acknowledge and respect the specific moral precepts declared and taught by the Church in the name of God, the Creator and Lord. When the Apostle

Paul sums up the fulfilment of the law in the precept of love of neighbour as oneself (cf. Rom 13:8-10), he is not weakening the commandments but reinforcing them, since he is revealing their requirements and their gravity. Love of God and of one's neighbour cannot be separated from the observance of the commandments of the Covenant renewed in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Spirit. It is an honour characteristic of Christians to obey God rather than men (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:29) and accept even martyrdom as a consequence, like the holy men and women of the Old and New Testaments, who are considered such because they gave their lives rather than perform this or that particular act contrary to faith or virtue. (Note 125: Cf. Ecumenical Council of Trent, Session VI, Decree on Justification Cum Hoc Tempore, Canon 19: DS, 1569. See also: Clement XI, Constitution Unigenitus Dei Filius (September 8, 1713) against the Errors of Paschasius Quesnel, Nos. 53-56: DS, 2453-2456.) (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 76, August 6, 1993)

Rather than reducing the number of precepts, it is necessary to have a correct visualization of their worth to better understand that they serve to make us free in the service of God and free from the slavery of sin.

Perfection demands that maturity in self-giving to which human freedom is called. Jesus points out to the young man that the commandments are the first and indispensable condition for having eternal life; on the other hand, for the young man to give up all he possesses and to follow the Lord is presented as an invitation: 'If you wish...' These words of Jesus reveal the particular dynamic of freedom's growth towards maturity, and at the same time they bear witness to the fundamental relationship between freedom and divine law. **Human freedom and God's law are not in opposition; on the contrary, they appeal one to the other.** The follower of Christ knows that his vocation is to freedom. 'You were called to freedom, brethren' (Gal 5:13), proclaims the Apostle Paul with joy and pride. But he immediately adds: 'only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another' (ibid.). The firmness with which

the Apostle opposes those who believe that they are justified by the Law has nothing to do with man's 'liberation' from precepts. On the contrary, the latter are at the service of the practice of love: 'For he who loves his neighbour has fulfilled the Law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself' (Rom 13:8-9). **Saint Augustine, after speaking of the observance of the commandments as being a kind of incipient, imperfect freedom, goes on to say: 'Why, someone will ask, is it not yet perfect? Because 'I see in my members another law at war with the law of my reason'... In part freedom, in part slavery: not yet complete freedom, not yet pure, not yet whole, because we are not yet in eternity. In part we retain our weakness and in part we have attained freedom. All our sins were destroyed in Baptism, but does it follow that no weakness remained after iniquity was destroyed? Had none remained, we would live without sin in this life. But who would dare to say this except someone who is proud, someone unworthy of the mercy of our deliverer?... Therefore, since some weakness has remained in us, I dare to say that to the extent to which we serve God we are free, while to the extent that we follow the law of sin, we are still slaves' (In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus 41, 10). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 17, August 6, 1993)**

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If one chooses evil desiring a good consequence, in heaven these good intentions will be taken into consideration

Even the soul of the most perverse man holds an inextinguishable spark reminding him at each moment of his obligation to do good and avoid evil. Consequently, no one is able to do wrong without having first justified himself before his conscience. Francis opens new horizons within Moral Theology by teaching that God looks with pleasure on this way of acting – unfortunately so common in fallen human nature – and perhaps even rewards it...

However, can one choose to do something evil with the intention of reaping good fruit? Do the ends justify the means? Is conscience absolutely free from an objective moral norm?

FRANCIS

Conscience is free. If it chooses evil because of certainty that some good will be derived from it, in heaven these good intentions and their consequences will be taken into consideration. (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari, July 13, 2014*)¹

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine should be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

John Paul II

- ♦ There are faults which we fail to see but which nevertheless remain faults, because we have refused to walk towards the light
- ♦ Foreseeable consequences are part of the circumstances of an action, but cannot alter its moral species
- ♦ True heresies in the moral field have been promoted as Christians are tempted toward a sociological Christianity, without objective morality

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ A good intention does not justify any human act; one may not do evil so that good may result from it

GREGORY XVI

The dangers of liberty of conscience

This shameful font of indifferentism gives rise to that absurd and erroneous proposition which claims that liberty of conscience must be maintained for everyone. It spreads ruin in sacred and civil affairs, though some repeat over and over again with the greatest impudence that some advantage accrues to religion from it. **‘But the death of the soul is worse than freedom of error,’** as Augustine was wont to say (Epis. 166) When all restraints are removed by which men are kept on the narrow path of truth, their nature, which is already inclined to evil, propels them to ruin. Then truly ‘the bottomless pit’ (Rev 9:3) is open from which John saw smoke ascending which obscured the sun, and out of which locusts flew forth to devastate the earth. Thence comes transformation of minds, corruption of youths, contempt of sacred things and holy laws — in other words, a pestilence more deadly to the state than any other. **Experience shows, even from earliest times, that cities renowned for wealth, dominion, and glory perished as a result of this single evil, namely immoderate freedom of opinion, license of free speech, and desire for novelty.** (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 14, August 15, 1832)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

It is the duty of the Church to preach the one true God

Therefore the Church announces the good tidings of salvation to those who do not believe, so that all men may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent,

and may be converted from their ways, doing penance. To believers also the Church must ever preach faith and penance, she must prepare them for the sacraments, teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded, and invite them to all the works of charity, piety, and the apostolate. For all these works make it clear that Christ’s faithful, though not of this world, are to be the light of the world and to glorify the Father before men. (Vatican Council II. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 9, December 4, 1963)

Christians are capable of discharging the new law of love

The Christian man, conformed to the likeness of that Son Who is the firstborn of many brothers, **receives ‘the first-fruits of the Spirit’ (Rom 8:23) by which he becomes capable of discharging the new law of love.** (Vatican Council II. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 22, December 7, 1965)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Those who were deceived by others but diligently seek the truth, have invincible ignorance

Saint Paul truthfully said: ‘After a first and second warning, break off contact with a heretic, knowing that such a person is perverted and stands self-condemned.’ **But they should not be counted amongst the heretics who defend their opinion, however perverse and false, without stubborn animosity, especially if this be not fruit of their own audacious presumption, but received from their parents who were seduced and induced into error,**

while on the other hand they seek the truth, although with circumspect care, and are disposed to correct themselves as soon as they encounter it. [...] For this reason, I have written to some of the chiefs of the Donatists – not letters of communion, which for some time they have refused to receive because of their departure from Catholic unity spread all over the world – but rather private letters, as may be licitly sent even to pagans: even if the leaders have sometimes read them, nonetheless they did not want to, or what seems more believable, they have not been able to answer. We however think that we have, in doing this, fulfilled our duty of charity. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Epistle 43*, no. 1)

PIUS IX

Despite invincible ignorance, it is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry

For, it must be held by faith that **outside the Apostolic Roman Church, no one can be saved; that this is the only ark of salvation; that he who shall not have entered therein will perish in the flood;** but, on the other hand, it is necessary to hold for certain that **they who labor in ignorance of the true religion, if this ignorance is invincible, are not stained by any guilt in this matter in the eyes of God.** Now, in truth, who would arrogate so much to himself as to mark the limits of such an ignorance, because of the nature and variety of peoples, regions, innate dispositions, and of so many other things? For, in truth, when released from these corporeal chains ‘we shall see God as He is’ (1Jn 3:2), we shall understand perfectly by how close and beautiful a bond divine mercy and justice are united; **but, as long as we are on earth, weighed down by this mortal mass which blunts the soul, let us hold most firmly that, in accordance with Catholic teaching, there is ‘one God, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph 4:5); it is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry. Despite invincible ignorance, it is unlawful to proceed further in inquiry.** (Pius IX. *Allocution Singulari quadam*, December 9, 1854)

PAUL VI

Only the Church may adequately form

consciences and the faithful should cooperate in this mission

In the formation of their consciences, **the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church. For the Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that truth which is Christ Himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origins in human nature itself. Furthermore, let Christians walk in wisdom in the face of those outside, ‘in the Holy Spirit, in unaffected love, in the word of truth’ (2Cor 6:6-7), and let them be about their task of spreading the light of life with all confidence and apostolic courage, even to the shedding of their blood. The disciple is bound by a grave obligation toward Christ, his Master, ever more fully to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it, never – be it understood – having recourse to means that are incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel. At the same time, the charity of Christ urges him to love and have prudence and patience in his dealings with those who are in error or in ignorance with regard to the faith (Paul VI. *Declaration Dignitatis humanae*, no. 14, December 7, 1965)**

JOHN PAUL II

There are faults which we fail to see but which nevertheless remain faults, because we have refused to walk towards the light

In any event, **it is always from the truth that the dignity of conscience derives.** In the case of the correct conscience, it is a question of the objective truth received by man; in the case of the erroneous conscience, it is a question of what man, mistakenly, subjectively considers to be true. **It is never acceptable to confuse a ‘subjective’ error about moral good with the ‘objective’ truth rationally proposed to man in virtue of his end, or to make the moral value of an act performed with a true and correct conscience equivalent to the moral value of an act performed by following the judgment of an erroneous conscience. It is possible that the evil done as the result of invincible ignorance or a non-culpable error of judgment may not be imputable to the agent; but even**

in this case it does not cease to be an evil, a disorder in relation to the truth about the good. Furthermore, a good act which is not recognized as such does not contribute to the moral growth of the person who performs it; it does not perfect him and it does not help to dispose him for the supreme good. Thus, before feeling easily justified in the name of our conscience, we should reflect on the words of the Psalm: 'Who can discern his errors? Clear me from hidden faults' (Ps 19:12). **There are faults which we fail to see but which nevertheless remain faults, because we have refused to walk towards the light (cf. Jn 9:39-41).** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 63, August 6, 1993)

Foreseeable consequences are part of the circumstances of an action, but cannot alter its moral species

In order to offer rational criteria for a right moral decision, the theories mentioned above take account of the intention and consequences of human action. **Certainly there is need to take into account both the intention** — as Jesus forcefully insisted in clear disagreement with the scribes and Pharisees, who prescribed in great detail certain outward practices without paying attention to the heart (cf. Mk 7:20-21; Mt 15:19) — **and the goods obtained and the evils avoided as a result of a particular act. Responsibility demands as much. But the consideration of these consequences, and also of intentions, is not sufficient for judging the moral quality of a concrete choice. The weighing of the goods and evils foreseeable as the consequence of an action is not an adequate method for determining whether the choice of that concrete kind of behaviour is 'according to its species', or 'in itself', morally good or bad, licit or illicit. The foreseeable consequences are part of those circumstances of the act, which, while capable of lessening the gravity of an evil act, nonetheless cannot alter its moral species.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 77, August 6, 1993)

True heresies in the moral field have been promoted as Christians are tempted toward a sociological Christianity, without objective morality

Today, for an efficacious work in the field of preaching, it is necessary to understand the spiritual and psychological reality of Christians living in modern society. It is essential to realistically admit, with deep and pained sentiment, that in part, Christians today feel lost, confused, perplexed and even disillusioned; **ideas conflicting with the revealed and consistently taught truth have been widely spread; true heresies in dogmatic and moral fields have been promoted,** creating doubts, confusions, rebellions, even the Liturgy has been manipulated; immersed in the intellectual and moral 'relativism', and consequently permissiveness, Christians are tempted toward atheism, agnosticism, vaguely moralistic illuminism, and **a sociological Christianity, without defined dogmas and without objective morality.** (John Paul II. *Address to the First National Conference on 'Popular Missions during the 80s'*, February 6, 1981)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A good intention does not justify any human act; one may not do evil so that good may result from it

It is therefore an error to judge the morality of human acts by considering only the intention that inspires them or the circumstances (environment, social pressure, duress or emergency, etc.) which supply their context. **There are acts which, in and of themselves, independently of circumstances and intentions, are always gravely illicit** by reason of their object; such as blasphemy and perjury, murder and adultery. **One may not do evil so that good may result from it.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1756)

The Church is pharisaical when she wants to take charge of the consciences of people

Conscience is the sacred place where we find ourselves alone with God, where the most important matter of our existence is decided; the salvation or loss of our souls. For this reason, we have the obligation to orient our consciences always along the right path, for on the contrary, we may culpably compromise, in a fleeting moment, our friendship with God and the life of grace that He grants us. However, our human condition is so precarious that only with the immortal teachings of the Holy Catholic Church are we able to guide our conscience with certainty along the good path.

The education of consciences is one of the most beautiful missions confided by the Redeemer to Holy Mother Church, a mission we could call angelic if it wasn't really divine! Would that all thought this way!

FRANCIS

'And today is also a day to pray for our Mother Church,' Francis added, 'because of so much sterility within the people of God. A sterility arising from egoism, from power... **when the Church believes she can do everything, that she can take charge of the consciences of the people, walk along the road of the Pharisees, of the Sadducees, along the road of hypocrisy, yes, the Church is sterile.** Let's pray. That this Christmas our Church may be open to the gift of God, that she may allow herself to be surprised by the Holy Spirit and be a Church that gives birth, a mother Church. Many times I think that in some places the Church is more like an entrepreneur than a mother'. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae*, December 19, 2014)

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VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church

In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church (cf. Pius XII, radio message, March 23, 1952). **For the Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth.** It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that truth which is Christ Himself, and also to **declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order** which have their origins in human

nature itself. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Dignitatis humanae*, no. 14, December 7, 1965)

PIUS X

Bishops have the duty of forming the consciences of the people

As for you, Venerable Brethren, carry on diligently with the work of the Saviour of men by emulating His gentleness and His strength. Minister to every misery; let no sorrow escape your pastoral solicitude; let no lament find you indifferent. **But, on the other hand, preach fearlessly their duties to the powerful and to the lowly; it is your function to form the conscience of the people and of the public**

authorities. The social question will be much nearer a solution when all those concerned, less demanding as regards their respective rights, shall fulfill their duties more exactly. (Pius X. *Notre charge apostolique*, no. 39, August 23, 1910)

PIUS XII

The Church: Inexhaustible fecundity and inviolate in her sacred laws

Certainly the loving Mother is spotless in the Sacraments by which she gives birth to and nourishes her children; in the faith which she has always preserved inviolate; in her sacred laws imposed on all; in the evangelical counsels which she recommends; in those heavenly gifts and extraordinary grace through which with **inexhaustible fecundity** (cf. Vat. Council I, Sess. III, de fide Cath., cap 3), she generates hosts of martyrs, virgins and confessors. But **it cannot be laid to her charge if some members fall**, weak or wounded. In their name she prays to God daily: 'Forgive us our trespasses;' and with the brave heart of a mother she applies herself at once to the work of nursing them back to spiritual health. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 66, June 29, 1943)

JOHN PAUL II

With the spread of relativism the Church stresses the correct formation of consciences

At a time when in the sphere of morality there is a disturbing spread of relativism and subjectivism, the Church in America is called to proclaim with renewed vigor that conversion consists in commitment to the person of Jesus Christ, with all the theological and moral implications taught by the Magisterium of the Church. There is a need to recognize 'the role played by theologians, catechists and religion teachers who, by setting forth the Church's teaching in fidelity to the Magisterium, cooperate directly in the correct formation of the consciences of the faithful' (Propositio 68). (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Ecclesia in America*, no. 53, January 22, 1999)

PIUS XII

Conscience can and should be educated; the Church must intervene authoritatively in moral questions when necessary

It is necessary to turn again to some **fundamental concepts of Catholic doctrine in order to duly understand that the conscience can and should be educated.** The divine Savior has brought to man, ignorant and weak, his truth and grace: truth to indicate the path that leads to his end; grace to give him the strength to be able to reach it. [...] **But, where may the educator and the educated find, concretely with facility and certainty, the moral Christian law?** In the law of the Creator, engraved on the heart of each one, (cf Rom 2: 14-16), and in revelation; that is to say, in the ensemble of truths and precepts taught by the divine Master. Both, the law engraved in the heart, which is the natural law, as well as the truths and precepts of supernatural revelation, **were left by Jesus the Redeemer, as the moral treasure of humanity, in the hands of his Church, so that she may preach them to all peoples, explaining and transmitting them integrally and free of all contamination and error from generation to generation.** [...] Conscious, therefore, of the right and the **obligation of the Holy Apostolic See to intervene, when it be necessary, authoritatively in moral questions,** We in the address of October 29 last year, **proposed to enlighten the consciences in that which refers to the problems of conjugal life.** With the same authority we declare today to educators and to the youth: **the divine commandment of the purity of soul and body** is also necessary without diminishment for the youth of today. They in the same way, have the moral obligation – and with the help of grace – the possibility of keeping themselves pure. (Pius XII. Radio message *La famiglia è la culla* on the occasion of the celebration of 'Family Day', no. 4.6.13, March 23, 1952)

JOHN XXIII

The light of the Church illumines, enkindles and enflames

For here Our concern is with **the doctrine of the Catholic and Apostolic Church.** She is the Mother and Teacher of all nations. Her

light illumines, enkindles and enflames. No age but hears her warning voice, vibrant with heavenly wisdom. She is ever powerful to offer suitable, effective remedies for the increasing needs of men, and the sorrows and anxieties of this present life. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 262, May 15, 1961)

To the Church was entrusted by her holy Founder the task of teaching her children and guiding them

She is 'the pillar and ground of the truth' (Cf. 1Tim 3:15). **To her was entrusted by her holy Founder the twofold task of giving life to her children and of teaching them and guiding them**—both as individuals and as nations—with maternal care. Great is their dignity, a dignity which she has always guarded most zealously and held in the highest esteem. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 1 May 15, 1961)

JOHN PAUL II

It is the mission of the Church to form consciences and to offer criteria in delicate matters

In fact, it is the mission of the Church to form consciences and to offer criteria in such delicate matters that have a great influence on behaviour and on the moral principles of people, especially on children and youth. (John Paul II. *Address to Señor Manuel Antonio Hernández Gutiérrez*, Ambassador of Costa Rica to the Holy See, November 19, 1991)

The Catholic Church is by the will of Christ the teacher of truth

Christians have a great help for the formation of conscience in the Church and her Magisterium. As the Council affirms: 'In forming their consciences the Christian faithful must give careful attention to the sacred and certain teaching of the Church. For the Catholic Church is by the will of Christ the teacher of truth. Her charge is to announce and teach authentically that truth which is Christ, and at the same time with her authority to declare and confirm the principles of the

moral order which derive from human nature itself' (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 14). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 64, August 6, 1993)

The sphere of human hearts and consciences needs the direction of the Church

The Church's fundamental function in every age and particularly in ours is to direct man's gaze, to point the awareness and experience of the whole of humanity towards the mystery of God, to help all men to be familiar with the profundity of the Redemption taking place in Christ Jesus. At the same time man's deepest sphere is involved -we mean the sphere of human hearts, consciences and events. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptor Hominis*, no. 10, March 4, 1979)

BENEDICT XVI

Forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice

Yet one of the tasks of the Church in Africa consists in forming upright consciences receptive to the demands of justice, so as to produce men and women willing and able to build this just social order by their responsible conduct. (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Africae munus*, no. 22, November 19, 2011)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

The priest must practice the ministry of the formation of consciences

Sacramental Reconciliation re-establishes friendship with God the Father and with all his sons in his family which is the Church, which, in turn, is rejuvenated and edified in all of its dimensions: universal, diocesan, parochial. In spite of the reality of a loss of the sense of sin, greatly extended in the culture of our times, the priest must practice, with joy and dedication, the ministry of the formation of consciences, pardon and peace. (Congregation for the Clergy. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, no. 51, March 31, 1994)

JOHN PAUL II

To contest the Magisterium is to reject moral conscience; to speak of intangible dignity of conscience without posterior specifications brings on grave errors

Since the Magisterium of the Church has been instituted by Christ the Lord to enlighten the conscience, appealing to this conscience precisely in order to contest the truth of all that the Magisterium teaches comports a rejection of the Catholic concept of the Magisterium and of moral conscience. To speak of the intangible dignity of the conscience without posterior specifications, brings on the risk of grave errors. (John Paul II. *Address to the participants in the Second International Congress on Moral Theology*, November 12, 1988)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The minds of men are obscured and require the guidance of authority

Where, then, shall I begin? With authority, or with reasoning? In the order of nature, when we learn anything, authority precedes reasoning. For a reason may seem weak, when, after it is given, it requires authority to confirm it. But because the minds of men are obscured by familiarity with darkness, which covers them in the night of sins and evil habits, and cannot perceive in a way suitable to the clearness and purity of reason, there is most wholesome provision for bringing the dazzled eye into the light of truth under the congenial shade of authority. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Of the Morals of the Catholic Church*, Ch. 2, no. 3)

COMPENDIUM OF THE CATECHISM CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church transforms the moral life of Christians into an act of spiritual worship

How does the Church nourish the moral life of a Christian?

The Church is the community in which the Christian receives the Word of God, the teachings of the 'Law of Christ' (Gal 6:2), and the grace of the sacraments. Christians are

united to the Eucharistic sacrifice of Christ in such a way that **their moral life is an act of spiritual worship**; and they learn the example of holiness from the Virgin Mary and the lives of the Saints.

Why does the Magisterium of the Church act in the field of morality?

It is the duty of the Magisterium of the Church to preach the faith that is to be believed and put into practice in life. **This duty extends even to the specific precepts of the natural law because their observance is necessary for salvation.** (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. no. 429-430)

One must work to correct the errors of moral conscience

How is a moral conscience formed to be upright and truthful?

An upright and true moral conscience is formed by education and by assimilating the Word of God **and the teaching of the Church.** It is supported by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and helped by the advice of wise people. Prayer and an examination of conscience can also greatly assist one's moral formation.

Can a moral conscience make erroneous judgments?

A person must always obey the certain judgment of his own conscience **but he could make erroneous judgments for reasons that may not always exempt him from personal guilt.** However, an evil act committed through involuntary ignorance is not imputable to the person, even though the act remains objectively evil. **One must therefore work to correct the errors of moral conscience.** (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 374. 376)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

We are guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church

In the formation of conscience the Word of God is the light for our path (Ps 119:105), we must assimilate it in faith and prayer and put it into practice. We must also examine our conscience before the Lord's Cross. **We are**

assisted by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, aided by the witness or advice of others and guided by the authoritative teaching of the Church (cf DzH 14). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1785)

The conscience of each person should avoid confining itself to individualistic considerations and should not be set in opposition to the Magisterium

Ministries should be exercised in a spirit of fraternal service and dedication to the Church, in the name of the Lord (Rom 12:8,11). **At the same time the conscience of each person should avoid confining itself to individualistic considerations in its moral judgments of the person's own acts. As far as possible conscience should take account of the good of all, as expressed in the moral law, natural and revealed, and consequently in the law of the Church and in the authoritative teaching of the Magisterium on moral questions. Personal conscience and reason should not be set in opposition to the moral law or the Magisterium of the Church.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2039)

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‘Your Holiness, we offer you this spiritual treasure: 3,525 rosaries.’ There are certain restorationist groups, they go back to practices that I lived through, but not now...

What a joy for a mother to receive a flower from her little child! Her joy would surely be greater if her little one did not just offer her one rose, but a beautiful bouquet. What joy would be hers if, on a very special day all her children were to decorate the house with more than 175 thousand flowers?

This is what the Rosary is like, an offering that we Catholics render daily to the Virgin Mary, to praise her and to confide to her intercession all of our necessities, while meditating on the life of Jesus, just as She did. Moreover, when we esteem someone and want heaven to favor them, we pray for their intentions in many Rosaries, and at times offer a spiritual bouquet, as a sign of our affection in the Lord.

When Pope Francis assumed the pontificate, he received, as expected, messages of congratulations from all over the Catholic world. One group, attending to the constant request of the Bishop of Rome for prayers, sent him a spiritual bouquet of 3,525 Rosaries. However, he did not seem to like it...When this became known, it caused perplexity... and not without good reason. The fact of diminishing the significance of this devout practice makes us stop to think...What degree of importance does Pope Francis attach to a prayer that he himself has recommended on several occasions? Does he consider praying the Rosary a valuable supernatural aid, as Catholic doctrine demonstrates?

We know of the privileges, and above all, the efficacy that has been linked to this practice for centuries. The repetition of the Hail Mary as the basis of the Rosary, promotes a greater understanding of the mysteries of the life of Christ in our souls as we pray. The Church does not see in this repetition a pre-Conciliar custom, but rather considers it an immortal and fervent manifestation of love. To those who think that praying many Rosaries is an exaggeration, and that diminishing its frequency is advisable, we recall the saying of Lacordaire: ‘Love has but one word, and, in saying that forever, it is never repeated.’

FRANCIS

I share with you two concerns. One is the Pelagian current present in the Church at this moment. **There are certain restorationist groups.** I know some, I had to receive them in Buenos Aires. And one feels that it is like going back 60 years! Before the Council... It feels like 1940... An anecdote, just to illustrate this, it is not to laugh at it, I took it with respect, but it worries me; when I was elected, I received a letter from one of these groups, and they said to me: **‘Your Holiness, we offer you this spiritual treasure: 3,525 rosaries’.** Why don’t they say, ‘we prayed for you, we ask...’, **but this counting...And these groups go back to practices and to disciplines that I lived through – not you, because none of you are old – to disciplines, to things that at that moment we lived, but not now, today they are no longer.** (*Dialogue with CLAR officials, June 6, 2013*)

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**I – PRAY WITHOUT CEASING: A
CHARACTERISTIC OF SOULS PLEASING TO GOD**

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night?

Then he told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary. He said, 'There was a judge in a certain town who neither feared God nor respected any human being. And a widow in that town used to come to him and say, 'Render a just decision for me against my adversary.' For a long time the judge was unwilling, but eventually he thought, 'While it is true that I neither fear God nor respect any human being, because this widow keeps bothering me I shall deliver a just decision for her lest she finally come and strike me.' The Lord said, 'Pay attention to what the dishonest judge says. **Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night?** Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily. But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?' (Lk 18:1-8)

Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you

And he said to them, 'Suppose one of you has a friend to whom he goes at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has arrived at my house from a journey and I have nothing to offer him,' and he says in reply from within, 'Do not bother me; the door has already been locked and my children and I are already in bed. I cannot get up to give you anything.' I tell you, **if he does not get up to give him the loaves because of their friendship, he will get up to give him whatever he needs because of his persistence.** 'And I tell you, **ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.** For everyone who asks, receives; and the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. What father among you would hand his son a

snake when he asks for a fish? Or hand him a scorpion when he asks for an egg? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the Father in heaven give the holy Spirit to those who ask him?' (Lk 11:5-13)

It is the will of God that we pray without ceasing

Rejoice always. **Pray without ceasing.** In all circumstances give thanks, **for this is the will of God** for you in Christ Jesus. (1Thess 5:16-18)

PIUS IX

How many times and with how much fervor the prayers of the Rosary be said, so much more sure will be the protection of the Virgin

How many times and with how much fervor the prayers of the Rosary be said, so much more sure will be the protection of the Virgin in favor of the Christian people. (Pius IX. *Decree Proditum est*, February 8, 1875)

BENEDICT XVI

God thirsts for our prayer

Gregory [Saint Gregory Nazianzus] teaches us first and foremost the importance and necessity of prayer. He says: '**It is necessary to remember God more often than one breathes**' (Orationes 27, 4), **because prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with our thirst. God is thirsting for us to thirst for him** (cf. Orationes 40, 27). In prayer, we must turn our hearts to God, to consign ourselves to him as an offering to be purified and transformed. In prayer we see all things in the light of Christ, we let our masks fall and immerse ourselves in the truth and in listening to God, feeding the fire of love. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, August 22, 2007)

JOHN PAUL II

A Pope's desire that we never cease to pray

That for which I want to give you courage

and enthusiasm in this: keep visiting this Shrine. Even more do I want to say this to all of you, but especially to the young people (for it is the young who are particularly fond of this place): **keep praying; we 'ought always to pray and not lose heart'** (Lk 18:1), as Jesus taught. **Pray, and through prayer shape your lives.** (John Paul II. *Address*, Marian Shrine of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Poland, no. 3, June 7, 1979)

In the Church there is an enormous need for insistent prayer

We are reunited today also, as every Sunday, for the prayer in common of the Angelus. The reading of today's Liturgy inspires us to reflect on prayer. **'Lord, teach us to pray'** (Lk 11:1) one of the disciples says to Christ in the Gospel. **And he answers, giving the example of a man, certainly a persistent man,** who, being in need, knocks at the door of a friend of his, no less than at midnight. But he receives what he asked for. **Jesus, therefore, encourages us to have a similar attitude in prayer: the attitude of ardent perseverance.** He says: 'Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you' (Lk 11:9). [...] **There is an enormous need for prayer, for the great and insistent prayer of the Church;** there is need of fervent, humble and persevering prayer. **Prayer is the first front where, in our world, good and evil clash.** (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 1-3, July 27, 1980)

JOHN XXIII

A priest must be much more careful than others to obey Christ's command to pray always

The neglect of some of these rules [fidelity to prayer] may often be the reason why **certain churchmen are caught up in the whirl of external affairs, gradually lose their feeling for sacred things** and finally fall into serious difficulties when they are **shorn of all spiritual protection** and enticed by the attractions of this earthly life. [...] To use the words of Saint Pius X: 'We are sure of this much... that a priest must be deeply devoted to the practice of prayer if he is to live up to his rank and fulfill his duties properly... **For a priest must be**

much more careful than others to obey the command of Christ: You must always pray. Paul was only reaffirming this when he advised, as he did so often: Be constant in prayer, ever on the watch to give thanks; pray without ceasing' (*Haerent animo*). And We are more than happy to adopt as Our own the words that Our immediate predecessor, Pius XII, offered priests as their password at the very beginning of his pontificate: **'Pray, more and more, and pray more intensely'** (Discourse of June 24, 1939). (John XXIII. *Encyclical Sacerdotii nostri rimordia*, no. 43-44, August 1, 1980)

LEO XIII

Pray with perseverance and without intermission – do not for any cause whatsoever cease from the duty of prayer

The subtlety of the human intelligence fails now to grasp the high designs of Providence; **but the time will come when, through the goodness of God, causes and effects will be made clear, and the marvelous power and utility of prayer will be shown forth.** Then it will be seen how many in the midst of a corrupt age have kept themselves pure and inviolate from all concupiscence of the flesh and the spirit, working out their sanctification in the fear of God (2Cor 7:1); how others, when exposed to the danger of temptation, have without delay restrained themselves gaining new strength for virtue from the peril itself; how others, having fallen, have been seized with the ardent desire to be restored to the embraces of a compassionate God. Therefore, with these reflections before them, **We beseech all again and again not to yield to the deceits of the old enemy, nor for any cause whatsoever to cease from the duty of prayer.** Let their prayers be persevering, let them pray without intermission. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Octobri mense*, no. 10, September 22, 1891)

The true Christian often has the Rosary in his hands

Therefore **the Rosary of the Blessed Virgin Mary,** combining in a convenient and practical form an unexcelled form of prayer, an instrument well adapted to preserve the faith and an illustrious example of perfect virtue, **should be often in the hands of the**

true Christian and be devoutly recited and meditated upon. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Magna Dei Matris*, no. 29, September 8, 1892)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

Prayer: A violence which is delightful and dear to God

We must keep repeating, Lord help me; Lord, assist me; keep Thy hand upon me; leave me not; have pity upon me! Is there anything easier than to say, Lord, help me, assist me! The Psalmist says, 'With me is prayer to the God of my life' (Ps 41: 9). On which the gloss is as follows: **'A man may say, I cannot fast, I cannot give alms; but if he is told to pray, he cannot say this.'** Because there is nothing easier than to pray. But we must never cease praying; we must [so to speak] continually do violence to God, that He may assist us always – a violence which is delightful and dear to Him. 'This violence is grateful to God,' says Tertullian; and Saint Jerome says that the more persevering and importunate our prayers are, so much the more are they acceptable to God: 'Prayer, as long as it is importunate, is more acceptable.' [...] Let us, then, never neglect to beg God to give us this grace, and this spirit of continual prayer; because if we pray always, we shall certainly obtain from God perseverance and every other gift which we desire, since His promise of hearing whoever prays to Him cannot fail. 'For we are saved by hope' (Rom 8:24). **With this hope of always praying, we may reckon ourselves saved.** (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The Complete ascetical works*, Vol. III, The Great means of salvation and of perfection, Part I, Ch. 3, no. 4)

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

If they would spend at least one half their time in prayer they would do more, and with less trouble

Let those men of zeal, who think by their preaching and exterior works to convert the world, consider that they would be much more edifying to the Church, and more pleasing unto God-setting aside the good example they would give if they would spend at least one half their time in prayer. [...] Certainly they would do more, and with less trouble, by one single

good work than by a thousand: because of the merit of their prayer, and the spiritual strength it supplies. To act otherwise is to beat the air, to do little more than nothing, sometimes nothing and occasionally even mischief. (Saint John of Cross. *The Spiritual Canticle*, Ch.28, no. 3)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

We ought so much the more to pray, as we more frequently sin

Now we have here another kind of command given us, that at all times, not only in the day, but at night too, prayers should be offered up. For it follows, 'And shall go into him at midnight'. As David did when he said, 'At midnight I will rise and give thanks to you' (Ps 118:62). For he had no fear of awakening them from sleep, whom he knew to be ever watching. For if David who was occupied also in the necessary affairs of a kingdom was so holy, that seven times in the day he gave praise to God, **what ought we to do who ought so much the more to pray, as we more frequently sin, through the weakness of our mind and body?** (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Cited by Saint Thomas Aquinas*, *Catena Aurea*, Lk 11, lect. 2: 11:5-8)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

God does not despise petitions – He tires when you are silent

He who has redeemed you, has shown you what He would have you do. He would have you be instant in prayer, He would have you ponder in your heart the blessings you are praying for, He would have you ask and receive what His goodness is longing to impart. He never refuses His blessings to them that pray, but rather stirs men up by His mercy not to faint in praying. Gladly accept the Lord's encouragement: be willing to do what He commands, not to do what He forbids. Lastly, consider what a blessed privilege is granted you, to talk with God in your prayers, and make known to Him all your wants, while He though not in words, yet by His mercy, answers you, for He despises not petitions, He tires not but when you are silent. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Cited by Saint Thomas Aquinas*, *Catena Aurea*, Lk 18:1-8)

**II – THE POPES PRAISE AND ENCOURAGE
THE CONSTANCY OF THE FAITHFUL IN THE
RECITATION OF THE ROSARY**

BENEDICT XVI

**The Holy Rosary, a prayer of meditation:
in repeating the Hail Mary we reflect on
the Mystery**

In our time we are taken up with so many activities and duties, worries and problems: we often tend to fill all of the spaces of the day, without leaving a moment to pause and reflect and to nourish our spiritual life, contact with God. **Mary teaches us how necessary it is to find in our busy day, moments for silent recollection, to meditate on what the Lord wants to teach us.** [...] To meditate, therefore, means to create within us a situation of recollection, of inner silence, in order to reflect upon and assimilate the mysteries of our faith and what God is working within us; and not merely on the things that come and go. We may undertake this “rumination” in various ways: for example, by taking a brief passage of Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles or the Letters of the Apostles. [...] **The Holy Rosary is also a prayer of meditation: in repeating the Hail Mary we are asked to think about and reflect on the Mystery which we have just proclaimed.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, August 17, 2011)

**This cadent repetition of the Hail Mary
does not disturb inner silence, but indeed
both demands and nourishes it**

The Rosary is a school of contemplation and silence. At first glance, it could seem a prayer that accumulates words, therefore difficult to reconcile with the silence that is rightly recommended for meditation and contemplation. In fact, **this cadent repetition of the Hail Mary does not disturb inner silence but indeed both demands and nourishes it.** (Benedict XVI. *Meditation*, Pontifical Shrine of Pompeii, October 19, 2008)

JOHN PAUL II

With the tranquil succession of Hail

**Marys, the Rosary has a peaceful effect
on those who pray it**

Moreover, by virtue of its meditative character, with the tranquil succession of **Hail Marys, the Rosary has a peaceful effect on those who pray it**, disposing them to receive and experience in their innermost depths, and to spread around them, that true peace which is the special gift of the Risen Lord (cf. Jn 14:27; 20.21). (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, no. 40, October 16, 2002)

PAUL VI

**The Rosary is a compendium of the entire
Gospel**

We wish now, venerable Brothers, to dwell for a moment on the renewal of the pious practice which has been called ‘the compendium of the entire Gospel’ (Pius XII, Letter to the Archbishop of Manila *Philippinas Insulas*, p. 419): **the Rosary. To this our predecessors have devoted close attention and care.** On many occasions they have recommended its frequent recitation, encouraged its diffusion, explained its nature, recognized its suitability for fostering contemplative prayer – prayer of both praise and petition – and recalled its intrinsic effectiveness for promoting Christian life and apostolic commitment. We, too, from the first general audience of our pontificate on July 13, 1963, have shown our great esteem for the pious practice of the Rosary (Discourse to the participants in the III Dominican International Rosary Congress). Since that time we have underlined its value on many different occasions, some ordinary, some grave. Thus, at a moment of anguish and uncertainty, we published the Letter *Christi Matri* (September 15, 1966), in order to obtain prayers to Our Lady of the Rosary and to implore from God the supreme benefit of peace. We renewed this appeal in our Apostolic Exhortation *Recurrens mensis October* (October 7 1969), in which we also commemorated the fourth centenary of the Apostolic Letter *Consueverunt Romani pontifices* of our predecessor Saint Pius V, who in that document explained and in a certain sense established the traditional form of the Rosary. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Marialis cultus*, no. 42, February 2, 1974)

Without the Rosary, the family would lack its very character as a domestic Church

We now desire, as a continuation of the thought of our predecessors, **to recommend strongly the recitation of the family Rosary.** The Second Vatican Council has pointed out how the family, the primary and vital cell of society, 'shows itself to be the domestic sanctuary of the Church through the mutual affection of its members and the common prayer they offer to God' (Decree on the Lay Apostolate *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11). The Christian family is thus seen to be a domestic Church' (*Lumen Gentium*, 11) if its members, each according to his proper place and tasks, all together promote justice, practice works of mercy, devote themselves to helping their brethren, take part in the apostolate of the wider local community and play their part in its liturgical worship (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*, 11). This will be all the more true if together they offer up prayers to God. **If this element of common prayer were missing, the family would lack its very character as a domestic Church.** Thus there must logically follow a concrete effort to reinstate communal prayer in family life if there is to be a restoration of the theological concept of the family as the domestic Church. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Marialis cultus*, no. 52, February 2, 1974)

JOHN XXIII

The Rosary is a very commendable form of prayer and meditation

Among the pleasant recollections of Our younger days are the Encyclicals which Pope Leo XIII used to write to the whole Catholic world as the month of October drew near, in order to urge the faithful to devout recitation of Mary's rosary during that month in particular (cf. *Supremi Apostolatus, Superiore anno, Quamquam pluries, Octobri mense, Magnae Dei Matris, Laetitiae sanctae, lucunda semper, Adiutricem populi, Fidentem piunque, Augustissimae Virginis, Diuturni temporis*). These Encyclicals had varied contents, but they were all very wise, vibrant with fresh inspiration, and directly relevant to the practice of the Christian life. **In strong and persuasive terms they exhorted Catholics to pray to God in a spirit of faith**

through the intercession of Mary, His Virgin Mother, by reciting the holy rosary. For the rosary is a very commendable form of prayer and meditation. In saying it we weave a mystic garland of *Ave Maria's*, *Pater Noster's*, and *Gloria Patri's*. And as we recite these vocal prayers, we meditate upon the principal mysteries of our religion; the Incarnation of Jesus Christ and the Redemption of the human race are proposed, one event after another, for our consideration. These pleasant memories of Our younger days have not faded or vanished as the years of Our life have passed. On the contrary, We want to declare in complete frankness and simplicity that the years have made Mary's rosary all the dearer to Us. We never fail to recite it each day in its entirety and We intend to recite it with particular devotion during the coming month. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Grata recordatio*, no. 1-3, September 26, 1959)

PIUS XII

The recitation of identical formulas repeated so many times infuses confidence

The recitation of identical formulas repeated so many times, rather than rendering the prayer sterile and boring, has on the contrary **the admirable quality of infusing confidence in him who prays** and brings to bear a gentle compulsion on the motherly Heart of Mary. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Ingruentium malorum*, no. 9, September 15, 1951)

PIUS XI

Those wander from the path of truth who consider this devotion merely an annoying formula repeated

This practice of piety, Venerable Brethren, admirably diffused by Saint Dominic, not without the heavenly suggestion and inspiration of the Virgin Mother of God, is without doubt easy for all, even for the ignorant and the simple. **But those wander from the path of truth who consider this devotion merely an annoying formula repeated with monotonous singsong intonation, and refuse it as good only for children and silly women!** In this regard, it is to be noted that both piety and love, though always renewing the same words, do not

always repeat the same thing but always express something new issuing from the intimate sentiment of devotion. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ingravescens malis*, no.12 -13, September 29, 1937)

BENEDICT XV

The Roman Pontiffs have let pass no occasion of commending the Rosary

[The Rosary,] that prayer which, being both vocal and mental, in the contemplation especially of the mysteries of religion, **while the Lord's Prayer is fifteen times repeated together with as many decades of the Hail Mary, is most adapted to fostering widely piety and every virtue.** [...] Accordingly the Church, which is wont to salute her 'the Mother of Grace and the Mother of Mercy', has so found her always, but especially in answer to the Rosary. Wherefore **the Roman Pontiffs have let pass no occasion of commending the Rosary and have enriched it with Apostolic Indulgences.** (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Fausto appetente*, no. 11, June 29, 1921)

III – DEVOTIONS INSPIRED BY GOD ARE NEVER OUT-OF-DATE

JOHN PAUL II

I encourage you in the exercises of devotion that you have lovingly preserved for centuries

I wish also at this time to recall to you an important truth affirmed by the Second Vatican Council, namely: **'The spiritual life, nevertheless, is not confined to participation in the liturgy'** (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 12). **And so I also encourage you in the other exercises of devotion that you have lovingly preserved for centuries**, especially those in regard to the Blessed Sacrament. These acts of piety honour God and are useful for our Christian lives; they give joy to our hearts, and help us to appreciate more the liturgical worship of the Church. (John Paul II. *Homily*, Apostolic journey to Ireland, no. 7, September 29, 1979)

The Rosary is of great significance at the dawn of the third millennium and is destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness; like Christianity itself, it has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings

The Rosary of the Virgin Mary, which gradually took form in the second millennium under the guidance of the Spirit of God, is a prayer loved by countless Saints and encouraged by the Magisterium. Simple yet profound, it still remains, at the dawn of this third millennium, a prayer of great significance, destined to bring forth a harvest of holiness. It blends easily into the spiritual journey of the Christian life, which, after two thousand years, has lost none of the freshness of its beginnings and feels drawn by the Spirit of God to 'set out into the deep' (*duc in altum!*) in order once more to proclaim, and even cry out, before the world that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour, 'the way, and the truth and the life' (Jn 14:6), 'the goal of human history and the point on which the desires of history and civilization turn' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 45). (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Rosarium Virginis Mariae*, n. 1, October 16, 2002)

LEO XIII

The need to beseech the Virgin Mother again and again to aid sinners; the daily Rosary is a custom that ought to be preserved

For, to be brief, by repeating the same prayers [of the Rosary] we strenuously implore from Our Heavenly Father the Kingdom of His grace and glory; we again and again beseech the Virgin Mother to aid us sinners by her prayers, both during our whole life and especially at that last moment which is the stepping-stone to eternity. The formula of the Rosary, too, is excellently adapted to prayer in common, so that it has been styled, not without reason, 'The Psalter of Mary'. **And that old custom of our forefathers ought to be preserved or else restored**, according to which Christian families, whether in town or country, **were religiously wont at close of day, when their labours were at an end, to assemble before a figure of Our Lady and alternately recite the Rosary.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Fidentem piumque*, September 20, 1896)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

May the cult of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the practices of piety recommended by the Magisterium during centuries be generously fostered

This most Holy Synod deliberately teaches this Catholic doctrine and at the same time admonishes all the sons of the Church that the cult, especially the liturgical cult, of the Blessed Virgin, be generously fostered, and the practices and exercises of piety, recommended by the magisterium of the Church toward her in the course of centuries be made of great moment (Conc. Nicea II; Conc. Trent, sess. 2). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 67, November 21, 1964)

PIUS XI

No benefit for society will be obtained by putting aside the methods consecrated by Christian wisdom and the vast experience of centuries

In this regard, we, not unaware that some educators of youth – frightened by the current depravation of customs by which so many youth throw themselves into extreme ruin with incredible detriment to souls – with the aim of distancing from civil society so grave and disastrous an evil, are occupied in inventing new systems of education. But, We wish to make these people understand that it no benefit for society will be obtained

by putting aside those methods and those disciplines that, received for the sources of Christian wisdom and consecrated by the vast experience of the centuries, Aloysius Gonzaga personally experienced as most efficacious in himself: lively faith, the fleeing from near occasions of sin, moderation and the fight against the passions, a vigorous devotion to God and the Most Holy Virgin, and finally, a life that is as often as possible comforted and strengthened by the celestial banquet. (Pius XI. *Apostolic letter Singulari illud*, June 13, 1926)

BENEDICT XV

Modernists develop a keen dislike for all private exercises of piety

Nor do We merely desire that Catholics should shrink from the errors of Modernism, but also from the tendencies or what is called the spirit of Modernism. Those who are infected by that spirit develop a keen dislike for all that savours of antiquity and become eager searchers after novelties in everything: in the way in which they carry out religious functions, in the ruling of Catholic institutions, and even in private exercises of piety. Therefore it is Our will that the law of our forefathers should still be held sacred: 'Let there be no innovation; keep to what has been handed down.' In matters of faith that must be inviolably adhered to as the law; it may however also serve as a guide even in matters subject to change, but even in such cases the rule would hold: 'Old things, but in a new way.' (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Ad Beatissimi apostolorum*, no. 25, November 1, 1914)

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To make our First Communion we must know what it means to enter into communion with others, with those who belong to different communities but who believe in Jesus

There are few things as moving as a group of children making their First Communion. It brings back vivid memories of our own childhood innocence...After receiving the Sacrament of Penance, often with more earnestness than many adults, their souls are purified and made as white as on the day of their Baptism, so that Jesus might find them similar to Him. Then, the great day arrives, creating much expectation among the children, manifest in their attentive gaze, their surprising degree of recollection, and the prayers expressed in the silence of their innocent hearts. Finally, they present themselves before the altar to receive their King and Lord in the greatest of Sacraments. He enters to dwell in their souls and begin a deep friendship with them, one that, with the help of grace, will last for their whole lives, culminating in Eternity!

On this momentous occasion, which we Catholics recall with true emotion, abundant graces from Heaven are granted, and the ineffable presence of God Himself, present for the first time in our interior, makes a profound impression on us.

Is it possible to interpret this incomparable manifestation of God's mercy in a way that is alien to its true meaning, thus disfiguring the concept of the reception of the Body and Blood of the Lord? Let us be careful to neither forget nor distort the true significance of what happened on the day of our First Communion...which is repeated every time we desire and are prepared to receive the good Lord.

FRANCIS

They say that one should not talk about personal things, but I cannot resist the temptation. We are speaking about communion... communion among us. And today, I am so thankful to the Lord because 70 years ago today, I made my First Communion. **To make our First Communion we must know what it means to enter into communion with others, in communion with the brothers and sisters of our Church, but also in communion with those who belong to different communities but who believe in Jesus.** Let us thank the Lord for our Baptism, let us thank the Lord for our communion, in order **that this communion become joint communion with everyone, together.** (*General audience, October 8, 2014*)

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I – WHAT IS THE EUCHARIST?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Jesus declares Himself to be the bread of life

I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die. **I am the living bread that came down from Heaven;** whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world. (Jn 6:48-51)

Those who receive the Eucharist have eternal life

Jesus said to them, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, **unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you.** Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.' (Jn 6:53-55)

At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, 'Take and eat; **this is my body.**' Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for **this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.**' (Mt 26:26-28)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

The Eucharist is a mystery of faith and a true Sacrament

This [the Eucharist] is a true Sacrament, and

one of those seven which the holy Church has ever revered and venerated religiously. For when the consecration of the chalice is effected, it is called a mystery of faith. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2300)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Marvelous conversion of bread into the Body of Jesus Christ

The Eucharist is a Sacrament in which, by the marvelous conversion of the whole substance of bread into the Body of Jesus Christ, and that of wine into His precious Blood, is contained truly, really, and substantially, the Body, the Blood, the Soul and Divinity of the same Lord Jesus Christ, under the appearance of bread and wine as our spiritual food. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, The Blessed Eucharist, no. 1)

COMPENDIUM OF THE CATECHISM OF

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The true sign of unity, bond of charity, and paschal banquet

The Eucharist is the very sacrifice of the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus which he instituted to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until his return in glory. Thus he entrusted to his Church this memorial of his death and Resurrection. **It is a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet, in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.** (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 271)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The most important of sacrifices

This sacrament was appropriately instituted at the supper, when Christ conversed with His

disciples for the last time. First of all, because of what is contained in the sacrament: **for Christ is Himself contained in the Eucharist sacramentally.** [...] Secondly, because without faith in the Passion there could never be any salvation, according to Romans 3:25: 'Whom God hath proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood.' It was necessary accordingly that there should be at all times among men something to show forth our Lord's Passion; the chief sacrament of which in the old Law was the Paschal Lamb. Hence the Apostle says (1Cor 5:7): 'Christ our Pasch is sacrificed.' But its successor under the New Testament is the sacrament of the Eucharist, which is a remembrance of the Passion now past, just as the other was figurative of the Passion to come. [...] Consequently, since, as Pope Alexander I says, 'among sacrifices there can be none greater than the Body and Blood of Christ, nor any more powerful oblation'; our Lord instituted this sacrament at His last parting with His disciples. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 73, a.5)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Immediately after the consecration, Our Lord is truly present under the Eucharistic species

This belief has always been in the Church of God, that immediately after the consecration the true body of our Lord and His true blood together with His soul and divinity exist under the species of bread and wine; [...] Therefore, it is very true that as much is contained under either species as under both. For Christ whole and entire exists under the species of bread and under any part whatsoever of that species, likewise the whole (Christ) is present under the species of wine and under its parts. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1640. Council of Trent, *Session XIII, Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist*, October 11, 1551)

INNOCENT III

What is perceived differs from the substance really present

Yet 'mysterium fidei' is mentioned, since something is believed there other than what is

perceived; and something is perceived other than is believed. For the species of bread and wine is perceived there, and the truth of the body and blood of Christ is believed and the power of unity and of love. We must, however, distinguish accurately between three things which are different in this sacrament, namely, the visible form, the truth of the body, and the spiritual power. **The form is of the bread and wine; the truth, of the flesh and blood; the power, of unity and of charity.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 782-783. *Letter Cum Marthae circa to John*, Archbishop of Lyons, November 29, 1202)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The Sacrifice of the altar is perpetuated in obedience to Christ

So Christ our Lord – who, in His Pasion, offered for us that which, in being born, He had received from us – becoming forever the most high priest, ordered that the sacrifice which you see be offered, that is, of His body and his blood. In fact, his body, pierced by the lance, poured forth water and blood, by which he forgave our sins. Remembering this grace, working out your salvation (which is God who is at work in you), with fear and trembling come up to partake of this altar. **Recognize in the bread that which hung on the cross, and in the chalice that which gushed out from his side.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 228 B: About the Sacraments on Easter Day*, no.2)

A truth preached for centuries by the Church should be believed

Even if reason was incapable of understanding, and the word unable to express the reality, it is necessary to consider as true that which since antiquity was believed and preached as the true Catholic faith in the entire Church. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Contra Iulianum*, Book 6, ch. 5, no. 11)

BENEDICT XVI

The Church's faith is essentially a Eucharistic faith

The mystery of faith! With these words, spoken

immediately after the words of consecration, the priest proclaims the mystery being celebrated and expresses his wonder before the substantial change of bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, a reality which surpasses all human understanding. The Eucharist is a 'mystery of faith' par excellence: 'the sum and summary of our faith' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1327) The Church's faith is essentially a Eucharistic faith, and it is especially nourished at the table of the Eucharist. [...] For this reason, the Sacrament of the Altar is always at the heart of the Church's life: 'thanks to the Eucharist, the Church is reborn ever anew!' (Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass of Installation in the Cathedral of Rome – 7 May 2005): AAS 97 (2005): 752). **The more lively the eucharistic faith of the People of God, the deeper is its sharing in ecclesial life in steadfast commitment to the mission entrusted by Christ to his disciples.** (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Sacramentum caritatis*, no.6, February 22, 2007)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

A Sacrament confirmed by Christ's words

Hilary says (*De Trin.*, 8): 'There is no room for doubt regarding the truth of Christ's body and blood; for now by our Lord's own declaring and by our faith His flesh is truly food, and His blood is truly drink.' And Ambrose says (*De Sacram.*, 6): 'As the Lord Jesus Christ is God's true Son so is it Christ's true flesh which we take, and His true blood which we drink.' **The presence of Christ's true body and blood in this sacrament cannot be detected by sense, nor understanding, but by faith alone, which rests upon Divine authority.** Hence, on Luke 22:19: 'This is My body which shall be delivered up for you,' Cyril says: 'Doubt not whether this be true; but take rather the Saviour's words with faith; for since He is the Truth, He lieth not.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q.75, a.1)

II – THE TRUE EFFECTS OF RECEIVING THE EUCHARIST AND THE ECCLESIAL UNITY IT PRODUCES

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Through the Eucharist, Jesus remains in us

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. (Jn 6:56-57)

BENEDICT XVI

Christ comes to meet men and women, and becomes their food

In the sacrament of the altar, the Lord meets us, men and women created in God's image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:27), and becomes our companion along the way. In this sacrament, **the Lord truly becomes food for us, to satisfy our hunger for truth and freedom.** Since only the truth can make us free (cf. Jn 8:32), **Christ becomes for us the food of truth.** (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Sacramentum caritatis*, no.2, February 22, 2007)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Foundation of life in Christ

Holy Communion augments our union with Christ. The principal fruit of receiving the Eucharist in Holy Communion is an intimate union with Christ Jesus. Indeed, the Lord said: 'He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him' (Jn 6:56). **Life in Christ has its foundation in the Eucharistic banquet:** 'As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me' (Jn 6:57). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1391)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

A most elevated Sacrament that entwines us with Jesus Christ

That which when angels behold, they tremble,

and dare not so much as look up at it without awe on account of the brightness that cometh thence, **with this we are fed with this we are commingled, and we are made one body and one flesh with Christ.** [...] **Himself feeds us with His own blood, and by all means entwines us with Himself.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, hom. 82, no. 5)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Sacramental unity that corresponds to the unity of the Mystical Body

But although there are two elements, as bread and wine, of which the entire Sacrament of the Eucharist is constituted, yet guided by the authority of the Church, we confess that this is not many Sacraments, but only one. Otherwise, there cannot be the exact number of seven Sacraments, as has ever been handed down. [...] **Moreover, by virtue of the Sacrament, one mystical body is effected; hence, that the Sacrament itself may correspond to the thing which it effects, it must be one.** (Catechism of Trent, no. 2300, The Sacrament of the Eucharist)

JOHN PAUL II

The Eucharist is the culmination of our assimilation to Christ

Sharing in the Eucharist, the sacrament of the New Covenant (cf. 1Cor 11:23-29), is the culmination of our assimilation to Christ. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 21 August 6, 1993)

This banquet creates intimate communion between God and man

'We have become Christ. For if he is the head we are the members; he and we together are the whole man': Saint Augustine's bold words (*Tract. in Joh.*, 21, 8) extol **the intimate communion that is created between God and man in the mystery of the Church, a communion which, on our journey through history, finds its supreme sign in the Eucharist.** The commands, 'Take, eat ... Drink of it ...' (Mt 26:26-27), which Jesus gives his disciples

in that room on the upper floor of a house in Jerusalem on the last evening of his earthly life (cf. Mk 14:15), are rich in meaning. **The universal symbolic value of the banquet offered in bread and wine (cf. Is 25:6) already suggests communion and intimacy.** Other more explicit elements extol the Eucharist as a banquet of friendship and covenant with God. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, October 18, 2000)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Whoever receives this Sacrament is made one with Christ, and incorporated in His members

In this sacrament, as in the others, that which is a sacrament is a sign of the reality of the sacrament. Now there is a twofold reality of this sacrament, as stated above (Question 73, Article 6): one which is signified and contained, namely, Christ Himself; while the other is signified but not contained, namely, Christ's mystical body, which is the fellowship of the saints. Therefore, **whoever receives this sacrament, expresses thereby that he is made one with Christ, and incorporated in His members.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 80, a.4)

Through the Eucharist, the Church's children are united to one another

This sacrament has a threefold significance. one with regard to the past, inasmuch as it is commemorative of our Lord's Passion, which was a true sacrifice, as stated above (q. 48, a. 3), and in this respect it is called a 'Sacrifice.' **With regard to the present it has another meaning, namely, that of Ecclesiastical unity, in which men are aggregated through this Sacrament; and in this respect it is called *Communio* or *Synaxis*.** For Damascene says (*De Fide Orth.*, 4) that **'it is called Communion because we communicate with Christ through it, both because we partake of His flesh and Godhead, and because we communicate with and are united to one another through it.'** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 80, a.4)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Eucharist brings about unity among true believers

The Church is a ‘communion of saints’: this expression refers first to the ‘holy things’ (*sancta*), above all the Eucharist, by which ‘the unity of believers, who form one body in Christ, is both represented and brought about’ (LG 3). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 960)

BENEDICT XVI

The Eucharist is at the root of the Church as a mystery of communion

This is why Christian antiquity used the same words, *Corpus Christi*, to designate Christ’s body born of the Virgin Mary, his Eucharistic body and his ecclesial body. This clear datum of the tradition helps us to appreciate the inseparability of Christ and the Church. The Lord Jesus, by offering himself in sacrifice for us, in his gift effectively pointed to the mystery of the Church. It is significant that the Second Eucharistic Prayer, invoking the Paraclete, formulates its prayer for the unity of the Church as follows: ‘may all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit.’ These words help us to see clearly how the *res* of the sacrament of the Eucharist is the unity of the faithful within ecclesial communion. The Eucharist is thus found at the root of the Church as a mystery of communion (cf. *STh*, III, 80, 4). (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 15, February 22, 2007)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Constituted as members of Christ, let us be that which we receive

The Eucharist, in consequence, is our daily bread. But we must receive it not only receive as refreshment for the body, but as sustenance for the spirit. The effect that is fitting to this nutrition is to produce is unity, in order that, integrated into the body of Christ, constituted as his members, we become that which we receive. And so it will effectively be our daily

bread. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 57*, On the Lord’s Prayer, no. 7)

Those who do not persevere in a holy life will be deprived of this bread

When we say ‘give us this day our daily bread,’ we can understand this as perfectly referring also to the Eucharist, the daily nourishment. In effect, the faithful know what they receive and that for them it is a good to receive this daily bread, that is necessary in this life. They pray for themselves in order to become better and to persevere in goodness, in faith and in an upright life. This they desire, this they beseech in prayer for, if they do not persevere in a good life, they will be dispossessed of that bread. Hence, what is the meaning of: ‘give us this day our daily bread?’ May we live in such a way as to not be separated from your altar. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 58*, On the Lord’s Prayer, no. 5)

III – HERETICS ARE NOT PART OF THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST

PIUS XI

Saint John the Apostle forbade any association with those who profess a corrupt version of Christ’s teaching

Everyone knows that John himself, the Apostle of love, who seems to reveal in his Gospel the secrets of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and who never ceased to impress on the memories of his followers the new commandment ‘Love one another,’ altogether forbade any intercourse with those who professed a mutilated and corrupt version of Christ’s teaching: ‘If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him: God speed you’ (2Jn 10). (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 9, January 5, 1928)

LEO XIII

The members separated from the Mystical Body cannot be united to the Head, Christ

Scattered and separated members cannot

possibly cohere with the head so as to make one body. But Saint Paul says: 'All members of Everyone knows that **John himself, the Apostle** the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ' (1Cor 12:12). Wherefore this mystical body, he declares, is 'compacted and fitly jointed together. **The head, Christ:** from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly jointed together, by what every joint supplieth according to the operation in the measure of every part' (Eph 4:15-16). And so **dispersed members, separated one from the other, cannot be united with one and the same head.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 5, June 26, 1896)

The Church always expelled from the ranks of her children all who held beliefs on any point of doctrine different from her own

The Church, founded on these principles and mindful of her office, has done nothing with greater zeal and endeavour than she has displayed in guarding the integrity of the faith. Hence she regarded as rebels and expelled from the ranks of her children all who held beliefs on any point of doctrine different from her own. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 9, June 26, 1896)

PIUS IX

The necessity to anathematize those who separate from the faith of Christ

Ever since the origins of the early Church, due to the necessity that the faith of the elect be proven like gold in the fire, **the Apostle**, vessel of election, **wished to warn the faithful that if someone arise, of those who alter and amend the Gospel of Christ, spreading false doctrines and betraying the depository of the faith, even if it was an angel who evangelized something other than he had, it would be necessary to anathematize him.** (Pius IX. *Apostolic letter Ad apostolicae sedis*, August 22, 1851)

PIUS XII

Heretics are outside of the Mystical Body of Christ

It is owing to the Savior's infinite mercy that

place is allowed in His Mystical Body here below for those whom, of old, He did not exclude from the banquet (cf. Mt 9:11, Mk 2:16, Lk 15:2). For not every sin, however grave it may be, **is such as of its own nature to sever a man from the Body of the Church, as does schism or heresy or apostasy.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis*, no.23, June 29, 1943)

IV – TRUTHS PROCLAIMED BY THE CHURCH REGARDING EUCHARISTIC FAITH

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

One worthily receives the Eucharist by avoiding false doctrine

Receive, therefore, and eat the body of Christ; now that you too have become members of Christ in the body of Christ; receive and drink the blood of Christ. **So as not to be separated, eat what unites you; in order not to seem cheap in your own estimation, drink the price paid for you. [...]** So then, if you have life in him, you will be with him in one flesh. This sacrament, after all, does not give you the body of Christ so as then to divide you in it. [...] You, then, begin to receive what you have already begun to be, provided that you do not receive it unworthily, eating and drinking your own condemnation. [...] **And you receive it worthily, if you keep far from the yeast of bad doctrines, so that you be 'unleavened loaves of sincerity and truth'** (1Cor 5:8). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 228 B*, About the Sacraments, on Easter Day, nos. 3-5)

SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA

It is necessary to firmly believe in the Eucharist and to orally confess it

This is what the universal Church does today, for which is prepared today by Christ on Mount Sion a splendid and sumptuous banquet, that is, with a double richness: interior and exterior, and abundant. He gave his true body, rich in all spiritual power and filled with interior and exterior charity; and commanded it to be given to that those who believe in Him. **That is why one must firmly believe and orally confess that the body, which the Virgin bore, which hung on the cross, lay in the sepulcher, resurrected**

on the third day and rose into heaven to the right hand of the Father, He, today, really gave it to his apostles; and the Church, everyday, really consecrates and distributes it to the faithful. (Saint Anthony of Padua. *Sermo de Cena Domini*, Sermo Allegoricus II, no. 6 – Spanish)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

No Christian should be ignorant of the mysteries hidden within the Eucharist

We must now return to an explanation of those truths concerning the Eucharist about which the faithful are on no account to be left in ignorance. Pastors, aware of **the warning of the Apostle that those who discern not the body of the Lord are guilty of a most grave crime**, should first of all impress on the minds of the faithful the necessity of detaching, as much as possible, their mind and understanding from the dominion of the senses; **for if they believe that this Sacrament contains only what the senses disclose, they will of necessity fall into enormous impiety**. Consulting the sight, the touch, the smell, the taste and finding nothing but the appearances of bread and wine, they will naturally judge that this Sacrament contains nothing more than bread and wine. **Their minds, therefore, are as much as possible to be withdrawn from subjection to the senses and excited to the contemplation of the stupendous might and power of God**. The Catholic Church firmly believes and professes that in this Sacrament the words of consecration accomplish three wondrous and admirable effects. **The first is that the true body of Christ the Lord**, the same that was born of the Virgin, and is now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, **is contained in this Sacrament**. The second, however repugnant it may appear to the senses, is that none of the substance of the elements remains in the Sacrament. The third, which may be deduced from the two preceding, although the words of consecration themselves clearly express it, is that the accidents which present themselves to the eyes or other senses exist in a wonderful and ineffable manner without a subject. **All the accidents of bread and wine we can see, but they inhere in no substance, and exist independently of any; for the substance of the bread and wine is so changed into**

the body and blood of our Lord that they altogether cease to be the substance of bread and wine. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2300, The Sacrament of the Eucharist)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

The negation of the truth regarding the Body and Blood of Christ is disgraceful

First of all the holy Synod teaches and openly and simply professes that in the nourishing sacrament of the Holy Eucharist after the consecration of the bread and wine our Lord Jesus Christ, true God and man, is truly, really, and substantially [can. I] contained under the species of those sensible things. [...] it is a **most disgraceful thing for some contentious and wicked men to distort into fictitious and imaginary figures of speech, by which the real nature of the flesh and blood of Christ is denied, contrary to the universal sense of the Church**, which, recognizing with an ever grateful and recollecting mind this most excellent benefit of Christ, as the pillar and ground of truth (1Tim 3:15), has detested these falsehoods, devised by impious men, as satanical. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1636, 1637. *Council of Trent*, Session XIII, October 11, 1551)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Erroneously interpreting signs is the result of being misled by error

Now he is in bondage to a sign who uses, or pays homage to, any significant object without knowing what it signifies: **he, on the other hand, who either uses or honors a useful sign divinely appointed, whose force and significance he understands, does not honor the sign which is seen and temporal, but that to which all such signs refer**. [...] But at the present time, **after that the proof of our liberty has shone forth so clearly in the resurrection of our Lord**, we are not oppressed with the heavy burden of attending even to those signs which we now understand, but our Lord Himself, and apostolic practice, have handed down to us a few rites in place of many, and these at once very easy to perform, most majestic in their significance, and most sacred

in the observance; such, for example, as the sacrament of Baptism, and the celebration of the Body and Blood of the Lord. And as soon as any one looks upon these observances he knows to what they refer, and so reveres them not in carnal bondage, but in spiritual freedom. Now, as to follow the letter, and to take signs for the things that are signified by them, is a mark of weakness and bondage; so to interpret signs wrongly is the result of being misled by error.[...] And it is better even to be in bondage to unknown but useful signs than, by interpreting them wrongly, to draw the neck from under the yoke of bondage only to insert it in the coils of error. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Christian Doctrine*, Book III, ch. 9, no. 13)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

The Sacrament instituted with the purpose of maintaining unity without schisms

He wished, furthermore, that this be a pledge of our future glory and of everlasting happiness, and thus be a symbol of that one 'body' of which He Himself is the 'head' (1Cor 11:23 Eph 5:23), and to which He wished us to be united, as members, by the closest bond of faith, hope, and charity, that we might 'all speak the same thing and there might be no schisms among us' (cf. 1Cor 1:10). (Denzinger-Hunermann 1638. Council of Trent, *Session XIII, Decree on the Most Holy Eucharist*, October 11, 1551)

To deny the substance of the Eucharist is to precipitate oneself into excommunication

If anyone denies that in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist there are truly, really, and substantially contained the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore the whole Christ, but shall say that He is in it as by a sign or figure, or force, let him be anathema. [...] If anyone moreover teaches the contrary or preaches or obstinately asserts, or even publicly by disputation shall presume to defend the contrary, by that fact itself he is excommunicated. (Denzinger-Hunermann 1651, Council of Trent, *Session XIII, Decree on the Sacrament of the Eucharist*, October 11, 1551)

The faithful are prohibited to believe, teach or preach regarding the Eucharist in a different way than that proclaimed by the Church

The sacred and holy ecumenical and general Synod of Trent [...] namely to publish the true and ancient doctrine concerning faith and the sacraments, and to provide a remedy for all the heresies and other very serious troubles by which the Church of God is at present wretchedly agitated and torn into many different factions, yet from the beginning has had this especially among its desires, to uproot the 'cockles' of execrable errors and schisms, which the enemy in these troubled times of our has 'sown' (Mt 13:25 ff.), in the doctrine of the faith, in the use and worship of the sacred Eucharist, which our Savior, moreover, left in His Church as a symbol of that unity and charity with which He wished all Christians to be mutually bound and united. Therefore, this same sacred and holy synod, transmitting that sound and genuine doctrine of this venerable and divine sacrament of the Eucharist, which the Catholic Church, instructed by our Lord Jesus Christ himself and by his Apostles, and taught by the 'Holy Spirit who day by day brings to her all truth' (Jn 14:26), has always held and will preserve even to the end of time, forbids all the faithful of Christ hereafter to venture to believe, teach, or preach concerning the Most Holy Eucharist otherwise than is explained and defined in this present decree. (Denzinger-Hunermann 1635, Council of Trent, *Session XIII, Decree on the Sacrament of the Eucharist*, October 11, 1551)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

You have seen and you do not believe

Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst. But I told you that although you have seen (me), you do not believe. (Jn 6:35-36)

There are some of you who do not believe

Then many of his disciples who were listening said, 'This saying is hard; who can accept it?' Since Jesus knew that his disciples were

murmuring about this, he said to them, 'Does this shock you? What if you were to see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. **The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. But there are some of you who do not believe.**' (Jn 6:60-64)

Whoever teaches something different from the sound words of Jesus Christ is conceited

Whoever teaches something different and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the religious teaching is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid disposition for arguments and verbal disputes. From these come envy, rivalry, insults, evil suspicions, and mutual friction among people with corrupted minds, who are deprived of the truth, supposing religion to be a means of gain. (1Tim 6:3-5)

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You never know where and how you will find God

It is especially during moments of doubt and affliction, that all Christians know where and how to find God, and thus obtain relief for their souls. Prayer, whether mental or vocal, is where we have the certainty of finding God, as he himself has promised us: 'where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them' (Mt 18:17). The Most High is always disposed to hear us and attend to our necessities. At any moment we may put our soul in contact with him; all we must do is recollect ourselves in the midst of our daily cares, direct a plea toward him, and he communicates to us mysteriously in the depths of our heart and our conscience. This idea, which sounds so natural to us, seems to clash with the affirmation: 'You never know where and how you will find God' since 'you are not setting the time and place of the encounter with him'. Has God changed his way of responding to our requests? Is there a new way of encountering God? We need to clarify concepts.

FRANCIS

We must enter into the adventure of the quest for meeting God; we must let God search and encounter us. Because God is first; God is always first and makes the first move. God is a bit like the almond flower of your Sicily, Antonio, which always blooms first. We read it in the Prophets. God is encountered walking, along the path. At this juncture, someone might say that this is relativism. Is it relativism? Yes, if it is misunderstood as a kind of indistinct pantheism. It is not relativism if it is understood in the biblical sense, **that God is always a surprise, so you never know where and how you will find him. You are not setting the time and place of the encounter with him.** You must, therefore, discern the encounter. Discernment is essential. (*Interview with Antonio Spadaro, August 19, 2013*)

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I – GOD TAKES THE INITIATIVE, BUT HE DEMANDS OUR COOPERATION

PIUS XII

An unhealthy quietism: attributing the whole spiritual life of Christians to God's action, neglecting our due collaboration

No less far from the truth is the dangerous error of those who endeavor to deduce from the mysterious union of us all with **Christ a certain unhealthy quietism. They would attribute the whole spiritual life of Christians and their progress in virtue exclusively to the action of the Divine Spirit, setting aside and neglecting the collaboration which is due from us.** No one, of course, can deny that the Holy spirit of Jesus Christ is the one source of whatever supernatural powers enters into the Church and its members. For 'The Lord will give grace and glory' as the Psalmist says (Ps 83:12). But that men should persevere constantly in their good works, that they should advance eagerly in grace and virtue, that they should strive earnestly to

reach the heights of Christian perfection and at the same time to the best of their power should stimulate others to attain the same goal, - **all this the heavenly Spirit does not will to effect unless they contribute their daily share of zealous activity. 'For divine favors are conferred not on those who sleep, but on those who watch,'** as Saint Ambrose says (*Expos. Evang. sec. Luc.*, IV, 49; PL 15, 1626). For if in our mortal body the members are strengthened and grow through continued exercise, much more truly can this be said of the social Body of Jesus Christ in which each individual member retains his own personal freedom, responsibility, and principles of conduct. For that reason he who said: 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me' (Gal 2:20) did not at the same time hesitate to assert: **'His (God's) grace in me has not been void, but I have labored more abundantly than all they: yet not I, but the grace of God with me'** (1Cor 15:10). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 87, June 29, 1943)

II – GOD GAVE US THE MEANS TO FIND HIM EASILY

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Jesus himself taught us where and how to find him

Again, (amen) I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. **For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.** (Mt 18: 19-20)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

We can be continually in the presence of God

Thus, the life of prayer is the habit of being in the presence of the thrice-holy God and in communion with him. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2565)

Ways of placing ourselves in the presence of God

The Lord leads all persons by paths and in ways pleasing to him, and each believer responds according to his heart's resolve and the personal expressions of his prayer. However, Christian Tradition has retained three major expressions of prayer: vocal, meditative, and contemplative. They have one basic trait in common: composure of heart. **This vigilance in keeping the Word and dwelling in the presence of God makes these three expressions intense times in the life of prayer.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2699)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Liturgy, a way to encounter God

To accomplish so great a work, **Christ is always present in His Church, especially in her liturgical celebrations.** He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, not only in the person of His minister, 'the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross' (Council of Trent, Session

XXII, Doctrine on the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, c. 2), but especially under the Eucharistic species. By His power He is present in the sacraments, so that when a man baptizes it is really Christ Himself who baptizes (cf. Saint Augustine, *Tractatus in Ioannem*, 6, n. 7). **He is present in His word, since it is He Himself who speaks when the holy scriptures are read in the Church. He is present, lastly, when the Church prays and sings, for He promised: 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'** (Mt 18:20). Christ indeed always associates the Church with Himself in this great work wherein God is perfectly glorified and men are sanctified. The Church is His beloved Bride who calls to her Lord, and through Him offers worship to the Eternal Father. (Vatican Council II. *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 7, December 4, 1963)

PIUS XII

God sets the time and place to meet with us

But it is His will, besides, that the worship He instituted and practiced during His life on earth shall continue ever afterwards without intermission. For he has not left mankind an orphan. He still offers us the support of His powerful, unfailing intercession, acting as our 'advocate with the Father' (cf. 1Jn 2:1). **He aids us likewise through His Church, where He is present indefectibly as the ages run their course:** through the Church which He constituted 'the pillar of truth' (cf. 1Tim 3:15) and dispenser of grace, and which by His sacrifice on the cross, He founded, consecrated and confirmed forever (cf. Boniface IX, *Ab origine mundi*; Callistus III, *Summus Pontifex*; Pius II, *Triumphans Pastor*; Innocent XI, *Triumphans Pastor*). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 18, November 20, 1947)

Mutual encounter is good, but to live in Christ is better and more necessary

But the chief element of divine worship must be interior. **For we must always live in Christ and give ourselves to Him completely, so that in Him, with Him and through Him the heavenly Father may be duly glorified.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 24, November 20, 1947)

Sacraments possess objective power to make us sharers in the divine life of Jesus Christ

It is an unquestionable fact that the work of our redemption is continued, and that its fruits are imparted to us, during the celebration of the liturgy, notable in the august sacrifice of the altar. Christ acts each day to save us, in the sacraments and in His holy sacrifice. By means of them He is constantly atoning for the sins of mankind, constantly consecrating it to God. **Sacraments and sacrifice do, then, possess that 'objective' power to make us really and personally sharers in the divine life of Jesus Christ.** Not from any ability of our own, but by the power of God, **are they endowed with the capacity to unite the piety of members with that of the head,** and to make this, in a sense, the action of the whole community. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 29, November 20, 1947)

At Holy Mass, God will undoubtedly be present

The unbloody immolation at the words of consecration, when Christ is made present upon the altar in the state of a victim, is performed by the priest and by him alone, as the representative of Christ and not as the representative of the faithful. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 92, November 20, 1947)

Through prayer we can encounter the Blessed Trinity

To this lofty dignity of the Church's prayer, **there should correspond earnest devotion in our souls.** For when in prayer the voice repeats those hymns written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and extols God's infinite perfections, **it is necessary that the interior sentiment of our souls should accompany the voice so as to make those sentiments our own in which we are elevated to heaven, adoring and giving due praise and thanks to the Blessed Trinity;** 'so let us chant in choir that mind and voice may accord together' (Saint Benedict, *Regula Monachorum*, c. 19). **It is not merely a question of recitation or of singing** which, however perfect according to norms of music and the sacred rites, only reaches the ear, **but it is especially a question**

of the ascent of the mind and heart to God so that, united with Christ, we may completely dedicate ourselves and all our actions to Him. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mediator Dei*, no. 145, November 20, 1947)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

Our place of encounter: where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church

'For in the Church,' it is said, 'God hath set apostles, prophets, teachers' (1Cor 12:28), and all the other means through which the Spirit works; of which all those are not partakers who do not join themselves to the Church, but defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behavior. **For where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace;** but the Spirit is truth. (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies*, Book III, Ch. 24, no. 1)

JOHN PAUL II

The constant sign of God's presence among his people

The Psalmist reminds us that God was in constant touch with his people through Moses and Aaron, his mediators, and through Samuel, his prophet. He spoke and was heard, he punished offenses but also forgave. **The sign of his presence among his people was 'his footstool', namely, the throne of the Ark of the Temple of Zion** (cf. vv. 5-8). (John Paul II. *Audience*, November 27, 2002, no. 4)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

If the soul does not elevate itself, it does not know where or how to find God

'I thought on these things, and poured out my soul above myself' (Psalm 41:4). When would my soul attain to that object of its search, which is 'above my soul', if my soul were not to 'pour itself out above itself'? **For were it to rest in itself, it would not see anything else beyond itself; and in seeing itself, would not, for all**

that, see God. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on Psalm 42*, no.7)

Where is God found?

For when I was 'pouring out my soul above myself,' in order to reach my God, why did I do so? 'For I will go into the place of Your Tabernacle'. For I should be in error were I to seek for my God without 'the place of His tabernacle'. 'For I will go into the place of Your wonderful tabernacle, even unto the house of God'. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on Psalm 42*, no.8)

God is also found in the souls of his faithful

For there are already many things that I admire in 'the tabernacle'. See how great wonders I admire in the tabernacle! **For God's tabernacle on earth is the faithful**; I admire in them the obedience of even their bodily members: that in them 'Sin does not reign so that they should obey its lusts; neither do they yield their members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but unto the living God in good works' (Rom 6:12-13). (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on Psalm 42*, no.8)

INNOCENT XI

Contemplation: font of maximum union and encounter with God

But in order that the doctrine of contemplative prayer, by which the souls of the faithful are

elevated to the highest union with God, may remain purified of all error, integral, and intact, contemplatives should beware, first of all, of asserting or holding that the presence of God alone is in every place the object of contemplation or of what is called the prayer of quiet. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2181, 2185. Innocent XI, *Draft for an Instruction of the Holy Office Drawn up by Cardinal Girolamo Casanate*, October 1682)

PIUS X

Necessity of constant prayer for spiritual progress

It is the priest, more than any other, who is bound to obey scrupulously the command of Christ: We ought always pray (Lk 18:1). [...] How numerous are the opportunities of turning to God in prayer which present themselves daily to the soul which is eager for its own sanctification and the salvation of others! Anguish of soul, the persistent onslaught of temptation, our lack of virtue, slackness and failure in our works, our many offenses and negligences, fear of the divine judgment, all these should move us to approach the Lord with tears, in order to obtain help from him and also to increase without difficulty the treasure of our merit in his eyes. (Pius X. *Apostolic exhortation Haerent animo*, August 4, 1908)

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If a person says that he has met God with total certainty and is not touched by a margin of uncertainty, then this is not good.

Long ago, the Greeks had philosophized about man's inherent desire to discover the truth, affirming that 'doubt is the beginning of knowledge,' while Socratic maieutics taught that 'knowledge is the principle element of happiness.' In fact, this search for the truth constitutes one of the most profound yearnings of the human soul. But it is not intelligence that brings happiness to the spirit, as the Greeks had thought; rather, it is grace that brings us to encounter God, the Supreme Truth. The words of Saint Augustine on this topic are immortal, as he addresses the Lord in his Confessions: 'Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee' (Book 1, Ch. 1, 1). This 'rest' comes from the complete certainty of having found 'the Way, the Truth and the Life' with the strength of faith that dissipates any doubt, along with the generous desire to bring all to Him, in his Church, the guardian of truth.

This was the example given by those who guided God's people, as we read in Sacred Scripture. To doubt after having encountered the Lord, is to dishonor the truth and be unfaithful to it.

FRANCIS

[Spadaro] So if the encounter with God is not an 'empirical eureka,' and if it is a journey that sees with the eyes of history, then we can also make mistakes?

[Francisco] Yes, in this quest to seek and find God in all things there is still an area of uncertainty. There must be. **If a person says that he met God with total certainty and is not touched by a margin of uncertainty, then this is not good.** For me, this is an important key. **If one has the answers to all the questions—that is the proof that God is not with him.** It means that he is a false prophet using religion for himself. The great leaders of the people of God, like Moses, have always left room for doubt. You must leave room for the Lord, not for our certainties; we must be humble. **Uncertainty is in every true discernment that is open to finding confirmation in spiritual consolation.** (*Interview with Antonio Spadaro, September 21, 2013*)

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Sacred Scripture

- ♦ The Church is the house of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth

John Paul II

- ♦ The response to man’s search for the truth is given by Jesus Christ, by means of His Church

Catechism of the Catholic Church

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Gregory XVI

- ♦ The truth exists in one God, one Faith, one Baptism – those who do not gather with Christ disperse unhappily

Pius XI

- ♦ The task of teaching the truth of Christ belongs preeminently to the Church
- ♦ The Church possesses the whole of moral truth entirely

Pius X

- ♦ The sureness of the Christian is founded in the moral truth of the Church

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons

- ♦ It is not necessary to seek the truth among others: the Church holds in her hands all truth, received by Apostolic tradition

Saint Augustine of Hippo

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Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ Sacred Scripture and Tradition guarantee the conservation of truth in the Church

**I – ONE WHO CONSENTS TO DOUBTS DOES NOT
HAVE AUTHENTIC FAITH**

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Jesus teaches his disciples the unconditional love of truth: Let what you say be simply ‘Yes or No’

The Old Testament attests that God is the source of all truth. His Word is truth (cf. Prov 8:7; 2Sam 7:28). His Law is truth (cf. Ps 119:90). His faithfulness endures to all generations (Ps 119:142; Lk 1:50). Since God is ‘true’ (Rom 3:4), the members of his people are called to live in the truth (cf. Ps 119:30). In Jesus Christ, the whole of God’s truth has been made manifest. ‘Full of grace and truth’ (Jn 1:14), he came as the ‘light of the world’ (Jn 8:12), he is the Truth (cf. 14:6). ‘Whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness’ (Jn 12:46). The disciple of Jesus continues in his word so as to know ‘the truth [that] will make you free’ (cf. Jn 8:32) and that sanctifies (cf. Jn 17:17). To follow Jesus is to live in ‘the Spirit of truth,’ whom the Father sends in his name and who leads ‘into all the truth’ (Jn 16:13). To his disciples Jesus teaches the unconditional love of truth: ‘Let what you say be simply ‘Yes or No’ (Mt 5:37). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 2465-2466)

A Christian should confess the faith without equivocation

The Christian is not to ‘be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord’ (2Tim 1:8). In

situations that require witness to the faith, the Christian must profess it without equivocation. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2471)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Moses guided the people with the certainty of God’s victory

But Moses answered the people, ‘Fear not! Stand your ground, and you will see the victory the Lord will win for you today. These Egyptians whom you see today you will never see again. The Lord himself will fight for you; you have only to keep still.’ (Ex 14: 13-14)

The Israelites tempted the Lord and failed to believe in his power

‘I will be standing there in front of you on the rock in Horeb. Strike the rock, and the water will flow from it for the people to drink.’ This Moses did, in the presence of the elders of Israel. The place was called Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled there and tested the Lord, saying, ‘Is the Lord in our midst or not?’ (Ex 17:6-7)

He who vacillates will receive nothing from the Most High

But if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and he will be given it. But he should ask in faith, not doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed about by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive

anything from the Lord, since he is a man of two minds, unstable in all his ways. (Jas 1:5-8)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Doubt can lead to spiritual blindness – the first commandment requires us to protect our faith

The first commandment requires us to nourish and protect our faith with prudence and vigilance, and to reject everything that is opposed to it. There are various ways of sinning against faith:

Voluntary doubt about the faith disregards or refuses to hold as true what God has revealed and the Church proposes for belief. *Involuntary doubt* refers to hesitation in believing, difficulty in overcoming objections connected with the faith, or also anxiety aroused by its obscurity. If deliberately cultivated doubt can lead to spiritual blindness. Incredulity is the neglect of revealed truth or the willful refusal to assent to it. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2088-2089)

Offenses against truth are fundamental infidelities to God

The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. **Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God** and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2464)

The prayer of Jesus is the foundation of our certainties

Faith bears its fruit in love: it means keeping the word and the commandments of Jesus, it means abiding with him in the Father who, in him, so loves us that he abides with us. **In this new covenant the certitude that our petitions will be heard is founded on the prayer of Jesus** (Cf. Jn 14:13-14). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2614)

II – MAN’S OWN NATURE LEADS HIM TO SEEK TRUTH AND RECOGNIZE IT WHEN FOUND

JOHN PAUL II

Man naturally seeks truth and rejects falsity

‘All human beings desire to know’, (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 1) and truth is the proper object of this desire. Everyday life shows how concerned each of us is to discover for ourselves, beyond mere opinions, how things really are. Within visible creation, **man is the only creature who not only is capable of knowing but who knows that he knows, and is therefore interested in the real truth of what he perceives**. People cannot be genuinely indifferent to the question of whether what they know is true or not. **If they discover that it is false, they reject it; but if they can establish its truth, they feel themselves rewarded**. It is this that Saint Augustine teaches when he writes: ‘I have met many who wanted to deceive, but none who wanted to be deceived’ (Confessions, X, 23, 33: CCL 27, 173). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Fides et ratio*, no. 25, September 14, 1998)

Man’s certainty comes from finding truth

This means that the human being – the one who seeks the truth – is also the one who lives by belief. [...] **Human perfection**, then, consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge of the truth, but **in a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving** with others. It is in this faithful self-giving that a person **finds a fullness of certainty and security**. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Fides et ratio*, no. 31-32, September 14, 1998)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Conformity of life with the divine Law is the source of rectitude

The truth of life is the truth whereby a thing is true, not whereby a person says what is true. **Life like anything else is said to be true, from the fact that it attains its rule and measure, namely, the divine law; since rectitude of life**

depends on conformity to that law. **This truth or rectitude is common to every virtue.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, qu. 109, a.2, ad 3)

The truth of the faith is strong in itself, and is not overcome by any attack

Because **truth is strong in itself and is overcome by no attack**, it must be our intention to show that **the truth of faith cannot be overcome by reason.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra Gentiles*, Book IV, ch. 10, n. 15)

JOHN PAUL II

It is a moral obligation to seek the truth and to adhere to it once it is known

Genuine freedom is an outstanding manifestation of the divine image in man. For God willed to leave man ‘in the power of his own counsel’ (cf. Sir 15:14), so that he would seek his Creator of his own accord and would freely arrive at full and blessed perfection by cleaving to God (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 17). Although each individual has a right to be respected in his own journey in search of the truth, **there exists a prior moral obligation, and a grave one at that, to seek the truth and to adhere to it once it is known** (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 11). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 34, August 6, 1993)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Man has the obligation to seek the truth and to embrace it

‘All men are bound to **seek the truth**, especially **in what concerns God and his Church, and to embrace it and hold on to it as they come to know it**’ (DH 1 no. 2). This duty derives from ‘the very dignity of the human person’ (DH 2 no. 1). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2104)

Man tends by nature toward the truth, and is obliged to honor and bear witness to it – especially religious truth

Man tends by nature toward the truth. He is obliged to honor and bear witness to it: ‘It is

in accordance with their dignity that all men, because they are persons . . . are both impelled by their nature and **bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth.** They are also bound to adhere to the truth once they come to know it and direct their whole lives in accordance with the demands of truth.’ (DH 2 no. 2.). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2467)

III – THE CHURCH IS THE HOUSE OF THE LIVING GOD, THE PILLAR AND FOUNDATION OF TRUTH

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Church is the house of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth

I am writing you about these matters, although I hope to visit you soon. But if I should be delayed, you should know how to behave **in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth.** (1Tim 3:14-15)

JOHN PAUL II

The response to man’s search for the truth is given by Jesus Christ, by means of His Church

The light of God’s face shines in all its beauty on the countenance of Jesus Christ, ‘the image of the invisible God’ (Col 1:15), the ‘reflection of God’s glory’ (Heb 1:3), ‘full of grace and truth’ (Jn 1:14). Christ is ‘the way, and the truth, and the life’ (Jn 14:6). Consequently **the decisive answer to every one of man’s questions, his religious and moral questions in particular, is given by Jesus Christ** [...] Jesus Christ, the ‘light of the nations’, shines upon the face of his Church, which he sends forth to the whole world to proclaim the Gospel to every creature (cf. Mk 16:15). (Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, 1). Hence **the Church**, as the People of God among the nations, (Cf. *ibid.*, 9). while attentive to the new challenges of history and to mankind’s efforts to discover the meaning of life, **offers to everyone the answer which comes from the truth about Jesus Christ and his Gospel.** The Church remains deeply conscious of her ‘duty in every age of examining the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel,

so that she can offer in a manner appropriate to each generation replies to the continual human questionings on the meaning of this life and the life to come and on how they are related' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 4). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 2, August 6, 1993)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Magisterium's task is to guarantee God's people the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error

The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this **Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates.** (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 890)

PIUS IX

Nothing is more certain than the truth of our faith, and nothing is supported on firmer principles

Indeed, human reason, lest it be deceived and err in a matter of so great importance, ought to search diligently for the fact of divine revelation so that it can know with certainty that God has spoken, and so render to Him, as the Apostle so wisely teaches, 'a rational service' (Rom 12:1). For who does not know, or cannot know that all faith is to be given to God who speaks, and that nothing is more suitable to reason itself than to acquiesce and firmly adhere to those truths which it has been established were revealed by God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived? But, **how many, how wonderful, how splendid are the proofs at hand by which human reason ought to be entirely and most clearly convinced that the religion of Christ is divine, and that 'every principle of our dogmas has received its root from above, from the Lord of the heavens,' and that, therefore, nothing is more certain than our faith, nothing more secure, that there is nothing more holy and nothing which is supported**

on firmer principles. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2778- 2779. *Pius IX*, Encyclical *Qui pluribus*, November 9, 1846)

GREGORY XVI

The truth exists in one God, one Faith, one Baptism – those who do not gather with Christ disperse unhappily

We consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: **indifferentism.** This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as morality is maintained. Surely, in so clear a matter, you will drive this deadly error far from the people committed to your care. **With the admonition of the apostle that 'there is one God, one faith, one baptism' (Eph 4:5), may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever. They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that 'those who are not with Christ are against Him' (Lk 11:23), and that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him. Therefore 'without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate.'** (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 13, August 15, 1832)

PIUS XI

The task of teaching the truth of Christ belongs preeminently to the Church

And first of all education belongs preeminently to the Church, by reason of a double title in the supernatural order, conferred exclusively upon her by God Himself; absolutely superior therefore to any other title in the natural order. **The first title is founded upon the express mission and supreme authority to teach, given her by her divine Founder: 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,**

and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world' (Mt 28: 18-20). Upon this magisterial office Christ conferred infallibility, together with the command to teach His doctrine. **Hence the Church 'was set by her divine Author as the pillar and ground of truth, in order to teach the divine Faith to men, and keep whole and inviolate the deposit confided to her;** to direct and fashion men, in all their actions individually and socially, to purity of morals and integrity of life, in accordance with revealed doctrine' (Pius IX, *Quum non sine*). **The second title is the supernatural motherhood, in virtue of which the Church, spotless spouse of Christ, generates, nurtures and educates souls in the divine life of grace, with her Sacraments and her doctrine.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 15-17, December 31, 1929)

The Church alone possesses the whole of moral truth

It is worthy of note how a layman, an excellent writer and at the same time a profound and conscientious thinker, has been able to understand well and express exactly this fundamental Catholic doctrine (cf. A. Manzoni, *Osservazioni sulla Morale Cattolica*, c. III): **'The Church does not say that morality belongs purely, in the sense of exclusively, to her; but that it belongs wholly to her.** She has never maintained that outside her fold and apart from her teaching, man cannot arrive at any moral truth; she has on the contrary more than once condemned this opinion because it has appeared under more forms than one. **She does however say, has said, and will ever say, that because of her institution by Jesus Christ, because of the Holy Ghost sent her in His name by the Father, she alone possesses what she has had immediately from God and can never lose, the whole of moral truth, *omnem veritatem*, in which all individual moral truths are included, as well those which man may learn by the help of reason, as those which form part of revelation or which may be deduced from it.'** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 20, December 31, 1929)

Pius X

The sureness of the Christian is founded

in the moral truth of the Church

No matter what the Christian does, even in the realm of temporal goods, he cannot ignore the supernatural good. Rather, **according to the dictates of Christian philosophy, he must order all things to the ultimate end, namely, the Highest Good. All his actions, insofar as they are morally either good or bad** (that is to say, whether they agree or disagree with the natural and divine law), **are subject to the judgment and judicial office of the Church.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Singulari Quadam*, no. 3, September 24, 1912)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

It is not necessary to seek the truth among others: the Church holds in her hands all truth, received by Apostolic tradition

Since therefore we have such proofs, **it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man (depositing his money) in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth:** so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. (Rev 22:17) For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account **are we bound to avoid them, but to make choice of the thing pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth.** (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Adversus Haereses*, Bk III, ch. 4, no.1)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Truth is clearly manifested in all the realities of the Catholic Church – outside Her there is only the promise of truth, without any fulfillment

For in the Catholic Church, not to speak of the purest wisdom, to the knowledge of which a few spiritual men attain in this life, so as to know it, in the scantiest measure, indeed, because they are but men, still without any uncertainty (since the rest of the multitude derive their entire security not from acuteness of intellect, but from simplicity of faith,)— **not to speak of this wisdom, which you do not believe to be in the**

Catholic Church, there are many other things which most justly keep me in her bosom. The consent of peoples and nations keeps me in the Church; so does her authority, inaugurated by miracles, nourished by hope, enlarged by love, established by age. **The succession of priests keeps me, beginning from the very seat of the Apostle Peter, to whom the Lord, after His resurrection, gave it in charge to feed His sheep, down to the present episcopate. And so, lastly, does the name itself of Catholic, which, not without reason, amid so many heresies, the Church has thus retained;** so that, though all heretics wish to be called Catholics, yet when a stranger asks where the Catholic Church meets, no heretic will venture to point to his own chapel or house. **Such then in number and importance are the precious ties belonging to the Christian name which keep a believer in the Catholic Church,** as it is right they should, though from the slowness of our understanding, or the small attainment of our life, the truth may not yet fully disclose itself. **But with you, where there is none of these things** to attract or keep me, **the promise of truth is the only thing that comes into play.** Now if the truth is so clearly proved as to leave no possibility of doubt, it must be set before all the things that keep me in the Catholic Church; but if there is only **a promise without any fulfillment,** no one shall move me from the faith which binds my mind with ties so many and so strong to the Christian religion. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Against the 'Fundamental Epistle' of Manichaeus*, ch.4, no.5)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Sacred Scripture and Tradition guarantee the conservation of truth in the Church

Hence there exists a close connection and communication between Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, **in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end.** For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone **that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.** Therefore both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence (cf. Vatican Council I, 'On Revelation,' Dz 1786). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Dei Verbum*, no. 9, November 18, 1965)

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Some people say that sin is an offence to God...

It is normal to be afraid of being bitten by a snake, for its deadly poison kills in just a few minutes. This is especially true in places where such a danger is a reality and not just a remote possibility. Walking through the natural habitat of these perilous creatures, we redouble our attention, alert for any suspicious movement...and if possible we even try to avoid such places.

However, few are those who fear an incomparably more lethal species, whose sting causes a much graver death – that of the soul, separating us from God for all eternity! We are speaking about sin. Yes sin, whose gravity is such that numerous saints and spiritual authors felt the need to expound upon it with great clarity, so as to avoid any vague expressions, since due to our fallen nature, we have a tendency to pay less attention to the realities of the life to come.

Therefore it seems appropriate to recall some important points of the Magisterium of Holy Mother Church on this topic.

FRANCIS

The Church is the great family of God's children. Of course, she also has human aspects. In those who make up the Church, pastors and faithful, there are shortcomings, imperfections and sins. The Pope has these too — and many of them; but **what is beautiful is that when we realize we are sinners we encounter the mercy of God who always forgives. Never forget it: God always pardons** and receives us into his love of forgiveness and mercy. **Some people say that sin is an offence to God**, but also an opportunity to humble oneself so as to realize that there is something else more beautiful: God's mercy. (*General audience, May 29, 2013*)

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I – FUNDAMENTAL NOTIONS REGARDING SIN

JOHN PAUL II

Before injuring man, sin is first and foremost a betrayal of God; a violation of His law and a rejection of His plan

Sin is not just a psychological and social matter, but an event that corrodes the relationship with God, violating his law, refusing his plan in history and overturning his set of values, 'putting darkness for light and light for darkness', in other words, 'calling evil good and good evil' (Is 5:20). **Before finally injuring man, sin is first and foremost a betrayal of God.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, May 8, 2002)

The Church believes in and professes that sin is an offense against God

The Church, taking her inspiration from Revelation, believes and professes that sin is an offense against God. What corresponds, in the inscrutable intimacy of the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, to this 'offense,' this rejection of the Spirit who is love and gift? The concept of God as the necessarily most perfect being certainly excludes from God any pain

deriving from deficiencies or wounds; but in the 'depths of God' there is a Father's love that, faced with man's sin, in the language of the Bible reacts so deeply as to say: 'I am sorry that I have made him' (cf. Gen 6:7). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Dominum et vivificantem*, no.39, May 18, 1986)

Sin may not be considered exclusively from its psychological consequences: it is not a simple human error, but an offense toward God

Above all, the Council recalls that an essential characteristic of sin is that of being an offense toward God. It is a deed of momentous importance that includes the perverse act of the creature who, knowingly and voluntarily, opposes the will of its Creator and Lord, violating the law of goodness, and entering, through free choice, under the yolk of evil. [...] It is necessary to say that it is also an act of betrayal of the divine charity, inasmuch as it is an infraction of the law of friendship and the covenant that God established with his people and with every man through the blood of Christ; and, therefore, an act of infidelity, and, in practice, of rejection of his love. Sin, consequently, is not a simple human error, and does not merely result in a detriment to man: **it is an offense toward God, for the sinner**

violates the law of him, who is Creator and Lord, and offends his fatherly love. One may not consider sin exclusively from the point of view of its psychological consequences: sin acquires its significance from the relation of man with God. (John Paul II. *General Audience*, no. 4, April 15, 1992)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Sin is a transgression of the eternal law

Sin, then, is any transgression in deed, or word, or desire, of the eternal law. And the eternal law is the divine order or will of God, which requires the preservation of natural order, and forbids the breach of it. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Reply to Faustus*, Book XXII, no. 27)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Sin violates the sanctity of the soul and profanes the temple of God

The sanctity of the soul is violated, which we know to have been wedded to Christ. **That temple of the Lord is profaned**, against the contaminators of which the Apostle utters this denunciation: 'If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy' (1Cor 3: 16-17). (Catechism of Trent, no. 4500)

Sin disturbs the order established by the divine wisdom

God it is against whom, having cast off obedience, we sin; the order of whose wisdom we disturb, as far as in us lies; whom we offend; whom we outrage by words and deeds. (Catechism of Trent, no. 4500)

Sin infects the reason and the will, the two most intimate faculties of the soul

Innumerable are the evils brought upon man by sin, that almost infinite pest of which David says: 'There is no health in my flesh, because of thy wrath; there is no peace for my bones, because of my sins.' In these words he marks the violence of the plague, confessing that it left no part of him uninfected by pestiferous sin; for the poison had penetrated into his bones, that is, it infected his understanding and will,

which are the two most intimate faculties of the soul. (Catechism of Trent, no. 4500)

II – THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST FOR THE EXPIATION OF SINS

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Christ died to reconcile us with God

For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath. Indeed, if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more, once reconciled, will we be saved by his life! (Rom 5:6-10)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Jesus suffered to satisfy divine justice and to inspire the deepest horror for sin

Was it necessary for Jesus Christ to suffer as much as He actually did?

No, it was not absolutely necessary for Jesus Christ to suffer as much as He did, because each of His acts being of infinite value, the least of His sufferings would have sufficed for our redemption.

Why, then, did Jesus suffer so much?

Jesus Christ suffered so much in order to satisfy divine justice all the more abundantly; to display His love for us still more; and to inspire us with the deepest horror of sin. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 12-13)

PIUS XI

Admiring the Redeemer's infinite charity, we must have a vehement hatred of sin

And this indeed was the purpose of the merciful Jesus, when He showed His Heart to us bearing about it the symbols of the passion

and displaying the flames of love, **that from the one we might know the infinite malice of sin, and in the other we might admire the infinite charity of Our Redeemer, and so might have a more vehement hatred of sin, and make a more ardent return of love for His love.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Miserentissimus Redemptor*, no. 11, May 8, 1928)

Each fault renews the Passion of the Lord, crucifying and making him a mockery

And the minds of the pious meditate on all these things the more truly, because the sins of men and their crimes committed in every age were the cause why Christ was delivered up to death, and **now also they would of themselves bring death to Christ, joined with the same griefs and sorrows, since each several sin in its own way is held to renew the passion of Our Lord: 'Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making him a mockery' (Heb 6:6).** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Miserentissimus Redemptor*, no. 13, May 8, 1928)

JOHN PAUL II

The death of Christ is a sacrifice which makes us understand the gravity of sin

The death of Christ, arduous and excruciating, was also a 'sacrifice of expiation,' which makes us understand the **gravity of sin**, a rebellion against God and a rejection of his love, **and also the marvelous redeeming work of Christ**, who, in expiating for humanity, has restored grace in us, that is, the participation in the same Trinitarian life of God and the inheritance of his eternal happiness. (John Paul II. *General Audience*, no. 3, March 22, 1989)

BENEDICT XVI

The mercy of Jesus Christ takes nothing away from the gravity of sin

Jesus Christ, the Incarnation of God, has demonstrated this **immense mercy, which takes nothing away from the gravity of sin, but aims always at saving the sinner**, at offering him the possibility of redemption, of starting again from the beginning, of

converting. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, October 31, 2010)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

God's justice is an equal and corresponding attribute to mercy: sinners by themselves are utterly incapable of due satisfaction

By their commission [sins] we become guilty before God and incur a debt of punishment, which we must pay either by satisfaction or by **suffering**. It was of this debt that Christ the Lord spoke by the mouth of His Prophet: 'Then did I pay that which I took not away' (Ps 68:5). **From these words of God we may understand that we are not only debtors, but also unequal to the payment of our debt, the sinner being of himself utterly incapable of making satisfaction.** Wherefore we must fly to the mercy of God; and as justice, of which God is most tenacious, is an equal and corresponding attribute to mercy, we must make use of prayer, and the intercession of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, without which no one ever obtained the pardon of his sins. (Catechism of Trent, no. 4500)

III – ONLY REPENTANT SOULS ARE WORTHY OF MERCY

SACRED SCRIPTURE

How can we who died to sin yet live in it? Sin must not reign over your mortal bodies

What then shall we say? **Shall we persist in sin that grace may abound? Of course not! How can we who died to sin yet live in it?** Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. [...] **We know that our old self was crucified with him, so that our sinful body might be done away with, that we might no longer be in slavery to sin.** For a dead person has been absolved from sin. [...] Therefore, **sin must not reign over your mortal bodies** so that you obey their desires.

And do not present the parts of your bodies to sin as weapons for wickedness, but present yourselves to God as raised from the dead to life and the parts of your bodies to God as weapons for righteousness. (Rom 6:1-13)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

One must detest the offense toward God and amend perversity with penance

Penance has indeed been necessary for all men, who at any time whatever have stained themselves with mortal sin, in order to attain grace and justice, even for those who have desired to be cleansed by the sacrament of baptism, so that their perversity being renounced and amended, they might detest so great an offense against God with a hatred of sin and a sincere sorrow of heart. Therefore, the Prophet says: 'Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities; and iniquity shall not be your ruin' (Ez 18:30). The Lord also said: 'Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish' (Lk 13:3). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1669. Council of Trent, *Session XIV*, November 25, 1551)

True contrition includes not only cessation from sin, but also hatred for the old life

Contrition, which has the first place among the aforementioned acts of the penitent, is a sorrow of the soul and a detestation of sin committed, with a determination of not sinning in the future. This feeling of contrition is, moreover, necessary at all times to obtain the forgiveness of sins, and thus for a person who has fallen after baptism it especially prepares for the remission of sins, if it is united with trust in divine mercy and with the desire of performing the other things required to receive this sacrament correctly. The holy Synod, therefore, declares that this contrition includes not only cessation from sin and a resolution and a beginning of a new life, but also hatred of the old, according to this statement: 'Cast away from you all your transgressions, by which you have transgressed, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit' (Ez 18:31). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1676. Council of Trent, *Session XIV*, November 25, 1551)

To obtain pardon, many tears and labors are necessary on our part

We can in no way arrive by the sacrament of penance without many tears and labors on our part, for divine justice demands this, so that penance has justly been called by the holy Fathers, 'a laborious kind of baptism.' (Denzinger-Hünemann 1672. Council of Trent, *Session XIV*, November 25, 1551)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

If then you desire that God have compassion on you, have compassion on your soul with profound cries of penance

The sinner who beseeches God the remission of his sins cannot but hear this opportune response: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy' (Mt 5:7). If then you desire that God have compassion on you, have compassion on your soul. Flood your bed every night with tears; and drench your couch with weeping (Ps 6:7). If you have compassion on yourself, if you produce profound cries of penance, you have already made the first step to the plane of mercy, and with all certainty you shall obtain it. (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Of conversion: A sermon to the Clergy*, Ch. XIV, no. 29)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The stain of sin is washed away with tears and confession

Whereas sin induces such a blot, that not even with ten thousand fountains could one purge it away, but with tears only, and with confessions. But no one hath any sense of this blot. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily XXXVII of the Gospel of Matthew*, no. 8)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

What should you do to excite yourself to detest your sins? Consider the rigor God's justice and the foulness of sin

To excite myself to detest my sins: (1) I will consider the rigour of the infinite justice of God And the foulness of sin which has defiled my soul and made me worthy of the

eternal punishment of hell; (2) I will consider that by sin **I have lost the grace**, friendship and sonship of God and the inheritance of Heaven; (3) **That I have offended my Redeemer** who died for me And that my sins caused His death; (4) **That I have despised my Creator** and my God, that I have turned my back upon Him who is my Supreme Good and worthy of being loved above everything else And of being faithfully served. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 54)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Dispositions of soul necessary to ask pardon from the Lord

Since, however, to obtain what we ask we must pray in a becoming manner, it appears expedient to explain the **disposition with which this prayer should be offered to God**. [...] he who comes to offer this Petition must **first acknowledge, and next feel sorrow and compunction for his sins**. He must also be firmly convinced that **to sinners, thus disposed and prepared, God is willing to grant pardon** [...] we ought to be so disposed, that, **acknowledging our sins in the bitterness of our souls, we may fly to God as to a Father, not as to a Judge, imploring Him to deal with us not according to His justice, but according to His mercy**. (Catechism of Trent, no. 4500, The fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

If we say that we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie: sins are darkness

But moreover, if **'God be light, and in Him is no darkness at all, and we must have fellowship with Him,'** then from us also must the darkness be driven away, that there may be light created in us, for darkness cannot have fellowship with light. [...] God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. **If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie**, and do not the truth: if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another [...] **But sins are darkness**, as the Apostle says of the devil and his angels, that they are 'rulers of this darkness.' Ephesians 6:12 He would not call them of

darkness, save as rulers of sins, having lordship over the wicked. Then what are we to do, my brethren? **Fellowship with God must be had, other hope of life eternal is none** [...] Let us walk in the light, as He is in the light, that we may be able to have fellowship with Him. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Homily I on the First Epistle of John*, no. 5)

Jesus pardons those who are displeased with their conduct and change until reaching perfection

And lest haply he should seem to have given impunity for sins, in that he said, 'He is faithful and just to cleanse us from all iniquity;' **and men henceforth should say to themselves, 'Let us sin, let us do securely what we will, Christ purges us, is faithful and just, purges us from all iniquity': He takes from you an evil security, and puts in an useful fear**. To your own hurt you would be secure; you must be solicitous. For **'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,'** provided you always **displease yourself, and be changing until you be perfected**. Accordingly, what follows? 'My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not' (1Jn 2:1). [...] He then is the advocate; **do your endeavor not to sin: if from the infirmity of this life sin shall overtake you, see to it straightway, straightway be displeased, straightway condemn it;** and when you have condemned, you shall come assured unto the Judge. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Homily I on the First Epistle of John*, no. 7)

Above all, recognition of sin

Before all, confession: lest any think himself righteous, and, before the eyes of God who sees that which is, man, that was not and is, lift up the neck. **Before all, then, confession; then, love**. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Homily I on the First Epistle of John*, no. 6)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Those who do not repent reject pardon and eternal salvation

There are no limits to the mercy of God, **but anyone who deliberately refuses to accept his mercy by repenting, rejects the forgiveness of his sins and the salvation offered by the Holy**

Spirit (cf. John Paul II, DeV 46). **Such hardness of heart can lead to final impenitence and eternal loss.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1864)

JOHN PAUL II

God's pardon must correspond to the conversion of the one who repents

However, to the 'return' of God who forgives must correspond the 'return', that is, the 'conversion', of the one who repents. In fact, the Psalm says that peace and salvation are offered 'to those who turn to him in their hearts' (cf. Ps 84 v. 9). **Those who set out with determination on the path of holiness receive the gifts of joy, freedom and peace.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, September 25, 2002)

BENEDICT XVI

The pardon of the Lord incites us to acknowledge the gravity of sin

By experiencing the **tenderness and pardon of the Lord, the penitent is more easily led to acknowledge the gravity of sin, is more resolved to avoid it** in order to remain and grow in renewed friendship with him. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the Confessors who serve in the four Papal Basilicas of Rome*, February 19, 2007)

PAUL VI

We must bear sufferings of spirit and of the body that we may expiate our sins and avoid the twofold penalty of hell

Therefore, impelled by love and by the wish to placate God for the offenses against His sanctity and His justice and, at the same time, moved by trust in His infinite mercy, we **must bear the sufferings of the spirit and of the body that we may expiate our sins** and those of our fellow beings **and so avoid the twofold penalty of 'harm' and of 'sense', that is to say, the loss of God—the supreme good—and eternal fire** (cf. Mt 25: 41; *Lumen Gentium*, n. 48). (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Signum magnum*, no. 4, May 13, 1967)

INNOCENT IV

Hell is the torment of those who die impenitent

Moreover, if anyone without repentance dies in mortal sin, without a doubt he is tortured forever by the flames of eternal hell. (Denzinger-Hünemann 839. Innocent IV, *Letter Sub Catholicae to the Bishop of Tusculum*, March 6, 1254)

IV – MAN'S INDIFFERENCE TOWARD SIN INCITES THE ANGER OF GOD

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Few fear the death of the soul – a more horrifying kind of death

If we all consider, and understand that more horrifying kind of death, every one who sins dies. **But every man is afraid of the death of the flesh; few, of the death of the soul.** In regard to the death of the flesh, which must certainly come some time, all are on their guard against its approach: this is the source of all their labor. Man, destined to die, labors to avert his dying; **and yet man, destined to live for ever, labors not to cease from sinning.** And when he labors to avoid dying, he labors to no purpose, for its only result will be to put off death for a while, not to escape it; **but if he refrain from sinning, his toil will cease, and he shall live for ever.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Tractate 49 on the Gospel of John*, no. 2)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

God's wrath pursues sinners – their sinful act passes, but its guilt and stain remains

For the wicked are at war with God, who is offended beyond belief at their crimes; hence the Apostle says: 'Wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil' (Rom 2:8-9). **Although the sinful act is transient, yet the sin by its guilt and stain remains; and the imminent wrath of God pursues it, as the shadow does the body.** (Catechism of Trent, no. 4500)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Indignation and wrath are caused in God by sinners who feel no sorrow for their faults

The best thing then is, to avoid sin in the first instance: the next to it, is to feel that we sin, and thoroughly amend ourselves. But if we have not this, how shall we pray to God, and ask forgiveness of our sins, we who take no account of these matters? For when you yourself who hast offended art unwilling to know so much as this very fact, that you have sinned; for what manner of offenses will you entreat God for pardon? For what you know not? And how will you know the greatness of the benefit? Tell therefore your offenses in particular, that you may learn for what you receive forgiveness, that so you may become grateful towards your Benefactor. [...] But when the God of all is provoked, we gape, and throw ourselves back, and live in luxury and in drunkenness, and do all things as usual. And when shall we be able to propitiate Him? And how shall we by this very thing fail to provoke Him so much the more? For not so much sinning, as sinning without even pain, causes in Him indignation and wrath. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily XIV on Matthew*, no. 5)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

He who loves iniquity, hates his own soul

Perhaps one becomes perplexed by this word of the Prophet: 'He who loves iniquity, hates his soul' (Ps 10:6). But I add: he also hates his own flesh. Does he not treat it with hate, in fact, when every day he accumulates for it the torments of hell, and he accumulates, due to his hardening in evil and the impenitence of his heart, an abundance of wrath for the day of revenge? It is true that we should judge much less from his intention than by the effects [of his deeds] that the sinner is the enemy of his body, just as of his soul. For example, the dissolute that, while drowsing his reason endeavors to do evil to himself, shows himself to be the enemy of his body. Yet is there worse dissolution than impenitence of the heart and obstinacy in sin? It is not just on his body that the miserable raises a violent hand, but his own soul that he wounds and tears. If you have ever seen

a man rub his hands together until they start bleeding, you have a clear example of what the sinner does. (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Of conversion: A sermon to the clergy*, Ch. IV, no. 5)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

A grievous kind of death: the habit of wickedness

A grievous kind of death it is, and is distinguished as a habit of wickedness. For it is one thing to fall into sin, another to form the habit of sinning. He who falls into sin, and straightway submits to correction, will be speedily restored to life; for he is not yet entangled in the habit, he is not yet laid in the tomb. But he who has become habituated to sin, is buried, and has it properly said of him, 'he stinks;' for his character, like some horrible smell, begins to be of the worst repute. Such are all who are habituated to crime, abandoned in morals. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Tractate 49 on the Gospel of John*, no. 3)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

What punishment awaits those who return to their former vomit, preferring the serpent of sin to the dove of baptism?

Not until then, assuredly, were either the heavens opened, nor did the Spirit make His approach. Because henceforth He leads us away from the old to the new polity, both opening to us the gates on high, and sending down His Spirit from thence to call us to our country there; and not merely to call us, but also with the greatest mark of dignity. For He has not made us angels and archangels, but He has caused us to become 'sons of God,' [...] Having then all this in your mind, show forth a life worthy of the love of Him who calls you, and of your citizenship in that world, and of the honor that is given you. [...] Or rather, what punishment will you not have to suffer, who after so great a gift art running to your former vomit? For no longer are you punished merely as a man, but as a son of God that has sinned; and the greatness of your honor becomes a mean of bringing a sorer punishment on you. [...] For if he who had paradise for his portion, for

one disobedience underwent such dreadful things after his honor; we, who have received Heaven, and have become joint heirs with the Only Begotten, what excuse shall we have, for running to the serpent after the dove. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily XII on the Gospel of Matthew*, no. 4)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Through sin we sell ourselves to the slavery of the devil

The pastor, however, should not be content with placing before the eyes of the faithful the turpitude of sin. He should also depict the unworthiness and baseness of men, who, though nothing but rottenness and corruption, dare to outrage in a manner beyond all belief the incomprehensible majesty and ineffable excellence of God, particularly after having been created, redeemed and enriched by Him with countless and invaluable benefits. And for what? Only for this, that separating ourselves from God our Father, who is the supreme Good, and lured by the most base rewards of sin, we may devote ourselves to the devil, to become his most wretched slaves. Language is inadequate to depict the cruel tyranny which the devil exercises over those who, having shaken off the sweet yoke of God, and broken the most lovely bond of charity by which our spirit is bound to God our Father, have gone over to their relentless enemy, who is therefore called in Scripture, the prince and ruler of the world, the prince of darkness, and king over all the children of pride. (Catechism of Trent, no. 4500)

V – DOCTRINAL CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING VENIAL AND MORTAL SIN

JOHN PAUL II

Sin has a twofold consequence

Because it offends the holiness and justice of God and scorns God's personal friendship with man, sin has a twofold consequence. In the first place, if it is grave, it involves deprivation of communion with God and, in consequence, exclusion from a share in eternal life. [...] In the second place, 'every sin, even venial,

entails an unhealthy attachment to creatures, which must be purified either here on earth, or after death in the state called Purgatory. This purification frees one from what is called the 'temporal punishment' of sin' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1472), and this expiation removes whatever impedes full communion with God and with one's brothers and sisters. (John Paul II. *Bull Incarnationis mysterium*, no. 10, November 30, 1998)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A first sin prepares for many others

Sin creates a proclivity to sin; it engenders vice by repetition of the same acts. This results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Thus sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself, but it cannot destroy the moral sense at its root. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1865)

The consequences of venial sin

Venial sin weakens charity; it manifests a disordered affection for created goods; it impedes the soul's progress in the exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good; it merits temporal punishment. Deliberate and unrepented venial sin disposes us little by little to commit mortal sin. However venial sin does not set us in direct opposition to the will and friendship of God; it does not break the covenant with God. With God's grace it is humanly repairable. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1863)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Do not make light of venial sin, for it leads to mortal sin

A man, so long as he bears the flesh, cannot but have some at any rate light sins. But these which we call light, do not make light of. If you make light of them when you weigh them, be afraid when you count them. Many light make one huge sin: many drops fill the river; many grains make the lump. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Homily I on the First Epistle of John*, no. 6)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

It is also necessary to do penance for the pardon of venial sins

Forgiveness of sin, as stated above (q.86, a.2), is effected by man being united to God from Whom sin separates him in some way. Now this separation is made complete by mortal sin, and incomplete by venial sin: because, by mortal sin, the mind through acting against charity is altogether turned away from God; whereas by venial sin man's affections are clogged, so that they are slow in tending towards God. Consequently both kinds of sin are taken away by penance, because by both of them man's will is disordered through turning inordinately to a created good. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 87, a.1)

JOHN PAUL II

Mortal sin is a rejection of God's love for humanity and the whole of creation – the person turns away from God and loses charity

Likewise, care will have to be taken not to reduce mortal sin to an act of 'fundamental option' – as is commonly said today – against God, intending thereby an explicit and formal contempt for God or neighbor. For mortal sin exists also when a person knowingly and willingly, for whatever reason, chooses something gravely disordered. In fact, such a choice already includes contempt for the divine law, a rejection of God's love for humanity and the whole of creation; the person turns away from God and loses charity. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliation et paenitentia*, no. 17, December 2, 1984)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

One is condemned to the eternal death of hell if mortal sins are not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness

Mortal sin is a radical possibility of human freedom, as is love itself. It results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying

grace, that is, of the state of grace. If it is not redeemed by repentance and God's forgiveness, it causes exclusion from Christ's kingdom and the eternal death of hell, for our freedom has the power to make choices for ever, with no turning back. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1861)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

True penance consists in abandoning sin

Mortal sin cannot be forgiven without true Penance, to which it belongs to renounce sin, by reason of its being against God, which is common to all mortal sins. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 86, a.3)

The turning away from God deserves an infinite punishment: the 'pain of loss' of God forever

Punishment is proportionate to sin. Now sin comprises two things. First, there is the turning away from the immutable good, which is infinite, wherefore, in this respect, sin is infinite. Secondly, there is the inordinate turning to mutable good. In this respect sin is finite, both because the mutable good itself is finite, and because the movement of turning towards it is finite, since the acts of a creature cannot be infinite. Accordingly, in so far as sin consists in turning away from something, its corresponding punishment is the 'pain of loss,' which also is infinite, because it is the loss of the infinite good, i.e. God. But in so far as sin turns inordinately to something, its corresponding punishment is the 'pain of sense,' which is also finite. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 87, a.4)

Duration of punishment corresponds to duration of fault, not the act but the stain: an irreparable fault incurs everlasting punishment

Duration of punishment corresponds to duration of fault, not indeed as regards the act, but on the part of the stain, for as long as this remains, the debt of punishment remains. But punishment corresponds to fault in the point of severity. And a fault which is irreparable, is such that, of itself, it lasts for ever; wherefore

it incurs an everlasting punishment. But it is not infinite as regards the thing it turns to; wherefore, in this respect, it does not incur punishment of infinite quantity. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 87, a.4)

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Of what things can a Christian boast? Two things: his sins and Christ Crucified

‘For a correct interpretation of Sacred Scripture it is therefore necessary to seek attentively what the hagiographers have truly wished to state and what it has pleased God to express in human words.’ This is the wise counsel that Pope Benedict XVI had imparted to the participants of the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 2009. In fact, Greek is a very rich language that requires a demanding work of interpretation, whereby certain passages of Revelation are not easily grasped by amateurs. But, more importantly, besides a profound knowledge of this language, an exegete must also possess complete submission to the Holy Spirit, so as not to cast the shadow of his own ideas upon that which is really the Word of God. The Pauline epistles are the best example of this. And that’s why an explanation of this aspect seems necessary...

FRANCIS

Of what things can a Christian boast? Two things: his sins and Christ Crucified. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae*, September 4, 2014)

‘The privileged place for the encounter with Christ is our sins’. Pope Francis commented that to the untrained ear this ‘would almost seem heresy, but even Saint Paul said it’ in the Second Letter to the Corinthians (2Cor 12:9), when he affirmed boasting of ‘only two things: of his sins and of the Risen Christ who saved him’. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae*, September 18, 2014)

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I – INTRODUCTORY EXEGETIC CLARIFICATION

In chapter 12 of the Second Letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle repeats the terms 'boast' and 'weakness' (καυχῆσομαι / ἀσθενείαις): 'I must boast; not that it is profitable, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord' (2Cor 12:1). 'About this person I will boast, but about myself I will not boast, except about my weaknesses. Although if I should wish to boast, I would not be foolish, for I would be telling the truth' (2Cor 12:5-6). 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness. I will rather boast most gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong' (2Cor 12:9-10).

What are these weaknesses? Is it true that they are sins? It seems not, for in other parts of the same Epistle, when he uses the word 'sin', he uses other terms: ἁμαρτίαν / προημαρτηκότων

II – WHAT IS MEANT BY THE 'WEAKNESSES' SAINT PAUL BOASTED OF?

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Boast of evil? But this is not glory but misery

Lord, I had believed that I was something of myself, I judged myself to be self-sufficient, without realizing that You governed me, until you distanced yourself from me, and then I realized, and saw and recognized that it was You who had helped me; that if I fell it was my fault, and if I got up it was because of You. You have opened my eyes, divine light, and have lifted me up and illuminated me; and I have observed that the life of man on this earth is a test, and that no flesh can boast before you, nor is any living being justified, because all good, great or small, is Your gift, and ours is only evil. **What then may flesh boast of? Evil, perhaps? But this is not glory but misery. Could one boast of some good, even though not one's own? But all good is Yours, Lord, and Yours is the glory.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo (attrib.). *Soliloquies of the soul to God*, 15)

Saint Paul recognized his own nothingness, and that all must be attributed to the God's grace

He [Saint Paul] recognized that he is nothing on his own; and that all that he is must be attributed to the grace of God, not to his own strength. He recognized what is written, I will glory of my infirmities; recognized the truth of the words, To the humble He gives his grace, and he has been weakened; you however have strengthened him because power is made perfect in weakness. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on Psalm 67*, no. 12)

Weakness is the power that holds pride in check

Power is perfected in weakness, for weakness obliges us to combat. The greater the facility in victory, the lesser is the effort in combat. How can one fight against himself, if he finds no resistance in his interior? And, what is that which resists within us if not that which needs to be cured, to be healed? Weakness is then, the only cause that obliges us to initiate a combat within ourselves; and weakness itself is a warning for us not to become proud. Consequently, the power that holds our pride in check when we may feel arrogant, is perfected in weakness. (Saint Augustine. *Reply to Julian*, Book IV, 11)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Grace is increased in proportion to the intensity of trials: where affliction is, there is also consolation; where consolation, there grace

Here he hints at another thing also, namely, that in proportion as the trials waxed in intensity, in the same proportion the grace was increased and continued. 'Wherefore I take pleasure in many weaknesses' (2Cor 12:10). Of what sort? Tell me. 'In injuries, in persecutions, in necessities, in distresses.' Do you see how he has now revealed it in the clearest manner? For in mentioning the species of the infirmity he spoke not of fevers, nor any return of that sort, nor any other bodily ailment, but of 'injuries, persecutions, distresses.' Do you see a single-minded soul? He longs to be delivered from those dangers; but when he heard God's

answer that this befits not, he was not only not sorry that he was disappointed of his prayer, but was even glad. Wherefore he said, 'I take pleasure,' 'I rejoice, I long, to be injured, persecuted, distressed for Christ's sake.' And he said these things both to check those, and to raise the spirits of these that they might not be ashamed at Paul's sufferings. [...] 'For when I am weak, then am I strong.' Why do you marvel that the power of God is then conspicuous? I too am strong 'then'; for then most of all did grace come upon him. 'For as His sufferings abound, so does our consolation abound also.' Where affliction is, there is also consolation; where consolation, there is grace also. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily on Second Corinthians*, Hom. 26, no. 3)

By weaknesses, Saint Paul means also persecutions and trials

Do you see that he nowhere glories of miracles, but of his persecutions and his trials? For this is meant by 'weaknesses.' (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily on Second Corinthians*, Homily 25, no.2)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Infirmity is the material on which to exercise humility, patience and temperance; and the occasion for fighting unto perfect virtue

Then he gives the reason for the Lord's response when he says, 'for my power is made perfect in weakness [infirmity]'. This is a remarkable expression: **virtue is made perfect in infirmity...** But this can be understood in two ways, namely, materially and by way of occasion. If it is taken materially, the sense is this: **infirmity is the material on which to exercise virtue; first, humility**, as stated above; **secondly, patience**: 'The testing of your faith produces steadfastness' (Jas 1:3); **thirdly, temperance**, because hunger is weakened by infirmity and a person is made temperate. But if it is taken as an occasion, **infirmity is the occasion for arriving at perfect virtue**, because a man who knows that he is weak is more careful when resisting, and as a result of fighting and resisting more he is better exercised and, therefore, stronger. (Saint

Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, lect. 3: 2Cor 12:7-10, no. 479)

Glorying of weaknesses: through them the Christ's grace dwells and is made perfect in us

Then the Apostle mentions the effect of this answer from the Lord, saying: I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. **He mentions two effects. One is glorying**; hence he says: **because my virtue is made perfect in infirmity**, I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, i.e., given to me for my profit; **and this because it joins me closer to Christ**: 'But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Gal 6:14); [...] **The reason I will glory gladly is that the power of Christ may rest upon me [dwell in me], i.e., that through infirmity the grace of Christ may dwell and be made perfect in me**: 'He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength' (Is 40:29). The other effect is joy. Hence he says: For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses. In regard to this he does two things. First, he mentions the effect of joy; secondly, he assigns the reason for it (v. 10b). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, lect. 3: 2Cor 12:7-10, no. 480-481)

Joy in weaknesses: they are the occasion to suffer for Christ and to receive God's help

The other effect is joy. Hence he says: For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses. In regard to this he does two things. First, he mentions the effect of joy; secondly, he assigns the reason for it. He mentions the effect of joy and the matter of joy. He says therefore: 'Because the power of Christ dwells in me in all tribulations, I am content', i.e., I am greatly pleased and take joy in the infirmities I mentioned: 'Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials' (Jas. 1:2). [...] **But in all these things the material which makes for joy is that they are for Christ. As if to say: I am pleased because I suffer for Christ**: 'But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief' (1Pet 4:15). [...] **He assigns the reason for this joy, when he says, 'for when I am weak, then I am strong,' i.e., when as a result of**

what is in me or as a result of persecutions, I fall into any of the aforesaid, God's help is applied to me to strengthen me. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary of the Second Letter to the Corinthians*, lect. 3: 2Cor 12:7-10, no. 481-482)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

The Apostle shows that man is delivered over to his infirmity, lest being uplifted he might fall away. By means of infirmity man is acquainted with God's power

The Apostle Paul has, moreover, in the most lucid manner, pointed out that man has been delivered over to his own infirmity, lest, being uplifted, he might fall away from the truth. [...] *My grace is sufficient for thee; for strength is made perfect in weakness. Gladly therefore shall I rather glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.* What, therefore? (as some may exclaim) did the Lord wish, in that case, that His apostles should thus undergo buffering, and that he should endure such infirmity? Even so it was; the word says it. For strength is made perfect in weakness, **rendering him a better man who by means of his infirmity becomes acquainted with the power of God. For how could a man have learned that he is himself an infirm being, and mortal by nature, but that God is immortal and powerful, unless he had learned by experience what is in both?** (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against Heresies. Book.5, Ch. III, no. 503*)

BENEDICT XVI

St. Paul is well aware that he is an earthen vessel in which God places the riches and power of his grace

What are the weaknesses that the Apostle is talking about? [...] his attitude enables us to realize that **every difficulty** in following Christ and witnessing to his Gospel may be overcome by opening oneself with trust to the Lord's action. **Saint Paul is well aware that he is an 'unworthy servant' (Lk 17:10) – it is not he who has done great things, it is the Lord – an 'earthen vessel' (2Cor 4:7), in which God places the riches and power of his Grace.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience, June 13, 2012*)

Saint Paul understands clearly how to face every event: God's power is revealed at the very moment when we experience our own weakness

In this moment of concentrated contemplative prayer, **Saint Paul understands clearly how to face and how to live every event, especially suffering, difficulty and persecution. The power of God, who does not abandon us or leave us on our own but becomes our support and strength, is revealed at the very moment when we experience our own weakness.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, June 13, 2012)

We must entrust ourselves to God as fragile earthen vessels, so that He may work miracles through our weakness

The Lord does not free us from evils, but helps us to mature in sufferings, difficulties and persecutions. [...] Therefore, to the extent that our union with the Lord increases and that our prayers become intense, we also go to the essential and understand that it is not the power of our own means, our virtues, our skills that brings about the Kingdom of God but that it is God who works miracles precisely through our weakness, our inadequacy for the task. **We must therefore have the humility not to trust merely in ourselves, but to work, with the Lord's help, in the Lord's vineyard, entrusting ourselves to him as fragile 'earthen vessels'.** (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, June 13, 2012)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

We should glory in the knowledge of our insufficiency, that thus we may acquire the virtue of holy humility

Gladly, says the Apostle, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me (2Cor 12:9). **We, too, should say the same: we should glory in the knowledge of our insufficiency, that thus we may acquire the power of Jesus Christ, that is, holy humility.** (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Selva of material for preaching*, Part II, Ch. 6, no. 3, pg. 318)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Only faith can discern God's power when it 'is made perfect in weakness'

Of all the divine attributes, only God's omnipotence is named in the Creed: to confess this power has great bearing on our lives. We believe that his might is universal, for God who created everything also rules everything and can do everything. God's power is loving, for he is our Father, and mysterious, for **only faith can discern it when it 'is made perfect in weakness.'** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 268)

God's almighty power shows forth by converting us from our sins

God shows forth his almighty power by converting us from our sins and restoring us to his friendship by grace. 'God, you show your almighty power above all in your mercy and forgiveness' (Roman Missal, 26th Sunday, Opening Prayer) (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 277)

There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle

The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. **There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the asceticism and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2015)

III – SIN IS NOT A FACTOR OF UNION WITH GOD, BUT RATHER OF SEPARATION

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sin is love of oneself unto contempt of God – it is diametrically opposed to obedience which achieves salvation

Sin is thus 'love of oneself even to contempt of God' (Saint Augustine, *De civ. Dei* 14, 28). In this proud self-exaltation, **sin is diametrically opposed to the obedience of Jesus, which achieves our salvation** (cf. Phil 2:6-9). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1850)

Sin turns our hearts away from God's love for us

Sin sets itself against God's love for us and turns our hearts away from it. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1850)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Even little sins cannot be disregarded: they are like drops of water, which although small, form rivers and drag away boulders

If you do not take into account your sin, considering it light, at least be afraid of the gravity of the chastisement. But you would insist: 'they are little things, trifling details, which live here below cannot be exempt from. Very well, gather together all these trifles and you will see if they do not form an enormous mass. Like the grains of wheat: so small, and yet they form a great heap; or like the drops of water, which although so small, form rivers and drag away even the boulders. The psalmist meditates on the innumerable sins, small ones perchance, that man commits every day, considering only those in thought and with the tongue, yet it does not escape him that putting together many light sins a great heap is made. (Saint Augustine. *Expositions on Psalm 129*, no. 5)

Sins stink foully

Let a man but have his soul's sense of smelling sound, he perceives how foully sins stink. (Saint Augustine. *Expositions on Psalm 38* (37), 8)

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

Sin is the use of human faculties against the will of God

And this is the definition of sin: a deviated use, and contrary to the will God, of the faculties that God has given us to practice good; just as, virtue, on the contrary, which God seeks [of us], consists in using these faculties with an upright conscience, proceeding in accordance with the Lord's command. (Saint Basil the Great. *Greater Monastic Rule*, resp. 2, 1: PG 31, 910)

JOHN PAUL II

Sin is an abuse of the freedom received from God

'Sin is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons so that they are capable of loving him and loving one another' (Catechism, 387); it is refusal to live the life of God received in Baptism, to let ourselves be loved by the true Love: the human being has in fact the terrible power to be an obstacle to God who wills to give all that is good. Sin, which has its origin in the person's free will (Mk 7:20), is failure in genuine love; it wounds the nature of the human person and injures human solidarity by attitudes, words and actions steeped in self-love (cf. Catechism, 1849-1850). (John Paul II. *Message on the occasion of the 14th World Youth Day*, January 9, 1999)

The Church believes and professes that sin is an offense against God

The Church, taking her inspiration from Revelation, believes and professes that sin is an offense against God. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Dominum et vivificantem*, no. 39, May 18, 1986)

Sin is *aversio a Deo* – and consequently choosing death

For man also knows, through painful experience, that by a conscious and free act of his will he can change course and go in a direction opposed to God's will, separating himself from God (*aversio a Deo*), rejecting loving communion with him, detaching himself from the life principle which God is and consequently choosing death. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 17, December 2, 1984)

...and *conversio ad creaturam*, something contrary to the divine will

With the whole tradition of the church, we call mortal sin the act by which man freely and consciously rejects God, his law, the covenant of love that God offers, preferring to turn in on himself or to some created and

finite reality, something contrary to the divine will (*conversio ad creaturam*). (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 17, December 2, 1984)

Disobedience to God destroys the bond that unites man with his life principle-an act gravely offensive to God

Man perceives that this disobedience to God destroys the bond that unites him with his life principle: It is a mortal sin, that is, an act which gravely offends God and ends in turning against man himself with a dark and powerful force of destruction. (John Paul II. *Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 17)

BENEDICT XVI

Sin ruins man's relationship with God

Sin is the distortion or destruction of the relationship with God, this is its essence: it ruins the relationship with God, the fundamental relationship, by putting ourselves in God's place. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, February 6, 2013)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

To arrive at a clear understanding of the truth: begin in confession, then let good works follow

'Begin to the Lord in confession' (Ps146:7). Begin with this, if you would arrive at a clear understanding of the truth. If you will be brought from the road of faith to the profession of the reality, 'begin in confession'. First accuse yourself: accuse yourself, praise God. What after confession? Let good works follow. 'Sing unto our God upon the harp'. What is, 'upon the harp'? As I have already explained, just like the Psalm upon the psaltery, so also is the 'harp': not with voice only, but with works. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Expositions on Psalm 148*, no. 11)

IV – THOSE WHO STRAY FROM THE LORD SHOULD REPENT AND RECEIVE SACRAMENTAL ABSOLUTION

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

To receive God's mercy we must admit our faults

'God created us without us: but he did not will to save us without us' (St. Augustine, Sermon 169, 11-13). To receive his mercy, we must admit our faults. 'If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (Jn 8-9). As Saint Paul affirms, 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more' (Rom 5:20). But to do its work grace must uncover sin so as to convert our hearts and bestow on us 'righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord' (Rom 5:21). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1847-1848)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Even more than by sin, God's wrath is caused by sinning without remorse for having provoked Him

For not so much sinning, as sinning without even pain, causes in Him indignation and wrath. Wherefore it were meet after all this to sink into the very earth, and not so much as to behold this sun, nor to breathe at all, for that having so placable a Master, we provoke Him first, and then have no remorse for provoking Him. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 14 on Saint Matthew*, no. 5)

How can we expect forgiveness when we take no account of sin first?

The best thing then is, to avoid sin in the first instance: the next to it, is to feel that we sin, and thoroughly amend ourselves. But if we have not this, how shall we pray to God, and ask forgiveness of our sins, we who take no account of these matters? For when you yourself who hast offended art unwilling to know so much as this very fact, that you

have sinned; for what manner of offenses will you entreat God for pardon? (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 14 on Saint Matthew*, no. 5)

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

Why die a spiritual death when a sovereign remedy is available? – having consented in sin, make haste to seek purification

And so the soul which has ever so little consented to sin, **ought to abhor itself and make haste to seek purification, out of respect to His Divine Gaze** Who beholds it always. **Why should we die a spiritual death when there is a sovereign remedy available?** (Saint Francis de Sales. *Introduction to the Devout Life*, Ch. XIX)

JOHN PAUL II

Through the Sacrament of Confession man renews his friendship with God

As it is known, the Father that has made us his children through Baptism, remains faithful to his love even when, by his own fault, man separates from Him. **His mercy is stronger than sin, and the Sacrament of Confession is its most expressive sign, like a second Baptism**, as the Fathers of the Church call it. Effectively, in Confession the same grace of Baptism is **renewed precisely by a newer and richer insertion into the mystery of Christ and the Church**. (John Paul II. *Address to the clergy of Todi and Orvieto*, November 22, 1981)

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Who decides what is good and evil? Each one's conscience...

'Conscience, conscience! Divine instinct, immortal and celestial voice, sure guide of a being that is ignorant and limited, but intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil that makes man like unto God'. Just as Jean-Jacques Rousseau did 250 years ago, Pope Francis and the atheistic, socialist journalist Eugenio Scalfari – in a prolific and widely publicised exchange of ideas – put particular focus on the riveting theme of the morality of human conduct.

FRANCIS

Above all, you ask if the God of Christians forgives those who do not believe and who do not seek faith. Given the premise, and this is fundamental, that the mercy of God is limitless for those who turn to him with a sincere and contrite heart, **the issue for the unbeliever lies in obeying his or her conscience. There is sin, even for those who have no faith, when conscience is not followed. Listening to and obeying conscience means deciding in the face of what is understood to be good or evil.** It is on the basis of this choice that the goodness or evil of our actions is determined. (*Letter to Eugenio Scalfari*, September 4, 2013)

Each of us has a vision of good and of evil. We have to encourage people to move towards what they think is Good. And I repeat it here. Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must **choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them. That would be enough to make the world a better place.** (*Interview with Scalfari*, October 1, 2013) (*La Repubblica*, October 1, 2013)¹

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine should be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

Paul VI

- ♦ Conscience is not the last word in judging the goodness of a human act-it only interprets a superior norm
- ♦ Pedagogy of conscience is necessary: it is not always infallible nor objectively supreme

John Paul II

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Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

- ♦ If following conscience always justifies, then we'll see the Nazi SS in heaven!

Pius IX

Condemned errors regarding natural and Christian ethics

[Error condemned:] 56. The laws of morals by no means need divine sanction, and there is not the least need that human laws conform to the natural law, or receive the power of binding from God.

[Error condemned:] 57. The science of philosophy and of morals, likewise the civil laws, can and should ignore divine and ecclesiastical authority. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2956-2957. *The Syllabus of errors condemned by Pius IX*, December 8, 1864)

JOHN XXIII

Christ is the center of history, the absolute criteria of goodness

After almost twenty centuries, the gravest situations and problems that humanity has to face do not change; in fact, Christ always occupies **central place in history and in life: men either adhere to Him and His Church, and thus enjoy light, goodness, right order, and the benefits of peace, or they live without Him or fighting against Him, and deliberately remain outside His Church, and so among**

them there is confusion, mutual relations become difficult, and the danger of bloody wars looms over them. (John XXIII. *Address on the solemn opening of the Second Vatican Council*, October 11, 1962)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Duty of the Church to preach the one true God

Therefore the Church announces the good tidings of salvation to those who do not believe, so that all men may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and may be converted from their ways, doing penance. To believers also the Church must ever preach faith and penance, she must prepare them for the sacraments, teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded, and invite them to all the works of charity, piety, and the apostolate. For all these works make it clear that Christ's faithful, though not of this world, are to be the light of the world and to glorify the Father before men. (Vatican Council II. *Constitution Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 9, December 4, 1963)

PAUL VI

Conscience is not the last word in judging the goodness of a human act – it only interprets a superior norm

We should make an observation about the supremacy and the exclusivity that today is attempted to attribute to conscience as the guide for human conduct. One hears often repeated, as an indisputable maxim, that all human morality must consist in following one's own conscience; and this is said both to emancipate man from the necessities of an extrinsic norm, as also from the deference toward an authority that intends to dictate laws for the free and spontaneous activity of man, which should be a law in itself, without the limitation of other interventions in its operations. We would be saying nothing new if we were to ask those who sum up in this criterion the ambit of the moral life that **having one's own conscience as guide is not only a good thing, but even a duty.** Those who act against their consciences are outside of the path of uprightness (cf. Rom 14:23). **But, it is necessary, primarily, to affirm that conscience, in itself, is not a judge of the moral value of the actions that it suggests.** The conscience is **the interpreter of an interior and superior norm;** which it does not create by itself. It is enlightened by the intuition of certain normative principles, co-natural with human reason. (cf. *S.Th.*, I, q. 79, a. 12-13; I-II, q. 94, a.1); **conscience is not the source of good and evil;** it is the admonition, it is the sounding of a voice, that is justly called the voice of conscience, it is the calling to conformity that an action should have with an requirement that is extrinsic to man, so that man may be true and perfect man. That is to say, it is the subjective and immediate warning of a law, that we should call natural, despite the fact that many today do not wish to hear of the natural law. Is it not in relating with this law, understood in its true significance, that the sense of responsibility is born in emerges? And with the sense of responsibility, that of good conscience and of merit, as well as that of remorse and guilt? Conscience and responsibility are two related terms. (Paul VI. *General audience*, February 12, 1969)

Pedagogy of conscience is necessary: it is not always infallible nor objectively supreme

In the second place, we should observe that conscience, in order to be a valid norm for human activity, should be upright, that is, it should be sure and true, neither uncertain nor culpably erroneous. This unfortunately, can easily occur, given the weakness of human reason, when it is left to its own devices, when it is not educated. Conscience must be educated. The pedagogy of conscience is necessary, as it is for all in man, – who unfolds his life in an external milieu that is immensely complex and demanding – this being always in [a process of] interior development. Conscience is not the only voice that can guide human activity; its voice becomes clear and is strengthened when that of the law, and therefore that of legitimate authority, is united to it. That is to say, the **voice of conscience is not always infallible, nor objectively supreme. And this is especially certain in the realm of supernatural action,** where reason cannot rely on itself to construe the right path, and must have recourse to the faith in order to dictate to man the norm of justice willed by God through revelation: 'He who is righteous lives by faith' says Saint Paul (Gal 3:11). To walk uprightly, when it is night—that is during the mystery of Christian life—it is not sufficient to use one's eyes, a lamp is needed, light is necessary. And this '*lumen Christi*' does not distort, does not degrade nor contradict the light of our conscience, but rather illuminates it and enables it to follow Christ along the right path of our pilgrimage toward the eternal vision. Therefore: let us seek to always act with an upright and strong conscience, enlightened by the wisdom of Christ. (Paul VI. *General Audience*, February 12, 1969)

JOHN PAUL II

A crisis of truth results from the affirmation that moral judgment is true merely by the fact that it has its origin in conscience

Certain currents of modern thought have gone so far as to exalt freedom to such an extent that it becomes an absolute, which would then be the source of values. This is the direction taken by doctrines which have lost the sense of the

transcendent or which are explicitly atheist. **The individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgment which hands down categorical and infallible decisions about good and evil. To the affirmation that one has a duty to follow one's conscience is unduly added the affirmation that one's moral judgment is true merely by the fact that it has its origin in the conscience.** But in this way **the inescapable claims of truth disappear**, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and 'being at peace with oneself', so much so that some have come to adopt a radically subjectivistic conception of moral judgment. As is immediately evident, the *crisis of truth* is not unconnected with this development. **Once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason, is lost**, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes. Conscience is no longer considered in its primordial reality as an act of a person's intelligence, the function of which is to apply the universal knowledge of the good in a specific situation and thus to express a judgment about the right conduct to be chosen here and now. Instead, **there is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly.** Such an outlook is quite congenial to an individualist ethic, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth, different from the truth of others. Taken to its extreme consequences, this individualism leads to a denial of the very idea of human nature. These different notions are at the origin of currents of thought which posit a radical opposition between moral law and conscience, and between nature and freedom. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 32, August 6, 1993)

The Decalogue is engraved in human nature

The same law that God had revealed through Moses, and confirmed by Christ in the Gospel (cf. Mt 5:17-19), was engraved by the Creator in human nature. This is what we read in the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans: 'When Gentiles who have not the law do by nature what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law' (Rom 2: 14). In this way, then, the moral principles that God manifested to the chosen people through Moses, are the same

that He inscribed in the nature of the human being. That is why every person, following that which since the beginning formed a part of his nature, knows the duty to honor father and mother and respect life; is conscious that no one must commit adultery, nor steal, nor bear false witness; in a word, knows that unto others should not be done what one does not wish done to oneself. St. Paul adds in the Letter to the Romans (Rom 2:15): '*They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness. The conscience is thus presented as the witness, either accusing man when he violates the law inscribed in his heart, or justifying him when he is faithful to it.* Consequently, according to the teaching of the Apostle, there exists a law that is intimately linked to the nature of man as an intelligent and free being, and this law resounds in his conscience: **for man, living according to conscience means living according to the law of his own nature and, vice versa, living according to this law, means living according to conscience, obviously to a conscience that is true and upright**, that is to say according to the conscience which correctly reads the meaning of the law inscribed by the Creator in human nature. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, June 12, 1994)

A destroying force of true humanity: to say 'always follow your conscience' without adding 'does your conscience affirm truth?' and 'seek to know the truth'

It's not sufficient to merely say to man: 'always follow your conscience'. It is necessary to add immediately and always: 'ask yourself if your conscience affirms truth or falsity, and seek untiringly to know the truth.' If this necessary clarification is not made, man would run the risk of encountering in his conscience a destroying force of his true humanity, instead of a holy place where God reveals his true goodness. (John Paul II. *General audience*, August 17, 1983)

It is necessary to 'form' one's own conscience aided by the doctrine of the Church

It is necessary to 'form' one's own conscience. The Christian is aware that in this task he receives special assistance from the doctrine

of the Church. 'For the Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that truth which is Christ Himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origins in human nature itself' (Dignitatis humanae, 14). (John Paul II. *General audience*, August 17, 1983)

conscience remains in ignorance and makes erroneous judgments about acts to be performed or already committed. This ignorance can often be imputed to personal responsibility. This is the case when a man 'takes little trouble to find out what is true and good, or when conscience is by degrees almost blinded through the habit of committing sin'. In such cases, the person is culpable for the evil he commits. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1786. 1790-1791)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Erroneous judgment of conscience may be culpable

Faced with a moral choice, conscience can make either a right judgment in accordance with reason and the divine law or, on the contrary, an erroneous judgment that departs from them. A human being must always obey the certain judgment of his conscience. If he were deliberately to act against it, he would condemn himself. Yet it can happen that moral

CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER

If following conscience always justifies, then we'll see the Nazi SS in Heaven!

If this were so then the Nazi SS would be justified and we should seek them in heaven since they carried out all their atrocities with fanatic conviction and complete certainty of conscience. (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. *Address of Cardinal Ratzinger to the American Bishops, Conscience and Truth*, Dallas, Texas, 1991)

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The Lord always pardons, He never condemns

‘A second plank [of salvation] after the shipwreck of lost grace.’ Since the first centuries of Christianity, the sacrament of Penance has been described in this manner (cf. Dz 1542). A vivid and eloquent image, indeed, for when a soul loses its baptismal innocence by committing a serious transgression, it falls like a person drowning into the murky waves of sin. In order not to suffer eternal perdition and to recover the lost treasure of grace, one must have recourse to Confession, the secure plank of salvation for the baptized who do not wish to perish. However, this divine remedy comes with certain conditions. Does God always pardon? Does He pardon even those who do not wish to escape from the seas of sin? Such an important topic requires a profound analysis.

FRANCIS

When we go to confession, the Lord tells us: ‘I forgive you. But now come with me’. And He helps us to get back on the path. **He never condemns. He never simply forgives, but He forgives and accompanies. Then we are fragile and we have to return to confession, everyone. But He never tires. He always takes us by the hand again.** This is the love of God, and we must imitate it! Society must imitate it. Take this path. On the other hand, a true and complete reintegration of the person does not come about as the end of an exclusively human journey. This path also involves an encounter with God, the ability to allow ourselves to be looked at by God, who loves us. It is more difficult to allow God to look at us than to look at God. It is more difficult to allow God to encounter us than to encounter God, because we always resist. He waits for us, He looks at us, He always seeks us. This God who loves us, who is capable of understanding us and forgiving our mistakes. The Lord is a master at reintegrating people. He takes us by the hand and brings us back to society and the community. **The Lord always forgives, always accompanies and always understands; it is up to us to allow ourselves to be understood, to be forgiven and to be accompanied.** (*Address to the detainees, the penitentiary staff and their families, Pastoral visit to Cassano all’Ionio, June 21, 2014*)

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I – CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S GOODNESS DOES NOT MEAN THE ABUSE OF HIS MERCY

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Jesus warns the paralytic in the pool of Bethzatha

One man was there, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your pallet, and walk’. And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Afterward, Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, ‘See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you’. (Jn 5:5, 8-9,14).

Those who do not convert will be chastised

There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish’. (Lk 13:1-5)

The way that leads to destruction is easy

‘Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life, and those who find it are few’. (Mt 7:13-14)

JOHN PAUL II

Meekness and severe threats are in harmony within the Gospel

In this way, the Gospel of meekness and humility is in cadence with the Gospel of exigent morality and even of severe threats to those who do not wish to convert. There is no contradiction between one and the other. Jesus lives from the truth he announces and

from the love that he reveals, and this love is demanding just as is the truth from which it is derived. (John Paul II. *General audience*, June 8, 1988)

Catholics have the obligation to make all efforts not to sin

In effect, a spiritual renovation cannot take place without passing through penitential conversion, both as a permanent and interior attitude of the believer and as an exercise of the virtue which corresponds to the invitation of the Apostle to ‘be reconciled to God’ (2Cor 5:20), as well as through access to the pardon of God through the Sacrament of Penance. It is effectively a requirement of this same ecclesial condition that no Catholic omit that which is necessary in order to maintain oneself in the life of grace, and to do all possible in order not to fall into sin (which would separate one from it), and in this way be continually prepared to partake of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and thus be of service to all the Church by one’s own personal sanctification, and by the increasing commitment to the service of the Lord. (John Paul II. *Bull of the Convocation of the Jubilee for the 1950th anniversary of the Redemption Aperite portas Redemptori*, no. 4, January 6, 1983)

JOHN XXIII

Serious sins attract the chastisements of God

He who is already a member of Christ must learn of necessity to keep a rein upon himself. Only so will he be able to drive away the enemy of his soul and keep his baptismal innocence unsullied, or regain God’s grace when it is lost by sin. To become a member of Holy Church by baptism is to be clothed in the beauty with which Christ adorns His beloved Bride. ‘Christ loved the Church and delivered Himself up for her; that he might sanctify her, cleansing her in the bath of water by means of the word of life; in order that he might present to himself the Church in all her glory, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she might be holy and without blemish’. (Eph 5:26-27). This being so, well may those sinners who have stained the white robe of their sacred baptism fear the just

punishments of God. Their remedy is ‘to wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb’ (Apoc 7:14)—to restore themselves to their former splendor in the sacrament of Penance—and to school themselves in the practice of Christian virtue. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Paenitentiam agere*, On the Need for the Practice of Interior and Exterior Penance, no. 12-14, July 1, 1962)

BENEDICT XVI

The certainty of God’s pardon is not an excuse to fail to seek sanctity

Even when we have to struggle continually with the same failings, **it is important to resist the coarsening of our souls and the indifference** which would simply accept that this is the way we are. **It is important to keep pressing forward, without scrupulosity, in the grateful awareness that God forgives us ever anew-yet also without the indifference that might lead us to abandon altogether the struggle for holiness and self-improvement.** (Benedict XVI. *Letter to Seminarians*, no.3, October 18, 2010)

Priests should educate the faithful about the radical requirements of the Gospel

The discussed ‘crisis’ of the Sacrament of Penance, frequently calls into question **priests first of all and their great responsibility to teach the People of God the radical requirements of the Gospel.** In particular, **it asks them to dedicate themselves generously to hearing sacramental confessions; to guide the flock courageously so that it does not conform to the mindset of this world (cf. Rom 12:2) but may even be able to make decisions that run counter to the tide, avoiding adjustments and compromises.** (Benedict XVI. *Speech to Participants in the Internal Forum Course Organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary*, March 11, 2010)

THE CATECHISM OF TRENT

Whoever abuses mercy becomes unworthy to receive it

But here the faithful are to be admonished to guard against the danger of becoming more prone to sin, or slow to repentance,

from a presumption that they can have recourse to this power of forgiving sins which is so complete and, as we saw, unrestricted as to time. For, as such a propensity to sin would manifestly convict them of acting injuriously and contumaciously to this divine power, and would therefore **render them unworthy of the divine mercy;** so this slowness to repentance gives great reason to fear that, overtaken by death, they may in vain confess their belief in the remission of sins, which by their tardiness and procrastination they deservedly forfeited. (The Catechism of Trent, no.1100)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Pardon is granted for correction, not to favor iniquity

So therefore, brethren, we have a season of mercy, let us not on that account flatter or indulge ourselves saying, ‘God spareth ever. Behold what I did yesterday God spared; I do so today also, and God spareth; I will do so tomorrow also because God spareth’. Thou heedest His mercy, but fearest not his judgment. **If thou wish to sing of mercy and judgement, understand that He spareth that thou mayest amend, not that thou mayest remain in thy wickedness.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on Psalm 100 [101]*, n.3)

False hope leads to perdition

Who is deceived by hoping? **He who says, God is good, God is merciful, let me do what I please, what I like; let me give loose reins to my lusts, let me gratify the desires of my soul. Why this? Because God is merciful, God is good, God is kind. These men are in danger by hope.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 33, no. 8)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

A Christian goes to heaven not merely as a traveler, but rather as a soldier

For as Paul warns you: ‘Stand therefore, having fastened the belt of truth around your waist, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace’ (Eph 6:14-15). There is mention of being shod,

also of a staff and breastplate. Moses speaks to those who prepare to commence a journey, and Paul gives orders to those who prepare themselves to begin a battle. The former left one land to travel to another, and so are called travelers, but I am going from earth to heaven, and that is why I am a soldier. Why? Because my path through the air is infested with thieves, and demons come out along the way. For this reason, I bear confidence as an unsheathed sword; and for this reason I wear the breastplate of justice; for this reason I gird myself with truth. For I am not merely a traveler, but also a soldier. 'For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life! (Mt 7:14)' (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily II on Abraham*)

II – THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE REQUIRES GOOD DISPOSITIONS

SACRED SCRIPTURES

At times, God does not pardon

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'. (Jn 20:22-23)

PAUL VI

The sacraments may not be received in a passive or indifferent manner

The role of evangelization is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the sacraments as true sacraments of faith—and not to receive them passively or reluctantly. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 47, December 8, 1975)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Sacrament which makes the evangelical call to conversion present

It is called the sacrament of conversion because it makes sacramentally present Jesus' call to conversion, the first step in returning to

the Father from whom one has strayed by sin. It is called the sacrament of Penance, since it consecrates the Christian sinner's personal and ecclesial steps of conversion, penance, and satisfaction. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1423)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Penance requires contrition, confession and satisfaction.

Whereas, in Penance, the offense is atoned according to the will of the sinner, and the judgment of God against Whom the sin was committed, because in the latter case we seek not only the restoration of the equality of justice, as in vindictive justice, but also and still more the reconciliation of friendship, which is accomplished by the offender making atonement according to the will of the person offended. Accordingly the first requisite on the part of the penitent is the will to atone, and this is done by contrition; the second is that he submit to the judgment of the priest standing in God's place, and this is done in confession; and the third is that he atone according to the decision of God's minister, and this is done in satisfaction. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 90, a. 2, resp.)

COUNCIL OF TRENT

Contrition unites sorrow of the soul, detestation of sin and purpose of amendment

Contrition, which has the first place among the aforementioned acts of the penitent, is a sorrow of the soul and a detestation of sin committed, with a determination of not sinning in the future. This feeling of contrition is, moreover, necessary at all times to obtain the forgiveness of sins, and thus for a person who has fallen after baptism it especially prepares for the remission of sins, if it is united with trust in divine mercy and with the desire of performing the other things required to receive this sacrament correctly. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1676. *Council of Trent Session XIV. Doctrine about the Sacrament of Penance*, Ch. 4, Contrition, November 25, 1551)

JOHN PAUL II

The first step of returning to God is contrition

Understood in this way, contrition is therefore the beginning and the heart of conversion, of that evangelical metanoia which brings the person back to God like the prodigal son returning to his father, and which has in the sacrament of penance its visible sign and which perfects attrition. Hence upon this contrition of heart depends the truth of penance. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et penitencia*, no.31, December 2, 1984)

A sacrament that implies a battle against sin

As such, this sacrament was instituted for the pardon of sins committed after baptism, and within it the baptized play an active role. They are not limited to receiving a ritual and formal pardon, as passive participants. On the contrary, with the help of grace, they take the initiative to battle against sin, confessing their sins and asking pardon for them. The baptized know that this sacrament implies on their part, an act of conversion. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no.1, April 15, 1992)

CODE OF CANON LAW

It is a remedy that requires conversion

To receive the salvific remedy of the sacrament of penance, a member of the Christian faithful must be disposed in such a way that, rejecting sins committed and having a purpose of amendment, the person is turned back to God. (Code of Canon Law, no. 987)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

The request for mercy without contrition is useless

When we read in Scripture that certain persons did not obtain pardon from God, even though they earnestly implored it, we know that this was due to the fact that they had not a true and heartfelt sorrow for their sins. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2400)

BENEDICT XVI

He who repents, receives pardon and the strength to sin no more

Jesus sent the adulterous woman away with this recommendation: 'Go, and do not sin again'. He forgives her so that 'from now on' she will sin no more. In a similar episode, that of the repentant woman, a former sinner whom we come across in Luke's Gospel (cf. Lk 7:36-50), he welcomed a woman who had repented and sent her peacefully on her way. Here, instead, the adulterous woman simply receives an unconditional pardon. In both cases-for the repentant woman sinner and for the adulterous woman-the message is the same. In one case it is stressed that there is no forgiveness without the desire for forgiveness, without opening the heart to forgiveness; here it is highlighted that only divine forgiveness and divine love received with an open and sincere heart give us the strength to resist evil and 'to sin no more', to let ourselves be struck by God's love so that it becomes our strength. (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, visit to the Roman Parish of Saint Felicity and her children, Martyrs, March 25, 2007)

Confession is not only an instrument of pardon, but also of sanctification

Then there is a close connection between holiness and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, witnessed by all the saints of history. The real conversion of our hearts, which means opening ourselves to God's transforming and renewing action, is the "driving force" of every reform and is expressed in a real evangelizing effort. In confession, through the freely bestowed action of divine Mercy, repentant sinners are justified, pardoned and sanctified and abandon their former selves to be re clothed in the new. (Benedict XVI. *To participants in a course organized by the Apostolic Penitentiary*, March 9, 2012)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

After pardon, the necessity to expiate the sin follows

Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing

something more to make amends for the sin: he must 'make satisfaction for' or 'expiate' his sins. This satisfaction is also called 'penance'. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1459)

COUNCIL OF TRENT

Satisfaction is a check for sin and a stimulus for a new life

For, without doubt, these satisfactions greatly **restrain from sin**, and as by a kind of rein act as a check, and make penitents more cautious and vigilant in the future; they also remove the remnants of sin, and destroy vicious habits acquired by living evilly through acts contrary to virtue. Neither was there ever in the Church of God any way considered more secure for warding off impending punishment by the Lord than that men perform these works of penance. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1690. *Council of Trent Session XIV*, Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance, Ch. 8, The Necessity and Fruit of Satisfaction, November 25, 1551)

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In the case of divorcees who have remarried, we posed the question, what do we do with them? What door can we allow them to open? Why can't they be godfathers and godmothers? Things need to change.

Ever since the beginning, God established matrimony as an indissoluble alliance and granted it a blessing that was 'not forfeited by original sin, nor washed away by the flood'. In elevating matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament, Jesus Christ not only made this union more indissoluble and holy, but also willed that it reflect His own fidelity to the Church.

If we analyze the pages of history, it is evident that for the pagans, in diverse eras, divorce and repudiation were widespread attitudes that even had recognition. The Church, however, has always considered divorce as a grave sin; and the Popes have never tired of warning Christians so that they do not allow themselves to be contaminated with such pagan customs.

It is tradition in the Church that the newly baptized have godparents. This charge, far from being just a social duty – as some unfortunately consider it – entails the serious obligation of educating in the Faith both by word and example, practicing the Commandments and living in a virtuous life. 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin' – Jesus said – 'it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of things that cause sin! Such things must come, but woe to the one through whom they come!' (Mt 18:6-7). That is why the Church, with characteristic wisdom conferred by its Divine Spouse, has always decreed that only Catholics who lead a life in accordance with the Faith may be admitted as godparents in Baptism. Therefore, those who publically and obstinately live in grave sin may not be admitted to the special mission of guarding anyone's faith.

FRANCIS

In the case of **divorcees who have remarried**, we posed the question, **what do we do with them? What door can we allow them to open?** This was a pastoral concern: will we allow them to go to Communion? Communion alone is no solution. **The solution is integration.** They have not been excommunicated, true. **But they cannot be godfathers to any child being baptized,** mass readings are not for divorcees, they cannot give communion, they cannot teach Sunday school, there are about seven things that they cannot do, I have the list over there. Come on! If I disclose any of this it will seem that they have been excommunicated in fact! **Thus, let us open the doors a bit more. Why can't they be godfathers and godmothers? 'No, no, no, what testimony will they be giving their godson?' The testimony of a man and a woman saying 'my dear, I made a mistake, I was wrong here, but I believe our Lord loves me, I want to follow God, I was not defeated by sin, I want to move on'. Anything more Christian than that?** And what if one of the political crooks among us, corrupt people, are chosen to be somebody's godfather. If they are properly wedded by the Church, would we accept them? What kind of testimony will they give to their godson? A testimony of corruption? Things need to change, our standards need to change. (*Interview with La Nación, December 7, 2014*)

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- ♦ The baptized child is bound by another in things necessary for salvation
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John Paul II

- ♦ These little ones must find in their godparents support and guidance
- ♦ The Church desires that the godparents assume the grave duty of giving a good example
- ♦ God expects that godparents cooperate with parents in educating according to the teachings of the Gospel
- ♦ The mission of the godparents has an eminent importance in catechesis

Benedict XVI

- ♦ The renunciation of sin by godfathers and godmothers constitutes the necessary premises for the Church to confer Baptism
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- ♦ A demanding mission that requires drawing from the good springs
 - ♦ Godparents must offer good example openly and without compromises
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II – Matrimony is indissoluble. Divorce: a sin consistently denounced by the Popes

Code of Canon Law

- ♦ Marriage can be dissolved by no human power

Catechism of Trent

- ♦ Our Lord says clearly: ‘Whosoever shall put away his wife and shall marry another commits adultery’
 - ♦ Bound by the bond of marriage with no hope of marrying another, spouses are rendered less prone to strife and discord

Council of Trent (Ecumenical XIX)

- ♦ Christ Himself merited the grace of indissoluble union for us by His passion
- ♦ Heresy, grievous cohabitation or voluntary absence from the spouse does not dissolve matrimony
 - ♦ If anyone says that the Church errs in teaching, in accordance with Apostolic doctrine, that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved, let him be anathema
 - ♦ Matrimonial causes are subject to ecclesiastical judges

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ Matrimony imposes total fidelity and an unbreakable oneness

Gregory XVI

- ♦ Troublesome efforts against the Sacrament of Matrimony still continue

Leo XIII

- ♦ The Church is ever watchful in guarding the sanctity and indissolubility of Marriage
 - ♦ The wish to declare dissoluble the matrimonial bond is a deadly pest to society
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Stephen III

- ♦ Marrying again when you are already married is to act as the heathens

Pius VII

- ♦ Grave attempt against the divine and natural law

Leo XIII

- ♦ How great are the evils that flow from divorce...
- ♦ Divorce opens a way to every kind of evil-doing in public and in private life
- ♦ Divorce leads to the most extreme licentiousness

Pius XII

- ♦ A poison that is corrupting no small part of the human family

John Paul II

- ♦ Do not separate what God has joined together
- ♦ Children condemned to be orphans of living parents

Benedict XVI

♦ The so-called 'extended' family impresses upon children an erroneous typology of the family

Pius IX

♦ Any other union except the sacramental union is nothing else than disgraceful concubinage

Leo XIII

♦ The family cannot be restored to its dignity except by those laws under which it was established in the Church

John Paul II

- ♦ A second union is in contradiction with the nature of the sacrament of marriage
- ♦ To admit divorced remarried persons to the Eucharist is to lead the faithful into error and confusion
- ♦ The respect due to the sacrament of Matrimony forbids any pastor to perform ceremonies for divorced people who 'remarry'

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ♦ In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ, the Church does not recognize second unions
- ♦ The 'remarried' cannot receive Communion as long as their situation persists – for the same reason, they cannot exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

- ♦ Recalling the doctrine and discipline of the Church

International Theological Commission

♦ Changing the Church's doctrine would be transforming Her into a countersign and a counterwitness of Christ

Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts

- ♦ The Church cannot promote scandal

Pius XII

♦ People feel the need for a better and more elevated concept of domestic life

♦ Catholic marriage may not be compared with the irreverent and shameless image of marriage and infidelity portrayed in films

Pius XI

♦ The modern means of communication seek to deride the sanctity of marriage

♦ The advocates of neo-paganism today proclaim that a new and 'more humane' legislation take the place of 'antiquated laws' on the indissolubility of marriage

I – THE NECESSARY REQUIREMENTS TO BE GODPARENTS OF BAPTISM, AND THE OBLIGATIONS ASSUMED IN THIS MISSION

CODE OF CANON LAW

A sponsor assists the baptized person in Christian initiation

Insofar as possible, a person to be baptized is to be given a sponsor who assists an adult in Christian initiation or together with the parents presents an infant for baptism. A sponsor also helps the baptized person to lead a Christian life in keeping with baptism and to fulfill faithfully the obligations inherent in it. (Code of Canon Law, Can. 872)

The godparents must lead a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on

To be permitted to take on the function of sponsor a person must: [...] be a Catholic who has been confirmed and has already received the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist and who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on. (Code of Canon Law, Can. 874, §1, 3)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Pastors should explain the office of godparents so that they understand what is chiefly necessary for its proper performance

In former times these were commonly called by sacred writers receivers, sponsors or sureties, and are now called godfathers and godmothers. As this is an office pertaining almost to all the laity, pastors should explain it with care, so that the faithful may understand what is chiefly necessary for its proper performance. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2100)

The baptized should be entrusted to the care of someone well skilled in divine things

In the first instance it should be explained why at Baptism, besides those who administer the Sacrament, godparents and sponsors are also required. The propriety of the practice will at

once appear to all if they recollect that Baptism is a spiritual regeneration by which we are born children of God; for of it St. Peter says: As newborn infants, desire the rational milk without guile. As, therefore, every one, after his birth, requires a nurse and instructor by whose assistance and attention he is brought up and formed to learning and useful knowledge, so those, who, by the waters of Baptism, begin to live a spiritual life should be entrusted [...] to the care of someone well skilled in divine things, as to a master under whom, as a spiritual father and guardian of his salvation in holiness. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2100)

The imperative necessity of godparents to assist pastors in the private instruction in the rudiments of faith

[...] of some one [godparents] from whom they may imbibe the precepts of the Christian religion and may be brought up in all holiness, and thus grow gradually in Christ, until, with the Lord's help, they at length arrive at perfect manhood. This necessity must appear still more imperative, if we recollect that pastors, who are charged with the public care of parishes have not sufficient time to undertake the private instruction of children in the rudiments of faith. (Catechism of Trent, 2100)

The negligence with which the office of sponsors is often treated

The faithful are also to be taught the duty of sponsors; for such is the negligence with which this office is treated in the Church that only the bare name of the function remains, while none seem to have the least idea of its sanctity. Let all sponsors, then, at all times recollect that they are strictly bound by this law to exercise a constant vigilance over their spiritual children, and carefully to instruct them in the maxims of a Christian life; so that these may show themselves throughout life to be what their sponsors promised in the solemn ceremony. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2100)

'I admonish you who have acquired godchildren through Baptism, to consider that you stood as sureties before God'

On this subject let us hear the words of Saint

Denis. Speaking in the person of the sponsor he says: I promise, by my constant exhortations **to induce this child, when he comes to a knowledge of religion**, to renounce every thing opposed (to his Christian calling) and **to profess and perform the sacred promises which he now makes**. Saint Augustine also says: **I most especially admonish you, men and women, who have acquired godchildren through Baptism, to consider that you stood as sureties before God**, for those whom you received at the sacred font. Indeed it preeminently becomes every man, who undertakes any office, to be indefatigable in the discharge of its duties; and he who promised to be the teacher and guardian of another should never allow to be deserted him whom he once received under his care and protection as long as he knows the latter to stand in need of either. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2100)

It is the duty of sponsors to admonish their spiritual children to observe chastity

Speaking of this same duty of sponsors, Saint Augustine sums up in a few words the lessons of instruction which they are bound to impart to their spiritual children. They ought, he says, **to admonish them to observe chastity**, love justice, cling to charity; and above all they should teach them the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the rudiments of the Christian religion. (Catechism of Trent, I, no. 2100)

It is easy to decide who are inadmissible to this holy guardianship

It is easy, therefore, to decide who are **inadmissible to this holy guardianship**, that is, those who are unwilling to discharge its duties with fidelity, or who cannot do so with care and accuracy. (Catechism of Trent, I, no. 2100)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Catholics of good life, and obedient to the laws of the Church should be chosen as godfathers and godmothers

Who are the godfathers and godmothers in Baptism?

The godfathers and godmothers in Baptism

are those persons who, in accordance with the decree of the Church, hold the infants at the font, answer for them, and become guarantees in the sight of God for their Christian education, especially in the absence of the parents.

What sort of persons should be chosen as godfathers and godmothers?

There should be chosen as godfathers and godmothers Catholics of good life, and obedient to the laws of the Church.

What are the obligations of godfathers and godmothers?

Godfathers and godmothers are **bound to see that their spiritual children are instructed in the truths of faith**, and live as good Christians and they should **edify them by their good example**. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, Baptism, no. 22.24-25)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The godparent's task is a truly ecclesial function

For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized —child or adult on the road of Christian life. **Their task is a truly ecclesial function (officium)**. The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1255)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The baptized child is bound by another in things necessary for salvation

He who answers in the child's stead: 'I do believe,' does not foretell that the child will believe when it comes to the right age, else he would say: 'He will believe'; **but in the child's stead he professes the Church's faith** which is communicated to that child, the sacrament of which faith is bestowed on it, and to which faith **he is bound by another**. For **there is nothing unfitting in a person being bound by another in things necessary for salvation**. In like manner the sponsor, in answering for the

child, promises to use his endeavors that the child may believe. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, q.71, a.1)

Duty of instructing in the mode of Christian life

Instruction is manifold. [...] A third is instruction in the mode of Christian life: and this belongs to the sponsors. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, q.71, a.4, ad 3)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The catechumens should learn to bear witness of their lives

But this Christian initiation in the catechumenate should be taken care of not only by catechists or priests, but by the entire community of the faithful, so that right from the outset the catechumens may feel that they belong to the people of God. And since the life of the Church is an apostolic one, the catechumens also should learn to cooperate wholeheartedly, by the witness of their lives and by the profession of their faith, in the spread of the Gospel and in the building up of the Church. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no. 14, December 7, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

These little ones must find in their godparents support, guidance and example

In this way you will be better prepared to fulfill your task as the first teachers of faith for your children. **These little ones must find in you, and in their godparents, support and guidance** on the path of fidelity to Christ and the Gospel. **Be examples for them** of solid faith, of deep prayer and of active involvement in the Church's life. (John Paul II. *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, no. 3, January 9, 2000)

The Church desires that the godparents assume the grave duty of giving a good example

The Church is pleased to welcome these

neo-baptized children; **but desires that the parents, godfathers and godmothers, and also the whole community, assume the grave duty of good example**, of upright teaching and authentic Christian formation, so that the child, in the gradual development of his existence, be faithful to his baptismal commitments. (John Paul II. *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, no. 3, January 9, 1983)

God expects that godparents cooperate with parents in educating according to the teachings of the Gospel

The candle lighted from the paschal candle is a symbol of the light of faith which their parents and godparents must continually safeguard and nourish with the life-giving grace of the Spirit. [...] **And from you, godparents, God expects a special cooperation, which is expressed by supporting the parents in educating these infants according to the teachings of the Gospel.** (John Paul II. *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, no. 2, January 7, 2001)

The mission of the godparents has an eminent importance in catechesis

The parents solicit Baptism for their newborn children, pledging to educate them as Christians. To give an even fuller expression of this commitment, they ask other people, known as godparents, to commit themselves to help them – and if necessary replace them – in educating the newly baptized in the faith of the Church. **This use, currently practiced, has an eminent importance in the problematic of catechesis. A baptized child cannot be educated in the faith of the Church without having a systematic catechesis.** The commitments assumed by the parents and godparents at the Baptism of a newborn, refers primarily to the phase of childhood and adolescence. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1-2, December 19, 1984)

BENEDICT XVI

The renunciation of sin by the godfathers and godmothers constitutes the necessary premises for the Church to confer Baptism

Already at the outset the rite of Baptism

recalls insistently the theme of faith when the Celebrant reminds parents that in requesting Baptism for their children, they assume the commitment to 'training them in the practice of the faith'. The parents and godparents are reminded more forcefully of this task in the third part of the celebration that begins with the words addressed to them: 'on your part, you must make it your constant care to bring them up in the practice of the faith. **See that the divine life which God gives them is kept safe from the poison of sin, to grow always stronger in their hearts.** If your faith makes you ready to accept this responsibility... [...] These words of the Rite suggest that, in a certain way, **the profession of faith and the renunciation of sin by the parents, godfathers and godmothers constitute the necessary premises for the Church to confer Baptism upon their children.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, January 10, 2010)

Helped by the example of their godparents, the baptized must walk in this light of faith

It is the role of Baptism to illumine those being baptized with the light of Christ, to open their eyes to Christ's splendour and to introduce them to the mystery of God through the divine light of faith. **The children who are about to be baptized must walk in this light throughout their lives, helped by the words and example of their parents and their godparents.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, January 10, 2010)

A demanding mission that requires drawing from the good springs

The parents' task, helped by the godfather and godmother, is to raise their son or daughter. **Raising children is very demanding** and at times taxes our human capability, which is always limited. However, educating becomes a marvelous mission if it is carried out in collaboration with God who is the first and true educator of every human being. [...] **As adults, we have striven to draw from the good springs** for our own good and for the good of those entrusted to our responsibility, and you in particular, dear parents and godparents, for the good of these children. **And what are**

'the springs of salvation'? They are the Word of God and the sacraments. (Benedict XVI. *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, January 8, 2012)

Godparents must offer good example openly and without compromises

Dear godparents, it is your important duty to sustain and help the parents in their educational task [...] **May you always be able to offer them your good example**, through the practice of the Christian virtues. **It is not easy to express what one believes in openly and without compromises. This is especially true in the context in which we live**, in the face of a society that all too often considers those who live by faith in Jesus as out of fashion and out of time. (Benedict XVI. *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, January 13, 2013)

To carry a baby to the baptismal font is a gift and a joy, but also a responsibility

Dear friends, how great is the gift of Baptism! If we were to take this fully into account our lives would become a continual 'thank you'. **What a joy for Christian parents, who have seen a new creature come into being from their love, to carry the baby to the baptismal font and see him or her reborn from the womb of the Church, for a life without end! It is a gift, a joy, but also a responsibility!** Parents, in fact, together with godparents, must educate their children in accordance with the Gospel. (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, January 11, 2009)

II – MATRIMONY IS INDISSOLUBLE. DIVORCE: A SIN CONSISTENTLY DENOUNCED BY THE POPES

CODE OF CANON LAW

Marriage can be dissolved by no human power

A marriage that is *ratum et consummatum* can be dissolved by no human power and by no cause, except death. (Code of Canon Law, Can. 1141)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Our Lord says clearly: ‘Whosoever shall put away his wife and shall marry another commits adultery’

The selfsame testimony of Christ our Lord easily proves that **the marriage tie cannot be broken by any sort of divorce**. For if by a bill of divorce a woman were freed from the law that binds her to her husband, she might marry another husband without being in the least guilty of adultery. Yet our Lord says clearly: Whosoever shall put away his wife and shall marry another committeth adultery. **Hence it is plain that the bond of marriage can be dissolved by death alone.** (Catechism of Trent, no. 2700)

Bound by the bond of marriage with no hope of marrying another, spouses are rendered less prone to strife and discord

If marriage could be dissolved by divorce, married persons would hardly ever be without causes of disunion, which would be daily supplied by the old enemy of peace and purity; while, on the contrary, now that the faithful must remember that even though separated as to bed and board, **they remain none the less bound by the bond of marriage with no hope of marrying another**, they are by this very fact **rendered less prone to strife and discord**. And even if it sometimes happens that husband and wife become separated, and are unable to bear the want of their partnership any longer, they are easily reconciled by friends and return to their common life. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2700)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Christ Himself merited the grace of indissoluble union for us by His passion

The first parent of the human race expressed the perpetual and indissoluble bond of matrimony under the influence of the divine Spirit, when he said: ‘This now is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh.’ [...] But that by this bond two only are united and joined together, Christ the Lord taught more openly, when referring to those last words, as having been uttered by God, He said: ‘Therefore now they are not two, but one flesh’ (Mt 19:6), and immediately ratified the strength

of this same bond, pronounced by Adam so long ago in these words: ‘What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder’ (Mt 19:6, Mk 10:9). But the grace which was to perfect that natural love, and confirm the indissoluble union, and sanctify those united in marriage, Christ Himself, institutor and perfecter of the venerable sacraments, merited for us by His passion. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1797-1799. Council of Trent, *Session XXIV*, November 11, 1563)

Heresy, grievous cohabitation or voluntary absence from the spouse does not dissolve matrimony

If anyone says that the bond of matrimony can be dissolved because of heresy, or grievous cohabitation, or voluntary absence from the spouse: let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1805. Council of Trent, *Session XXIV*, can. 5, November 11, 1563)

If anyone says that the Church errs in teaching, in accordance with Apostolic doctrine, that the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved, let him be anathema

If anyone says that the Church errs, inasmuch as she has taught and still teaches that in accordance with evangelical and apostolic doctrine (Mt 10:1, 1Cor 7:1) the bond of matrimony cannot be dissolved because of adultery of one of the married persons, and that both, or even the innocent one, who has given no occasion for adultery, cannot during the lifetime of the other contract another marriage, and that he, who after the dismissal of the adulteress shall marry another, is guilty of adultery, and that she also, who after the dismissal of the adulterer shall marry another: let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1807. Council of Trent, *Session XXIV*, can. 7, November 11, 1563)

Matrimonial causes are subject to ecclesiastical judges

If anyone says that matrimonial causes do not belong to ecclesiastical judges: let him be anathema. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1812. Council of Trent, *Session XXIV*, can. 12, November 11, 1563)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Matrimony imposes total fidelity and an unbreakable oneness

For the good of the spouses and their offsprings as well as of society, the existence of the sacred bond no longer depends on human decisions alone. For, **God Himself is the author of matrimony**, endowed as it is with various benefits and purposes. All of these have a very decisive bearing on the continuation of the human race, on the personal development and eternal destiny of the individual members of a family, and on the dignity, stability, peace and prosperity of the family itself and of human society as a whole. [...] **As a mutual gift of two persons, this intimate union and the good of the children impose total fidelity on the spouses and argue for an unbreakable oneness between them.** (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 48, December 7, 1965)

GREGORY XVI

Troublesome efforts against the Sacrament of Matrimony still continue

Now the **honorable marriage of Christians**, which Paul calls 'a great sacrament in Christ and the Church' (Heb 13:4; Eph 5:32 |), **demands our shared concern lest anything contrary to its sanctity and indissolubility is proposed.** Our predecessor Pius VIII would recommend to you his own letters on the subject. However, **troublesome efforts against this sacrament still continue to be made.** The people therefore must be zealously taught that a marriage rightly entered upon cannot be dissolved; for those joined in matrimony God has ordained a perpetual companionship for life and a knot of necessity which cannot be loosed except by death. Recalling that **matrimony is a sacrament and therefore subject to the Church**, let them consider and observe the laws of the Church concerning it. Let them take care lest for any reason they permit that which is an obstruction to the teachings of the canons and the decrees of the councils. **They should be aware that those marriages will have an unhappy end which are entered upon contrary to the discipline of the Church** or without God's favor or because

of concupiscence alone, with no thought of the sacrament and of the mysteries signified by it. (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 12, August 15, 1832)

LEO XIII

The Church is ever watchful in guarding the sanctity and indissolubility of Marriage

It must consequently be acknowledged that **the Church** has deserved exceedingly well of all nations by her **ever watchful care in guarding the sanctity and the indissolubility of marriage.** Again, no small amount of gratitude is owing to her for having, during the last hundred years, openly denounced the wicked laws which have grievously offended on this particular subject; as well as for **her having branded with anathema the baneful heresy obtaining among Protestants touching divorce and separation;** also, for having in many ways condemned the habitual dissolution of marriage among the Greeks; for having declared invalid all marriages contracted upon the understanding that they may be at some future time dissolved; and, lastly, for having, from the earliest times, repudiated the imperial laws which disastrously favored divorce. **As often, indeed, as the supreme pontiffs have resisted the most powerful among rulers, in their threatening demands that divorces carried out by them should be confirmed by the Church,** so often must we account them to have been contending for the safety, not only of religion, but also of the human race. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum Divinae sapientiae*, no. 33-34, February 10, 1880)

The wish to declare dissoluble the matrimonial bond is a deadly pest to society

For difficult it is to imagine a more **deadly pest to the community than the wish to declare dissoluble a bond which the law of God has made perpetual and inseverable.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Longinqua oceani*, no. 14, January 6, 1895)

Marriage has become still more binding and more holy through Christ

But the Church, on the contrary, teaches that **'marriage, honorable in all,'** which God himself instituted in the very beginning of the world, and made indissoluble for the propagation and preservation of the human species, has **become still more binding and more holy through Christ,** who raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, and chose to use it as the figure of His own union with the Church. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quod apostolici muneris*, no. 8, December 28, 1878)

STEPHEN III

Marrying again when you are already married is to act as the heathens

It is wicked of you even to entertain the thought of **marrying again when you are already married.** You ought not to act thus, who profess to follow the law of God, and punish others to prevent men acting in this unlawful manner. **Such things do the heathen.** (Pope Stephen III. *Letter Dum omnium electorum to Carloman and Charlemagne*, Kings of the Franks, 771, English -The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages, p. 380)

PIUS VII

Grave attempt against the divine and natural law

Every divorce, among living Christians, as supposing the dissolution of the conjugal bond legitimately contracted and confirmed, **is nothing other than a grave attempt, if not against natural law** (about which the scholastics dispute among themselves) **at least, against the positive written divine law,** as clearly taught by the Holy Council of Trent. (Pius VII. *Instruction Catholica nunc*, from the Holy Office, to the Prefects of the Missions of Martinica and Guadalupe, French Antilles, July 6, 1817)

LEO XIII

How great are the evils that flow from divorce...

Truly, it is **hardly possible to describe how great are the evils that flow from divorce.** Matrimonial contracts are by it made variable; mutual kindness is weakened; deplorable inducements to unfaithfulness are supplied; harm is done to the education and training of children; occasion is afforded for the breaking up of homes; the seeds of dissension are sown among families; the dignity of womanhood is lessened and brought low, and women run the risk of being deserted after having ministered to the pleasures of men. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum Divinae sapientiae*, no. 29, February 10, 1880)

Divorce opens a way to every kind of evil-doing in public and in private life

Since, then, nothing has such power to lay waste families and destroy the mainstay of kingdoms as the corruption of morals, it is easily seen that **divorces** are in the highest degree hostile to the prosperity of families and States, springing as they do from the depraved morals of the people, and, as experience shows us, **opening out a way to every kind of evil-doing in public and in private life.** Further still, if the matter be duly pondered, we shall clearly see these evils to be the more especially dangerous, because, divorce once being tolerated, there will be no restraint powerful enough to keep it within the bounds marked out or presumed. **Great indeed is the force of example, and even greater still the might of passion. With such incitements it must needs follow that the eagerness for divorce, daily spreading by devious ways, will seize upon the minds of many like a virulent contagious disease, or like a flood of water bursting through every barrier.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum Divinae sapientiae*, no. 29-30, February 10, 1880)

Divorce leads to the most extreme licentiousness

It is easily understood how nefarious – as much for the home as for public life – **are these divorces that proceed from a degradation of customs, and that lead in turn to the most**

extreme licentiousness. (Leo XIII. *Allocution Afferre iucundiora*, The Secret Consistory, no. 1, December 16, 1901)

Pius XII

A poison that is corrupting no small part of the human family

Whoever examines today the causes that can be attributed to the moral decay, the poison that is corrupting no small part of the human family, will soon discover that one of the most ill-fated and guilty sources may be found in the legislation and in the practice of divorce. **The creations and laws of God always have a beneficial and powerful action; but when human thoughtlessness or malice gets in the way with disturbance and disorder, then the beneficial fruit, which disappears, is succeeded by an incalculable culmination of harm,** as if nature itself was indignantly stirred up against the work of the men. **And who can deny or doubt that the indissolubility of marriage be creation and law of God,** a most robust support for the family, for the greatness of the nation, for the defense of the Fatherland, that will always find the arm and shield of its prosperity in the bosom of her gallant youth? (Pius XII. *Allocution Quando, dilleti*, To newlyweds, no. 6, April 29, 1942)

JOHN PAUL II

Do not separate what God has joined together

Fight against the plague of divorce that ruins families and so negatively affects the education of children. **Do not separate what God has joined together.** (John Paul II. *Homily in Caracas*, no. 6, January 27, 1985)

Children condemned to be orphans of living parents

What is needed then is for human societies, and the families who live within them, often in a context of struggle between the civilization of love and its opposites, to seek their solid foundation in a correct vision of man and of everything which determines the full 'realization' of his humanity. **Opposed**

to the civilization of love is certainly the phenomenon of so-called 'free love'; this is particularly dangerous because it is usually suggested as a way of following one's 'real' feelings, but it is in fact destructive of love. How many families have been ruined because of 'free love'! **To follow in every instance a 'real' emotional impulse by invoking a love 'liberated' from all conditionings, means nothing more than to make the individual a slave to those human instincts which Saint Thomas calls 'passions of the soul'. 'Free love' exploits human weaknesses; it gives them a certain 'vener' of respectability with the help of seduction and the blessing of public opinion.** In this way there is an attempt to 'soothe' consciences by creating a 'moral alibi'. **But not all of the consequences are taken into consideration, especially when the ones who end up paying are, apart from the other spouse, the children, deprived of a father or mother and condemned to be in fact orphans of living parents.** (John Paul II. *Letter to Families, Gratissimam sane*, no. 14, February 2, 1994)

BENEDICT XVI

The so-called 'extended' family impresses upon children an erroneous typology of the family

The Church cannot be indifferent to the separation of spouses and to divorce, facing the break-up of homes and the consequences for the children that divorce causes. If they are to be instructed and educated, children need extremely precise and concrete reference points, in other words parents who are determined and reliable who contribute in quite another way to their upbringing. Nor, it is this principle that the practice of divorce is undermining and jeopardizing **with the so-called 'extended' family that multiplies 'father' and 'mother' figures** and explains why today the majority of those who feel 'orphans' are not children without parents but children who have too many. **This situation, with the inevitable interference and the intersection of relationships, cannot but give rise to inner conflict and confusion, contributing to creating and impressing upon children an erroneous typology of the family,** which in a certain sense can be compared to cohabitation, because of its precariousness. (Benedict XVI.

Address to the Bishops of Brazil on their ad limina visit, September 25, 2009)

PIUS IX

Any other union except the sacramental union is nothing else than disgraceful concubinage

Because no Catholic is ignorant or cannot know that matrimony is truly and properly one of the seven sacraments of the evangelical law, instituted by Christ the Lord, and that for that reason, there can be no marriage between the faithful without there being at one and the same time a sacrament, and that, therefore, any other union of man and woman among Christians, except the sacramental union, even if contracted under the power of any civil law, is nothing else than a disgraceful and death-bringing concubinage very frequently condemned by the Church, and hence, that the sacrament can never be separated from the conjugal agreement (see n. 1773), and that it pertains absolutely to the power of the Church to discern those things which can pertain in any way to the same matrimony. (Denzinger 1640. Pius IX. *Allocution Acerbissimum vobiscum*, September 27, 1852)

LEO XIII

The family cannot be restored to its dignity except by those laws under which it was established in the Church

Now, the training of youth most conducive to the defense of true faith and religion and to the preservation of morality must find its beginning from an early stage within the circle of home life; and this family Christian training sadly undermined in these our times, cannot possibly be restored to its due dignity, save by those laws under which it was established in the Church by her Divine Founder Himself. Our Lord Jesus Christ, by raising to the dignity of a sacrament the contract of matrimony, in which He would have His own union with the Church typified, not only made the marriage tie more holy, but, in addition, provided efficacious sources of aid for parents and children alike, so that, by the discharge of their duties one to another, they might with greater ease attain

to happiness both in time and in eternity. But when impious laws, setting at naught the sanctity of this great sacrament, put it on the same footing of mere civil contracts, the lamentable result followed, that, outraging the dignity of Christian matrimony, citizens made use of legalized concubinage in place of marriage; husband and wife neglected their bounden duty to each other; [...] the bonds of domestic love were loosened; and alas! the worst scandal and of all the most ruinous to public morality, very frequently an unholy passion opened the door to disastrous and fatal separations. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilio*, no. 10, April 21, 1878)

JOHN PAUL II

A second union is in contradiction with the nature of the Sacrament of Marriage

A second union is in contradiction with the nature of the sacrament of marriage, in which is expressed the indefectible love of Christ for his Church. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Belgium on their ad limina visit*, no. 6, July 3, 1992)

To admit divorced remarried persons to the Eucharist is to lead the faithful into error and confusion

However, the Church reaffirms her practice, which is based upon Sacred Scripture, of not admitting to Eucharistic Communion divorced persons who have remarried. They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church's teaching about the indissolubility of marriage. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 84, November 22, 1981)

The respect due to the Sacrament of Matrimony forbids any pastor to perform ceremonies for divorced people who 'remarry'

The respect due to the sacrament of Matrimony [...] forbids any pastor, for whatever reason or pretext even of a pastoral nature, to perform ceremonies of any kind for divorced people who remarry. Such ceremonies would give the impression of the celebration of a new sacramentally valid marriage, and would thus lead people into error concerning the indissolubility of a validly contracted marriage. By acting in this way, the Church professes her own fidelity to Christ and to His truth. At the same time she shows motherly concern for these children of hers, especially those who, through no fault of their own, have been abandoned by their legitimate partner. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation*, Familiaris consortio, no. 84, November 22, 1981)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ, the Church does not recognize second unions

Today there are numerous Catholics in many countries who have recourse to civil divorce and contract new civil unions. **In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ** – ‘Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery’ (Mk 10: 11-12) **The Church maintains that a new union cannot be recognized as valid**, if the first marriage was. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1650)

The ‘remarried’ cannot receive Communion as long as their situation persists – for the same reason, they cannot exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities

If the divorced are remarried civilly, they find themselves in a situation that objectively contravenes God’s law. Consequently, **they cannot receive Eucharistic communion as long as this situation persists. For the same reason, they cannot exercise certain ecclesial responsibilities.** Reconciliation through the sacrament of Penance can be granted only to those who have repented for having violated the sign of the covenant and of fidelity to Christ, and who are committed to living in

complete continence. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1650)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Recalling the doctrine and discipline of the Church

With respect to the aforementioned new pastoral proposals, this Congregation deems itself obliged therefore to recall the doctrine and discipline of the Church in this matter. In fidelity to the words of Jesus Christ (Mk 10:11-12), the Church affirms that a new union cannot be recognised as valid if the preceding marriage was valid. 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.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the reception of Holy Communion by the divorced and remarried members of the faithful*, no. 4, September 14, 1994)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

Changing the Church’s doctrine would be transforming Her into a countersign and a counterwitness of Christ

The approach of the divorced and remarried to the Eucharist is plainly incompatible with the mystery of which the Church is the servant and witness. In receiving the divorced and remarried to the Eucharist, the Church would let such parties believe that they can, on the level of signs, communicate with him whose conjugal mystery they disavow on the level of reality. **To do so would be, moreover, on the part of the Church to declare herself in accord with the baptized at the moment when they enter or remain in a clearly objective contradiction with the life, the thought, and the being itself of the Lord as Spouse of the Church. If the Church could give the sacrament of unity to those who have broken with her on an essential point of the mystery of Christ, she would no longer be the sign of the witness of Christ but rather a countersign and a counterwitness.** (International Theological Commission. *Propositions on the Doctrine of Christian Marriage*, no. 12, 1977)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR LEGISLATIVE TEXTS

The Church cannot promote scandal

In effect, the reception of the Body of Christ when one is publicly unworthy constitutes an objective harm to the ecclesial communion: it is a behavior that affects the rights of the Church and of all the faithful to live in accord with the exigencies of that communion. In the concrete case of the admission to Holy Communion of faithful who are divorced and remarried, the scandal, understood as an action that prompts others towards wrongdoing, affects at the same time both the sacrament of the Eucharist and the indissolubility of marriage. That scandal exists even if such behavior, unfortunately, no longer arouses surprise: in fact it is precisely with respect to the deformation of the conscience that it becomes more necessary for Pastors to act, with as much patience as firmness, as a protection to the sanctity of the Sacraments and a defense of Christian morality, and for the correct formation of the faithful. (Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts. *Declaration concerning the admission to Holy Communion of faithful who are divorced and remarried*, no. 1, July 7, 2000)

PIUS XII

People feel the need for a better and more elevated concept of domestic life

What a great collaboration could the press, radio, and cinema offer; but also, great is its responsibility regarding the family! Rather than demeaning itself with the intrigues of divorce and separation, would it not be better for the cinema to be put at the service of the unity of marriage, of conjugal fidelity, of family health and the happiness of the home? People feel the need for a better and more elevated concept of domestic life. (Pius XII. *Address to delegates from the International Union of Family Organisms*, September 20, 1949)

Catholic marriage may not be compared with the irreverent and shameless image of marriage and infidelity portrayed in films

The whole concept of the field of life, which is

found in the sixth commandment, is infected by what might be called the ‘film marriage’, which is nothing other than an irreverent and shameless image of the contaminations of marriage and marital infidelity, abasing the view of matrimony as disconnected from all moral bonds, merely as a scene and source of sensual pleasure, and not as a work of God, as a holy institution, and as a natural duty and pure joy, in which the spiritual element always prevails and dominates; a school and at the same time the true triumph of faithful love until the tomb, and to the gates of eternity. (Pius XII. *Address to the Parish Priests and Lenten preachers of Rome*, February 23, 1944)

PIUS XI

The modern means of communication seek to deride the sanctity of marriage

When we consider the great excellence of chaste wedlock, Venerable Brethren, it appears all the more regrettable that particularly in our day we should witness this divine institution often scorned and on every side degraded. For now, alas, not secretly nor under cover, but openly, with all sense of shame put aside, now by word again by writings, by theatrical productions of every kind, by romantic fiction, by amorous and frivolous novels, by cinematographs portraying in vivid scene, in addresses broadcast by radio telephony, in short by all the inventions of modern science, the sanctity of marriage is trampled upon and derided; divorce, adultery, all the basest vices either are extolled or at least are depicted in such colors as to appear to be free of all reproach and infamy. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Casti connubi*, no. 44-45, December 31, 1930)

The advocates of neo-paganism today proclaim that a new and ‘more humane’ legislation take the place of ‘antiquated laws’ on the indissolubility of marriage

The advocates of the neo-paganism of today have learned nothing from the sad state of affairs, but instead, day by day, more and more vehemently, they continue by legislation to attack the indissolubility of the marriage bond, proclaiming that the lawfulness of

divorce must be recognized, and that the antiquated laws should give place to a new and more humane legislation. Many and varied are the grounds put forward for divorce [by them]. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Casti connubii*, no. 85, December 31, 1930)

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The exclusion of divorced people who contract a second marriage from communion is not a sanction. The Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak

Some of Francis' affirmations regarding the Eucharist have been utilized for perverse purposes – by those who always do so – in order to sow confusion among the simple faithful. The latter often lack the formation necessary to grasp the subtle theological nuances involved in statements that are widely broadcasted. For this reason, it is indispensable to clarify certain expressions that have been causing perplexity... The Church, as a good Mother, has an abundance of immortal teachings promulgated by her Magisterium, within the reach of even her most simple children, for these teachings stand out for their clarity and precision. In this also, she follows the words of her divine Founder: 'Do not be afraid any longer, little flock' (Lk 12:32).

Catholic doctrine is solidly based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Can this doctrine possibly be changed or reinterpreted in our times, when it was established by the Son of God himself?

FRANCIS

The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems. (Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, no.47)

[Andrea Tornielli] In the Apostolic Exhortation you called for prudent and bold pastoral choices regarding the sacraments. What were you referring to?

[Francis] When I speak of prudence I do not think of it in terms of an attitude that paralyzes but as the virtue of a leader. Prudence is a virtue of government. So is boldness. One must govern with boldness and prudence. **I spoke about baptism and communion as spiritual food that helps one to go on; it is to be considered a remedy not a prize.** Some immediately thought about the sacraments for remarried divorcees, but I did not refer to any specific cases; I simply wanted to point out a principle. **We must try to facilitate people's faith, rather than control it.** Last year in Argentina I condemned the attitude of some priests who did not baptize the children of unmarried mothers. This is a sick mentality.

[Andrea Tornielli] And what about remarried divorcees?

[Francis] **The exclusion of divorced people who contract a second marriage from communion is not a sanction. It is important to remember this. But I didn't talk about this in the Exhortation.** (*Interview with Andrea Tornielli*, December 14, 2013)

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SACRED SCRIPTURE

Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery

He said to them, 'Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery.' (Mt 19:8-9)

Adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God

Do not be deceived; neither fornicators nor idolaters nor adulterers nor boy prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. (1Cor 6:9-10)

Whoever receives the Eucharist unworthily 'eats and drinks judgment on himself'

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1Cor 11: 27-29)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Church does not have the power to contravene the disposition of divine wisdom

Thus the *marriage bond* has been established by God himself in such a way that **a marriage concluded and consummated between baptized persons can never be dissolved.** This bond, which results from the free human act of the spouses and their consummation of the marriage, is a reality, henceforth irrevocable, and gives rise to a covenant guaranteed by God's fidelity. **The Church does not have the power to contravene this disposition of divine wisdom.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1640)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

No one conscious of mortal sin should approach the Holy Eucharist, however contrite he may seem to himself

Now ecclesiastical usage declares that this examination is necessary, that **no one conscious of mortal sin, however contrite he may seem to himself, should approach the Holy Eucharist without a previous sacramental confession.** This, the holy Synod has decreed, is always to be observed by all Christians, even by those priests on whom by their office it may be incumbent to celebrate, provided the recourses of a confessor be not lacking to them. But if in an urgent necessity a priest should celebrate without previous confession, let him confess as soon as possible [see no. 1138 ff.]. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1647. Council of Trent, *Session XIII, The Preparation that must be employed to receive the Holy Eucharist worthily*, October 11, 1551)

Whoever publicly asserts that one may receive communion in mortal sin is excommunicated

If anyone says that **faith alone is sufficient preparation for receiving the sacrament of the most Holy Eucharist: let him be anathema.** And that so great a Sacrament may not be unworthily received, and therefore unto death and condemnation, **this holy Council ordains and declares that sacramental confession must necessarily be made beforehand by those whose conscience is burdened by mortal sin, however contrite they may consider themselves. If anyone moreover teaches the contrary or preaches or obstinately asserts, or even publicly by disputation shall presume to defend the contrary, by that fact itself he is excommunicated.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 1661. Julius III, Council of Trent, *Session XIV, Canons on the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist*, October 11, 1551)

PIUS X

Frequent communion in the state of grace and with a right and pious intention

Frequent and daily communion... must be open to all the faithful of whatever class or condition, so that none who is **in the state of grace and approaches the holy table with a**

right and pious intention may be turned away from It. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3379. Pius X, *Decree Sacra Tridentina Synodus, Daily Eucharistic Communion*, December 20th, 1905)

JOHN PAUL II

No Christian who is conscious of grave sin can receive the eucharist

However, it must be remembered that the Church, guided by faith in this great sacrament, teaches that **no Christian who is conscious of grave sin can receive the Eucharist before having obtained God's forgiveness**. This we read in the instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium* which, duly approved by Paul VI, fully confirms the teaching of the Council of Trent: 'The eucharist is to be offered to the faithful also 'as a remedy, which frees us from daily faults and preserves us from mortal sin' and they are to be shown the fitting way of using the penitential parts of the liturgy of the Mass.' (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 27, December 2, 1984)

Reasons why the Church reaffirms her practice of not admitting to Communion divorced persons who have 'remarried'

The Church reaffirms her practice, which is based upon Sacred Scripture, of not admitting to Eucharistic Communion divorced persons who have remarried. They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church's teaching about the indissolubility of marriage. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 84, November 22, 1981)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE INTERPRETATION OF LEGISLATIVE TEXTS

Obstinate persistence in manifest grave sin closes the doors of the Eucharist

The third condition set out in the Canon

– 'those who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin' – is known to have caused the most conflicting and even polemical commentaries, above all by those who, with reductive and merely positivist interpretation of the norm, have sought to contrast it with the doctrine of the Magisterium. **Yet, the norm is clear in determining three requirements for the Minister of the Sacrament to deny Communion: that grave sin be involved, that the sin be manifest in the external forum – not hidden – and that the person persevere obstinately in this state. Among those who are in such an irregular situation are included: a) so-called 'free unions'; b) those who contract only civil marriage; c) the divorced who enter into 'civil remarriage'.** (Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts. *The Eucharist in the Juridical Order of the Church*, November 12, 2005)

PIUS XI

Christ Himself lays stress on the indissolubility and firmness of the marriage bond

In the first place Christ Himself lays stress on the indissolubility and firmness of the marriage bond when He says: 'What God hath joined together let no man put asunder,' (Mt 19:6) and: 'Everyone that putteth away his wife and marieth another committeth adultery, and he that marieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery' (Lk 14:18). And Saint Augustine clearly places what he calls the blessing of matrimony in this indissolubility when he says: 'In the sacrament it is provided that the marriage bond should not be broken, and that a husband or wife, if separated, should not be joined to another even for the sake of offspring' (*De Gen. ad litt. lib. IX, cap. 7, n. 12*). (Pius XI. *Encyclical Casti connubii*, no. 32-33, December 31, 1930)

GREGORY XVI

Matrimony is a sacrament and therefore subject to the Church

The people therefore must be zealously taught that a marriage rightly entered upon cannot be dissolved; for those joined in matrimony

God has ordained a perpetual companionship for life and a knot of necessity which cannot be loosed except by death. **Recalling that matrimony is a sacrament and therefore subject to the Church**, let them consider and observe the laws of the Church concerning it. Let them take care lest for any reason they permit that which is an obstruction to the teachings of the canons and the decrees of the councils. They should be aware that those marriages will have **an unhappy end which are entered upon contrary to the discipline of the Church or without God's favor or because of concupiscence alone**, with no thought of the sacrament and of the mysteries signified by it. (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 12, August 15, 1832)

BENEDICT XVI

The Church's practice does not admit the 'remarried' to the sacraments: their condition contradicts Christ's union with the Church, signified by the Eucharist

The Synod of Bishops confirmed **the Church's practice**, based on Sacred Scripture (cf. Mk 10:2-12), **of not admitting the divorced and remarried to the sacraments**, since their state and their condition of life objectively contradict the loving union of Christ and the Church signified and made present in the Eucharist. (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 29, February 22, 2007)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Communion for divorced persons in second union openly contradicts the Church's teaching

Members of the faithful who live together as husband and wife with persons other than their legitimate spouses may not receive Holy

Communion. Should they judge it possible to do so, pastors and confessors, given the gravity of the matter and the spiritual good of these persons (cf. 1Cor 11:27-29) as well as the common good of the Church, have the serious duty to admonish them that such a judgment of conscience openly contradicts the Church's teaching (cf. Code of Canon Law, 978 §2). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the reception of Holy Communion by the divorced and remarried members of the faithful*, no. 6, September 14, 1994)

PAUL VI

We may not silence the increased obligation of conjugal fidelity

We may not silence the increased obligation of conjugal fidelity within the family; now that legal divorce has been granted the possibility of being carried out with impunity. (Paul VI. *General audience*, May 24, 1978)

SYNOD OF ELVIRA

An adulterous woman may not receive communion

Likewise let the faithful woman, who has left an adulterous husband and attracts another faithful one, be forbidden to marry; if she should marry, let her not receive communion unless he whom she has left has previously departed this world; unless by chance the exigency of illness should compel the giving. (Denzinger-Hünemann 117. Synod of Elvira, *The Indissolubility of Matrimony*, Can. 9, between 300-306)

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The Church cannot have closed doors, not even to the sacraments

The constant changes in a society in which God is increasingly ignored present real pastoral challenges for the Church. Nevertheless, faithful to its mission, she cannot betray certain principles despite having to adapt some aspects of pastoral praxis to the new circumstances. However, it is no novelty that for quite some time, many voices have been raised – both within and outside the Church – regarding an allegedly ‘excessive frugality’ in administering the Sacraments. On reading Francis’ words on the necessity of not closing doors to the Sacraments for any reason, within the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, these same voices grew in passion... It was the dawn of long awaited novelties! What could have been the intention of the Holy Father in bringing up this problem? It is opportune to recall certain concepts...

FRANCIS

The Church is called to be the house of the Father, with doors always wide open. One concrete sign of such openness is that our church doors should always be open, so that if someone, moved by the Spirit, comes there looking for God, he or she will not find a closed door. There are **other doors that should not be closed either**. Everyone can share in some way in the life of the Church; everyone can be part of the community, **nor should the doors of the sacraments be closed for simply any reason**. This is especially true of the sacrament which is itself ‘the door’: baptism. The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness. Frequently, we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems. (*Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 47)

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SACRED SCRIPTURE

Whoever receives the Eucharist unworthily 'eats and drinks judgment on himself'

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself. (1Cor 11:27-29)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

To receive the Eucharist it is necessary to be in the state of grace

Now ecclesiastical usage declares that this examination is necessary, that **no one conscious of mortal sin, however contrite he may seem to himself, should approach the Holy Eucharist without a previous sacramental confession.** This, the holy Synod has decreed, is always to be observed by all Christians, even by those priests on whom by their office it may be incumbent to celebrate, provided the recourses of a confessor be not lacking to them. But if in an urgent necessity a priest should celebrate

without previous confession, let him confess as soon as possible [see no. 1138 ff.]. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1647. Council of Trent, Session XIII, *The Preparation that must be employed to receive the Holy Eucharist worthily*, October 11, 1551)

PIUS X

Frequent Communion... but in the state of grace and with upright intention

Let frequent and daily communion... be available to all Christians of every order or condition, so that no one, **who is in the state of grace and approaches the sacred table with a right and pious mind,** may be prevented from this. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3379. Pius X, *From the Decree of the Congregation of the Holy Council*, December 16, 1905)

Necessity of a firm resolution to never sin in order to receive Communion

Although it is especially expedient that those who practice frequent and daily communion be free from venial sins, at least those completely deliberate, and of their effect, it is enough, nevertheless, **that they be free from mortal sins, with the resolution that they will never sin in the future.** (Denzinger-Hünemann

3381. Pius X, *From the Decree of the Congregation of the Holy Council*, December 16, 1905)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Confirmation also requires the state of grace

To receive Confirmation **one must be in a state of grace**. One should receive the sacrament of Penance in order to be cleansed for the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1310)

Necessity of confessing mortal sins in order to approach the Eucharistic table

Anyone conscious of a grave sin must receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before coming to communion. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1385)

Eucharistic ‘intercommunion’ with communities derived from the ‘Reformation’ is not possible

Ecclesial communities derived from the Reformation and separated from the Catholic Church, ‘have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Holy Orders’ (UR 22). **It is for this reason that Eucharistic intercommunion with these communities is not possible for the Catholic Church.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1400)

CODE OF CANON LAW

Only the baptized may receive the Sacraments

A person who has not received baptism cannot be admitted validly to the other sacraments. (Code of Canon Law, 842 §1)

In order to receive the Sacraments one must be suitably prepared

Pastors of souls and other members of the Christian faithful, according to their respective ecclesiastical function, have the duty to take care that **those who seek the sacraments**

are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction, attentive to the norms issued by competent authority. (Code of Canon Law 843 §2)

The Sacraments may only be administered to Catholics

Catholic ministers administer the sacraments licitly to Catholic members of the Christian faithful alone, who likewise receive them licitly from Catholic ministers alone, without prejudice to the prescripts of §§2, 3, and 4 of this canon, and can. 861, §2. (Code of Canon Law 844 §1)

PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR INTERPRETATION

OF LEGISLATIVE TEXTS

Necessity of adequate dispositions in order to receive the Sacraments

‘The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the Sacraments’ (CIC, can. 213; CCEO, can. 16). This fundamental right of all the faithful – clerics and lay persons, which is a public right derived from the same condition of ‘*persona in Ecclesia Christi*’ (cf. CIC, can. 96) – corresponds to a duty of the Hierarchy — an obligation of justice, and not just of charity — that can. 843 formulates in the following manner: **‘Sacred ministers cannot deny the Sacrament to those who seek them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.’** (Pontifical Council for Interpretation of Legislative Texts. *The Eucharist in the Juridical Order of the Church*, November 12, 2005)

Frequent Communion – only without the awareness of grave sin

Anyone of the faithful, if duly prepared (rite dispositus), has the right – and the duty according to the words of Jesus in his discourse about the Bread of life in the synagogue of Capharnaum (Jn 6:55) – **of receiving the Holy Eucharist** (cf. can. 213; 912), at least once a year (can. 920). This is the minimal expression of a right-duty, which is linked to the obligation to participate each Sunday or feast of precept

in the celebration of the Holy Mass, as well as the recommendation to **receive Communion, if the soul is in grace with no awareness of grave sin.** (Pontifical Council for Interpretation of Legislative Texts. *The Eucharist in the Juridical Order of the Church*, November 12, 2005)

Obstinacy in manifest grave sin closes the doors to the Sacraments

‘All baptized persons not prohibited by law can and must be admitted to Holy Communion’ (CIC, can. 912). Since **the Eucharist is the most exalted of all the Sacraments** – as in It, not only is divine grace received, but also the very Author of grace – **it is understandable that the universal law of the Church establish a series of norms, some even of divine right, not only to protect and regulate the exercising of this right but also to limit it, when so required by the due veneration to the Body and Blood of Christ, the proper formation of consciences and the common good of the ecclesial society.** (Pontifical Council for Interpretation of Legislative Texts. *The Eucharist in the Juridical Order of the Church*, November 12, 2005)

Cases of states of sin which close the doors to the Eucharist

The third condition set out in the canon – ‘those who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin’ – is known to have caused the most conflicting and even polemical commentaries, above all by those who, with reductive and merely positivist interpretation of the norm, have sought to contrast it with the doctrine of the Magisterium. Yet, **the norm is clear in determining three requirements for the Minister of the Sacrament to deny Communion: that grave sin be involved, that the sin be manifest in the external forum – not hidden – and that the person persevere obstinately in this state. Among those who are in such an irregular situation are included: a) so-called ‘free unions’; b) those who contract only civil marriage c) the divorced who enter into ‘civil remarriage’.** (Pontifical Council for Interpretation of Legislative Texts, *The Eucharist in the Juridical Order of the Church*, November 12, 2005)

Communion should be denied to the publically unworthy

Pastors must strive to explain to the faithful implicated, the true ecclesial sense of the norm, so that they can understand it or at least respect it. But when situations in which these precautionary measures have not had their effect or were not possible, **the Eucharistic Minister must refuse to give It to whoever is publically unworthy.** This must be done with extreme charity, attempting to explain in a timely manner the reasons which obliged this. (Pontifical Council for Interpretation of Legislative Texts. *The Eucharist in the Juridical Order of the Church*, November 12, 2005)

JOHN PAUL II

The Tridentine doctrine regarding the reception of the Sacraments is still in effect

And keep in mind that the teaching of the Tridentine Council regarding integral confession of mortal sins, is, and always will always be, in effect (Sess. XIV, Ch. 5 and can. 7: Denz-Sch.1679-1683; 1707); the norm inculcated by Saint Paul and by the Council of Trent itself, in virtue of which **the worthy reception of the Eucharist should be preceded by the confession of sins – when one is conscious of mortal sin – is and will always be in effect in the Church** (Sess. XIII, Ch. 7, and can. 11: Denz.-Sch. 1647-1661). (John Paul II. *Speech to members of the Sacred Apostolic Penitentiary and the Penitentiaries of the Roman Patriarchal Basilicas*, January 30, 1981)

One may not receive the Eucharist while conscious of grave sin without previous confession

However, it must be remembered that the Church, guided by faith in this great sacrament, teaches that **no Christian who is conscious of grave sin can receive the Eucharist before having obtained God’s forgiveness.** This we read in the instruction *Eucharisticum Mysterium* which, duly approved by Paul VI, fully confirms the teaching of the Council of Trent: “The Eucharist is to be offered to the faithful also ‘as a remedy, which frees us from daily faults and preserves us from mortal sin’ and they are to be

shown the fitting way of using the penitential parts of the liturgy of the Mass. 'The person who wishes to receive Holy Communion is to be reminded of the precept: Let a man examine himself (1Cor 11:28). And the Church's custom shows that such an examination is necessary, **because no one who is conscious of being in mortal sin, however contrite he may believe himself to be, is to approach the Holy Eucharist without having first made a sacramental Confession**'. (John Paul II. *Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 27, December 2, 1984)

The danger of seeking paths of mercy other than those established by God

The first principle is that of compassion and mercy, whereby the church, as the continuer in history of Christ's presence and work, not wishing the death of the sinner but that the sinner should be converted and live, and careful not to break the bruised reed or to quench the dimly burning wick, ever seeks to offer, as far as possible, the path of return to God and of reconciliation with him. **The other principle is that of truth and consistency, whereby the Church does not agree to call good evil and evil good.** Basing herself on these two complementary principles, the church can only invite her children who find themselves in these painful situations **to approach the Divine Mercy by other ways, not however, through the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist until such time as they have attained the required dispositions.** (John Paul II. *Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 34, December 2, 1984)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Concrete application of the prohibition of Communion for divorced persons in second union

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** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1650). This norm is not at all a punishment or a discrimination against the divorced and remarried, but rather expresses an objective situation that **of itself renders impossible the reception of Holy Communion: 'They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and his Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church's teaching about the indissolubility of marriage'** (Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 84: AAS 74 (1982) 185-186). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops concerning the reception of the Holy Communion by the divorced and remarried members of the faithful*, no.4, September 14, 1994)

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Francis affirms that John Paul II and the Catechism of the Catholic Church condemn capital punishment

We live in a society often scarred by violence. And, the greater the violence, the more our society yearns for peace as avidly as a shipwrecked man looks to a lifeboat... We note, however, that some suggest that this peace can be reached by simply handing over the reins of law to the hands of crime, thus setting aside the most basic concepts of justice! What light does the Church throw upon the legitimacy of sanctions by public authorities to offences against the common good? Does the Church absolutely condemn capital punishment? Let's clarify some concepts...

FRANCIS

Nowadays the death penalty is inadmissible, no matter how serious the crime committed. It is an offence against the inviolability of life and the dignity of the human person, which contradicts God's plan for man and society, and his merciful justice, and **impedes the penalty from fulfilling any just objective. It does not render justice to the victims, but rather fosters vengeance.** [...]

The death penalty is contrary to the sentiment of humanitas and to divine mercy, which must be the model for human justice. ... There is discussion in some quarters about the method of killing, as if it were possible to find ways of 'getting it right'. ... **But there is no humane way of killing another person.** (*Letter to the delegation from the International Commission against the Death Penalty*, March 20, 2015)

It is impossible to imagine that States today fail to employ a means other than capital punishment to protect the lives of other people from the unjust aggressor. **St John Paul II condemned the death penalty** (cf. Encyclical Letter *Evangelium Vitae*, n. 56), as does the **Catechism of the Catholic Church** (n. 2267) as well. [...] **All Christians and men of good will are thus called today to fight not only for the abolition of the death penalty,** whether legal or illegal, and in all its forms, but also in order to improve prison conditions, with respect for the human dignity of the people deprived of their freedom. **And I link this to life imprisonment.** A short time ago the life sentence was taken out of the Vatican's Criminal Code. **A life sentence is just a death penalty in disguise.** (*Address to the delegates of the International Association of Penal Law*, October 23, 2014)

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SACRED SCRIPTURE

The legitimate authority must do justice and chastise the evildoer

Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgment upon themselves. **For rulers are not a cause of fear to good conduct, but to evil.** Do you wish to have no fear of authority? Then do what is good and you will receive approval from it, for it is a servant of God for your good. **But if you do evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword without purpose; it is the servant of God to inflict wrath on the evildoer.** (Rom 13:1-4)

THE CATECHISM OF TRENT

The Fifth Commandment – an exception: the execution of criminals. The civil authority gives security to life by repressing outrage and violence

[Exceptions to the Fifth Commandment of the Decalogue]

With regard to the prohibitory part, it should first be taught **what kinds of killing are not forbidden by this Commandment.** It is not prohibited to kill animals; for if God permits man to eat them, it is also lawful to kill them. When, says St. Augustine, we hear the words, 'Thou shalt not kill,' we do not understand this of the fruits of the earth, which are insensible, nor of irrational animals, which form no part of human society. Another kind of lawful slaying belongs to the civil authorities, **to whom is entrusted power of life and death,** by the legal and judicious exercise of which they punish

the guilty and protect the innocent. The just use of this power, far from involving the crime of murder, is an act of paramount obedience to this Commandment which prohibits murder. **The end of the Commandment is the preservation and security of human life. Now the punishments inflicted by the civil authority, which is the legitimate avenger of crime, naturally tend to this end, since they give security to life by repressing outrage and violence.** Hence these words of David: In the morning I put to death all the wicked of the land, that I might cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of the Lord. (Catechism of Trent, 3500)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

It is lawful to kill when carrying out a sentence of death in punishment of a crime

Q: Are there cases in which it is lawful to kill?

A: It is lawful to kill when fighting in a just war; **when carrying out by order of the Supreme Authority a sentence of death in punishment of a crime;** and, finally, in cases of necessary and lawful defense of one's own life against an unjust aggressor. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, The Fifth Commandment, Question 3 – Spanish)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The teaching of the Church does not exclude recourse to the death penalty

The State's effort to contain the spread of behaviors injurious to human rights and the fundamental rules of civil coexistence corresponds to the requirement of watching over the common good. **Legitimate public authority has the right and duty to inflict penalties commensurate with the gravity of the crime.** the primary scope of the penalty is to redress the disorder caused by the offense. **When his punishment is voluntarily accepted by the offender, it takes on the value of expiation.** Moreover, punishment, in addition to preserving public order and the safety of persons, has a medicinal scope: as far as possible it should contribute to the correction of the offender. (cf. Lk 23:40-43). **The traditional**

teaching of the Church does not exclude, presupposing full ascertainment of the identity and responsibility of the offender, recourse to the death penalty, when this is the only practicable way to defend the lives of human beings effectively against the aggressor. If, instead, bloodless means are sufficient to defend against the aggressor and to protect the safety of persons, public authority should limit itself to such means, because they better correspond to the concrete conditions of the common good and are more in conformity to the dignity of the human person. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2266-2267)

LEO XIII

Divine and natural Law permit the killing of a human being for public cause

Clearly, divine law, both that which is known by the light of reason and that which is revealed in Sacred Scripture, **strictly forbids anyone, outside of public cause, to kill or wound a man unless compelled to do so in self defense.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Pastoralis officii*, to the Archbishops and Bishops of the German Empire and Austria-Hungary, no. 2, September 12, 1881)

JOHN PAUL II

When it would not be possible otherwise to defend society, the execution of the offender is necessary

This is the context in which to place the problem of the *death penalty*. **On this matter there is a growing tendency, both in the Church and in civil society, to demand that it be applied in a very limited way or even that it be abolished completely.** The problem must be viewed in the context of a system of penal justice ever more in line with human dignity and thus, in the end, with God's plan for man and society. The primary purpose of the punishment which society inflicts is 'to redress the disorder caused by the offence' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2266). **Public authority must redress the violation of personal and social rights by imposing on the offender an adequate punishment for the crime, as a condition for the offender to regain**

the exercise of his or her freedom. In this way authority also fulfils the purpose of defending public order and ensuring people's safety, while at the same time offering the offender an incentive and help to change his or her behaviour and be rehabilitated (Cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2266). **It is clear that, for these purposes to be achieved, the nature and extent of the punishment must be carefully evaluated and decided upon, and ought not go to the extreme of executing the offender except in cases of absolute necessity: in other words, when it would not be possible otherwise to defend society.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Evangelium vitae*, no. 56, March 25, 1995)

PIUS XII

The execution of a condemned man: by his crime he has already disposed himself of his right to live

Even when it is a question of the execution of a condemned man, **the State does not dispose of the individual's right to life. In this case it is reserved to the public power to deprive the condemned person of the enjoyment of life in expiation of his crime when, by his crime, he has already disposed himself of his right to live.** (Pius XII. *Address to the participants in the First International Congress on Histopathology of the Nervous System*, no. 33, September 14, 1952)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Those who, representing public justice, put to death wicked men have by no means violated the commandment 'You shall not kill'

However, there are some **exceptions made by the divine authority to its own law, that men may not be put to death.** These exceptions are of two kinds, being justified either by a general law, or by a special commission granted for a time to some individual. And in this latter case, he to whom authority is delegated, and who is but the sword in the hand of him who uses it, is not himself responsible for the death he deals. And, accordingly, **they who** have waged war in obedience to the divine command, or in

conformity with His laws, **have represented in their persons the public justice** or the wisdom of government, **and in this capacity have put to death wicked men; such persons have by no means violated the commandment, 'You shall not kill.'** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *City of God*, Book I, Ch. 21)

Great and holy men punished some sins with death

But **great and holy men**, although they at the time knew excellently well that that death which separates the soul from the body is not to be dreaded, yet, in accordance with the sentiment of those who might fear it, **punished some sins with death, both because the living were struck with a salutary fear**, and because it was not death itself that would injure those who were being punished with death, but sin, which might be increased if they continued to live. They did not judge rashly on whom God had bestowed such a power of judging. Hence it is that **Elijah inflicted death on many**, both with his own hand and by calling down fire from heaven; **as was done also without rashness by many other great and godlike men, in the same spirit of concern for the good of humanity.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On the Sermon on the Mount*, Book I, Ch. 20, no.64)

Fear of the law represses the evil and gives security to the good

Conversely, the power of the sovereign, the right over life and death of the judge, the iron hook of the executioner, the soldier's weapon, the power to punish of the authority, and even the severity of the good father have not been instituted in vain. All these regulations have their measure, their causes, their reasons and their utility. When these are feared, not only are the evil refrained, but even the good live more tranquilly among the evil. [...] It is not useless to repress the arrogance and prepotency of men even by the fear of human laws, so that not only innocence might have security among the wicked, but also so that these same wicked ones may have, in fear of a torment, a brake to their possibility of doing evil, and so may they invoke God to cure their will to do so. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Letter to Macedonius*, no.153, Ch. 6, no. 16)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The slaying of evil-doers is not contrary to the precept of the Decalogue

The slaying of a man is forbidden in the decalogue, in so far as it bears the character of something undue: for in this sense the precept contains the very essence of justice. Human law cannot make it lawful for a man to be slain unduly. **But it is not undue for evil-doers or foes of the common weal to be slain: hence this is not contrary to the precept of the decalogue;** and such a killing is no murder as forbidden by that precept, as Augustine observes (*De Lib. Arb.* I, 4). In like manner when a man's property is taken from him, if it be due that he should lose it, this is not theft or robbery as forbidden by the decalogue. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 100, a. 8, ad. 3)

The capital penalty must be applied to safeguard the common good

Now every part is directed to the whole, as imperfect to perfect, wherefore every part is naturally for the sake of the whole. For this reason we observe that if the health of the whole body demands the excision of a member, through its being decayed or infectious to the other members, it will be both praiseworthy and advantageous to have it cut away. Now every individual person is compared to the whole community, as part to whole. **Therefore if a man be dangerous and infectious to the**

community, on account of some sin, it is praiseworthy and advantageous that he be killed in order to safeguard the common good, since 'a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump' (1Cor 5:6). (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 64, a. 2)

Human justice should imitate divine justice

According to the order of His wisdom, God sometimes slays sinners forthwith in order to deliver the good, whereas sometimes He allows them time to repent, according as He knows what is expedient for His elect. **This also does human justice imitate** according to its powers; **for it puts to death those who are dangerous to others,** while it allows time for repentance to those who sin without grievously harming others. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 64, a. 2, ad. 2)

Both Divine and human laws command such sinners to be put to death out of the love of charity

It is for this reason that both Divine and human laws command such like sinners to be put to death, because there is greater likelihood of their harming others than of their mending their ways. Nevertheless the judge puts this into effect, not out of hatred for the sinners, but out of the love of charity, by reason of which he prefers the public good to the life of the individual. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 25, a. 6, ad. 2)

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PASTORAL

EDUCATION

ENCOUNTER

EVANGELIZATION

Francis does not speak much of abortion, homosexual marriage or contraceptives. He says it is not necessary to insist on such topics – rather, more emphasis must be put on positive things, lest we lose the freshness and the perfume of the Gospel

The spiritual well-being of the People of God depends on the proclamation of the Gospel that was confided by Jesus Christ himself to Saint Peter and the Apostles. The true faithful expect an integral transmission of the eternal truths from their shepherds, even when it contrasts with the world. Others, on the contrary, would prefer that such truths be changed so that they could live with a more tranquil conscience...

In this manner, the fidelity of the Hierarchy to its mission entails proclaiming the word of salvation whether it be 'convenient or inconvenient,' and thus facing frequent hostility from those who live distant from the truth.

FRANCIS

We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. This is not possible. I have not spoken much about these things, and I was reprimanded for that. But when we speak about these issues, we have to talk about them in a context. The teaching of the Church, for that matter, is clear and I am a son of the Church, but **it is not necessary to talk about these issues all the time.**

The dogmatic and moral teachings of the church are not all equivalent. **The Church's pastoral ministry cannot be obsessed with the transmission of a disjointed multitude of doctrines to be imposed insistently.** Proclamation in a missionary style focuses on the essentials, on the necessary things: this is also what fascinates and attracts more, what makes the heart burn, as it did for the disciples at Emmaus. We have to find a new balance; otherwise even **the moral edifice of the Church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel.** **The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant. It is from this proposition that the moral consequences then flow.** (*Interview with Antonio Spadaro, August 19, 2013*)

[Journalist]: Speaking on behalf of the Brazilians: society has changed, young people have changed, and in Brazil we have seen a great many young people. **You did not speak about abortion, about same-sex marriage.** In Brazil a law has been approved which widens the right to abortion and permits marriage between people of the same sex. **Why did you not speak about this?**

[Francis]: **The Church has already spoken quite clearly on this. It was unnecessary to return to it,** just as I didn't speak about cheating, lying, or other matters on which the Church has a clear teaching! **It wasn't necessary to speak of it, but rather of the positive things** that open up the path to young people. Isn't that right! Besides,

young people know perfectly well what the Church's position is. (*Press Conference during the return flight from Brazil after World Youth Day, July 28, 2013*)

[Journalist]: In the recent past, it was normal to appeal to the so-called 'non-negotiable' values, especially in bioethics and sexual morality. You have not picked up on this formula. The doctrinal and moral principles have not changed. Does this choice perhaps wish to show a style less preceptive and more respectful of personal conscience?

[Francis]: I have never understood the expression 'non-negotiable values.' Values are values, and that is it. I can't say that, of the fingers of a hand, there is one less useful than the rest – for which I do not understand in what sense there may be negotiable values. (*Interview with Corriere della Serra, March 5, 2014*)

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- ◆ The negative precepts express the demands of the Gospel
- ◆ If respect is due to the life of criminals, much more should it be to that of the innocent
- ◆ The Church condemns authorities who favor activities against the family

SACRED SCRIPTURE

I charge you: proclaim the Word of God whether convenient or inconvenient

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: **proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry.** (2Tim 4:1-5)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

He who has authority to teach, and does not, transgresses the Law

But see whence He begins, and whence He aggravates His blame of them. For they say, He says, and do not. **For every one is worthy of blame in transgressing the law, but especially he that bears the authority of teaching, for doubly and triply does he deserve**

to be condemned. For one cause, because he transgresses; for another, that as he ought to amend others, and then halts, he is worthy of a double punishment, because of his dignity; and in the third place, that he even corrupts the more, as committing such transgression in a teacher's place. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily LXXII on Saint Matthew*, no. 1)

PIUS X

He who omits to teach the truth, cannot expect good works...

Now, if we cannot expect to reap a harvest when no seed has been planted, **how can we hope to have a people with sound morals if Christian doctrine has not been imparted to them in due time?** It follows, too, that if faith languishes in our days, if among large numbers it has almost vanished, **the reason is that the duty of catechetical teaching is either fulfilled very superficially or altogether neglected.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 16, April 15, 1905)

LEO XII

The graver the evil, the more the Roman Pontiff ought to warn the faithful

Hence, the graver the evils threatening the

flock, the greater the solicitude the Roman Pontiffs ought to employ in preventing them. For, those who have been placed in the topmost watch tower of the Church can discern from afar the artifices which the enemies of the Christian family undertake to destroy the Church of Christ: (which they will never achieve) they can point them out and expose them to the faithful, who may then guard against them; they can drive away and remove them by their Authority. (Leo XII. *Apostolic constitution Quo graviora*, no. 1, March 13, 1826)

PIUS IX

Use every care and diligence to exhort the faithful our divine religion

Admonish and exhort them to be strong in our sacred faith, without which it is impossible to please God. Urge them to persevere firmly established in our divine religion, which alone is true and eternal and prepares for salvation and even, to a very great extent, preserves and prospers civil society. Through the parish priests chiefly and other ecclesiastics known for integrity of life, gravity of morals, and constant adherence to sound doctrine, may you teach unremittingly and accurately: at one time preaching the divine word, at another instructing the people in the mysteries of our august religion, its doctrine, precepts, and discipline. You, above all, know that **many evils generally arise from ignorance** of divine matters essential for salvation. Hence, you will understand that it behooves you to use every care and diligence that so detrimental a condition be prevented. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Quanto conficiamur*, no. 13-14, August 10, 1863)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

The Church was commanded to guard the deposit of faith, lest anyone be deceived

Further, the Church which, together with the apostolic duty of teaching, has received the command to guard the deposit of faith, has also, from divine Providence, the right and duty of proscribing 'knowledge falsely so called' (1Tim 6:20), 'lest anyone be cheated

by philosophy and vain deceit' (cf. Col 2:8). (Denzinger-Hünemann 3018. Vatican Council I, *Dogmatic constitution Dei Filius*, April 24, 1870)

LEO XIII

Our silence profits only the enemies of the Church

Amid such reckless and widespread folly of opinion, it is, as We have said, the office of the Church to undertake the defense of truth and uproot errors from the mind, and this charge has to be at all times sacredly observed by her, seeing that the honor of God and the salvation of men are confided to her keeping. But, when necessity compels, not those only who are invested with power of rule are bound to safeguard the integrity of faith, but, as St. Thomas maintains: 'Each one is under obligation to show forth his faith, either to instruct and encourage others of the faithful, or to repel the attacks of unbelievers' (*STh* II-II q.3, a.2, ad 2). **To recoil before an enemy, or to keep silence when from all sides such clamors are raised against truth, is the part of a man either devoid of character or who entertains doubt as to the truth of what he professes to believe.** In both cases such mode of behaving is base and is insulting to God, and both are incompatible with the salvation of mankind. **This kind of conduct is profitable only to the enemies of the faith,** for nothing emboldens the wicked so greatly as the lack of courage on the part of the good. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Sapientiae Christianae*, no. 14, January 10, 1890)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Confess the faith publically despite the disturbance of unbelievers

Yet, if there is hope of profit to the faith, or if there be urgency, a man should disregard the disturbance of unbelievers, and confess his faith in public. Hence it is written (Mt 15:12) that when the disciples had said to Our Lord that 'the Pharisee, when they heard this word, were scandalized,' He answered: 'Let them alone, they are blind, and leaders of the blind.' (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q.3 a.2, ad 3)

BENEDICT XVI

The responsibility of constantly proclaiming non-negotiable values

Evidently, this is true for all the baptized, yet it is especially incumbent upon those who, by virtue of their social or political position, must make decisions regarding **fundamental values, such as respect for human life, its defence from conception to natural death, the family built upon marriage between a man and a woman, the freedom to educate one's children and the promotion of the common good in all its forms** (Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*: AAS 87(1995),401-522; Benedict XVI, Address to the Pontifical Academy for Life – 27 February 2006: AAS 98(2006), 264-265). **These values are not negotiable.** Consequently, Catholic politicians and legislators, conscious of their grave responsibility before society, must feel particularly bound, on the basis of a properly formed conscience, to introduce and support laws inspired by values grounded in human nature (Cf. Cong. for the Doct. of the Faith, Doctrinal note on questions regarding participation of Catholics in political life: AAS 96(2004),359-370). There is an objective connection here with the Eucharist (cf. 1Cor 11:27-29). **Bishops are bound to reaffirm constantly these values as part of their responsibility to the flock entrusted to them** (cf. *Propositio* 46). (Benedict XVI. *Post-Synodal Apostolic exhortation Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 83, February 22, 2007)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Bishops are obliged to be authentic teachers of those committed to them

For bishops are preachers of the faith, who lead new disciples to Christ, and they are authentic teachers, that is, **teachers endowed with the authority of Christ, who preach to the people committed to them the faith they must believe and put into practice, and by the light of the Holy Spirit illustrate that faith.** They bring forth from the treasury of Revelation new things and old (Mt 13:52), **making it bear fruit and vigilantly warding off any errors that threaten their flock** (2Tim 4:1-4). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 25, November 21, 1964)

By the will of Christ, the Church's duty is to authoritatively teach the truth

For the Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that truth which is Christ Himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origins in human nature itself. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Dignitatis humanae*, no. 14, December 7, 1965)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Silence is neither caring nor pastoral

But we wish to make it clear that departure **from the Church's teaching, or silence about it, in an effort to provide pastoral care is neither caring nor pastoral.** Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral. **The neglect of the Church's position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the pastoral care of homosexual persons*, no. 15, October 1, 1986)

Clear communication of the truth depends on the fidelity of the Church's ministers

We recognize, of course, that in great measure **the clear and successful communication of the Church's teaching to all the faithful, and to society at large, depends on the correct instruction and fidelity of her pastoral ministers.** The Bishops have the particularly grave responsibility to see to it that their assistants in the ministry, above all the priests, are rightly informed and personally disposed to **bring the teaching of the Church in its integrity to everyone.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the pastoral care of homosexual persons*, no. 13, October 1, 1986)

PAUL VI

We may not silence the obligation of conjugal fidelity

We may not silence the increased obligation

of conjugal fidelity within the family; now that legal divorce has been granted the possibility of being carried out with impunity. In the same way, we may not forget the duty of all – especially ours, the Pastors – to deplore the permissive legislation regarding abortion. [...] These problems of today, to which are added others, countless and immeasurable, turn grave, and ever more grave, our pastoral duty, our responsibility over the People of God, and over that which is not officially of God, but is, nonetheless always ours. (Paul VI. *General audience*, May 24, 1978)

Church teachings are not easily accepted, but She cannot declare lawful what is unlawful

It is to be anticipated that perhaps not everyone will easily accept this particular teaching [on the illicitness of contraceptives]. There is too much clamorous outcry against the voice of the Church, and this is intensified by modern means of communication. But it comes as no surprise to the Church that She, no less than her divine Founder, is destined to be a ‘sign of contradiction’ (Lk 2:34). She does not, because of this, evade the duty imposed on her of proclaiming humbly but firmly the entire moral law, both natural and evangelical. Since the Church did not make either of these laws, she cannot be their arbiter—only their guardian and interpreter. It could never be right for Her to declare lawful what is in fact unlawful, since that, by its very nature, is always opposed to the true good of man. (Paul VI. *Encyclical Humanae vitae*, no. 18, July 25, 1968)

JOHN PAUL II

Pastors have the duty to transmit doctrine in its integrity

The Church’s Pastors have the duty to act in conformity with their apostolic mission, insisting that the right of the faithful to receive Catholic doctrine in its purity and integrity must always be respected. ‘Never forgetting that he too is a member of the People of God, the theologian must be respectful of them, and be committed to offering them a teaching which in no way does harm to the doctrine of the faith’ (cf. Cong. for the Doct. of the Faith, Instruction *Donum Veritatis*). (John

Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 113, August 6, 1993)

A serious omission: not to proclaim the truth about marriage

Indeed, there is no lack of attempts, in public opinion and in civil legislation, to make equivalent to the family mere de facto unions or to recognize as such same-sex unions. These and other anomalies lead us with pastoral firmness to proclaim the truth about marriage and the family. Not to do so would be a serious pastoral omission that would lead people into error, especially those who have the important responsibility of making decisions for the common good of the nation. (John Paul II. *Address to Bishops of Brazil on ad limina visit*, no. 4, November 16, 2002)

The crises in the family requires doctrinal clarity

A pastoral proposal for the family in crisis presupposes, as a preliminary requirement, doctrinal clarity, effectively taught in moral theology about sexuality and the respect for life. The opposing opinions of theologians, priests and religious that the media promote on pre-marital relations, birth control, the admission of divorced persons to the sacraments, homosexuality and artificial insemination, the use of abortion practices or euthanasia, show the degree of uncertainty and confusion that disturb and end by deadening the consciences of so many of the faithful. (John Paul II. *Address to Bishops of Brazil on ad limina visit*, no. 6, November 16, 2002)

Given the acceptance of abortion in the popular mind, in behavior and even in law itself we must ‘call things by their proper name’, without yielding to compromises

But today, in many people’s consciences, the perception of its gravity [of abortion] has become progressively obscured. The acceptance of abortion in the popular mind, in behavior and even in law itself, is a telling sign of an extremely dangerous crisis of the moral sense, which is becoming more and more incapable of distinguishing between good and evil, even when the fundamental right to life

is at stake. Given such a grave situation, we need now more than ever to have the courage to look the truth in the eye and to call things by their proper name, without yielding to convenient compromises or to the temptation of self-deception. In this regard the reproach of the Prophet is extremely straightforward: 'Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness' (Is 5:20). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Evangelium vitae*, no. 58, March 25, 1995)

The negative precepts express the demands of the Gospel

The commandments of which Jesus reminds the young man are meant to safeguard the good of the person, the image of God, by protecting his goods. 'You shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness' are moral rules formulated in terms of prohibitions. These negative precepts express with particular force the ever urgent need to protect human life, the communion of persons in marriage, private property, truthfulness and people's good name. The commandments thus represent the basic condition for love of neighbor; at the same time they are the proof of that love. They are the first necessary step on the journey towards freedom, its starting-point. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no. 13, August 6, 1993)

If respect is due to the life of criminals, much more should it be to that of the innocent

If such great care must be taken to respect every life, even that of criminals and unjust

aggressors, the commandment 'You shall not kill' has absolute value when it refers to the innocent person. And all the more so in the case of weak and defenseless human beings, who find their ultimate defence against the arrogance and caprice of others only in the absolute binding force of God's commandment. [...] Faced with the progressive weakening in individual consciences and in society of the sense of the absolute and grave moral illicitness of the direct taking of all innocent human life, especially at its beginning and at its end, the Church's Magisterium has spoken out with increasing frequency in defense of the sacredness and inviolability of human life. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Evangelium vitae*, no. 57, March 25, 1995)

The Church condemns authorities who favor activities against the family

Thus the Church condemns as a grave offense against human dignity and justice all those activities of governments or other public authorities which attempt to limit in any way the freedom of couples in deciding about children. Consequently, any violence applied by such authorities in favor of contraception or, still worse, of sterilization and procured abortion, must be altogether condemned and forcefully rejected. Likewise to be denounced as gravely unjust are cases where, in international relations, economic help given for the advancement of peoples is made conditional on programs of contraception, sterilization and procured abortion. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 30, November 22, 1981)

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Material charity toward the poor gives witness to the love of the Church more than the studies of theologians

The word 'charity' almost always brings to mind material aid offered to the needy. And this it is: almsgiving is a praiseworthy habit, which has always been promoted by Holy Mother Church. However, we should not forget that another type of charity, the spiritual works of mercy; to instruct, to give counsel, to console, to comfort, to pardon, and to bear wrongs patiently (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2447), are more important than the corporal works of mercy, namely to give food to the hungry, give shelter, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and bury the dead.

Within the Church there flourished, as in a lush garden, varied religious orders dedicated to the material assistance of the poor. But have they ever considered themselves exempt from the obligation to instruct in the true doctrine the ignorant who were in the darkness of error?

FRANCIS

The search for truth, the study of Catholic truth is another important dimension of the Church that theologians accomplish. Then, **it is transformed into catechesis and arrives. Caritas is direct**, it is the love of Mother Church that draws near, caresses, loves. **In this sense, permit me to say that you are the first and institutionalized witnesses of the love of the Church.** (*Address to the Executive Committee of Caritas Internationalis*, May 16, 2013)

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I – PRIMACY OF THE SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY OVER THE MATERIAL ONES

BENEDICT XVI

Care for the soul is more necessary than material support

The Church is one of those living forces: She is alive with the love enkindled by the Spirit of Christ. **This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support.** In the end, the claim that just social structures would make works of charity superfluous masks a materialist conception of man: the mistaken notion that man can live 'by bread alone' (Mt 4:4, cf. Deut 8:3) – a conviction that demeans man and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Deus caritas est*, no. 28, December 25, 2005)

The true labor in God's field is to set people free from the poverty of truth

It is the moment of mission: the Lord is sending you, dear friends, into his harvest. You must cooperate in this task of which the Prophet Isaiah speaks in the First Reading: **'The Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the broken hearted'** (Is 61:1). **This is the labour for the harvest in the field of God, in the field of human history: to bring to men and women the light of truth, to set them free from the lack of truth, which is the true sorrow, the true impoverishment of man.** It means bringing them the glad tidings that are not only words but an event: God himself has come among us. He takes us by the hand, he uplifts us toward himself and thus the broken heart is healed. Let us thank the Lord for sending out labourers into the harvest of the world's history. (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, February 5, 2011)

JOHN XXIII

Do not forget those whose souls are sick!

You endeavor to alleviate the physical sufferings, but, we well know, you do not forget that, unfortunately, marginal to your activity are the neediest and the most contagious sick, who are the obstinate and rebellious sinners. [...] The confusion that reigns in some sectors on this point demands the effort of all Christian souls of good sense to be inexorable and resolute in a patient and difficult exercise of true charity and to not neglect an occasion to enlighten, call upon, correct and lift up. To play with fire is always harmful: *et qui amat periculum in illo peribit* (Sir 3:26). (John XXIII. *Speech to the delegates of the 'Works of Mercy' in Rome*, February 21, 1960)

PIUS XI

Instructing our neighbors in the true faith is the greatest mark of love

Since Jesus Christ has proclaimed that the special sign of discipleship with Him is that we 'have love one for another' (Jn 13:35, 15:12), **can we give a mark of greater love for our neighbors than to assist them in putting behind themselves the darkness of error by instructing them in the true faith of Christ? As a matter of fact, this type of charity surpasses all other kinds of good works inspired by love just as the mind surpasses the body, heaven surpasses earth, eternity surpasses time.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Rerum ecclesiae*, no. 6, February 28, 1926)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Corporal alms–deeds are not superior to spiritual ones

There are two ways of comparing these alms–deeds. First, simply; and in this respect, **spiritual alms–deeds hold the first place**, for three reasons. First, because the offering is more excellent, since it is a spiritual gift, which

surpasses a corporal gift, according to Proverbs 4:2 – ‘I will give you a good gift, forsake not My Law.’ Secondly, on account of the object succored, because **the spirit is more excellent than the body**, wherefore, even as a man in looking after himself, ought to look to his soul more than to his body, so ought he in looking after his neighbor, whom he ought to love as himself. Thirdly, as regards the acts themselves by which our neighbor is succored, because **spiritual acts are more excellent than corporal acts**, which are, in a fashion, servile. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 32, a.3)

Pius X

A great number of those condemned to Hell are those who ignore the mysteries of the faith

And so Our Predecessor, Benedict XIV, had just cause to write: ‘**We declare that a great number of those who are condemned to eternal punishment suffer that everlasting calamity because of ignorance of those mysteries of faith which must be known and believed in order to be numbered among the elect.**’ (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 2, April 15, 1905)

SAINT BEDE

Alms are not only given in satisfying hunger

For not he alone gives alms who gives food to the hungry and things of that kind, but he also who gives pardon to the sinner, and prays for him, and reproves him, visiting him with some correcting punishment. (Saint Bede quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea in Lk 11:37-41*)

GREGORY I

It is worth more to encourage the soul, which is to live forever, with the food of the word than to satiate with earthly bread the body which is to die

‘For the lips of the priest are to keep knowledge, and instruction is to be sought from his mouth,

because he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts’ (Mal 2:7). But such an elevated name you can also deserve if you desire; for each one of you in as much as you are able, according to the divine grace you have received, if you distance your neighbor from sin, if you seek to exhort him to act well, if you remind the one at fault about the Kingdom or about the eternal punishment, you are certainly an angel when you use words of admonition. And may no one say: ‘I am no good to admonish, I am not ideal to exhort’. Do what you can, so that that, in the torments, what you received and kept badly may not be demanded of you. He had not received more than one talent, the one who preferred to bury it than to use it for his profit. We know that for the tabernacle of the Lord, there were made at his command, not only vessels, but also cups (cf. Ex 37:16). By vessels is designated the abundant doctrine, and by cups, little and scarce knowledge. Once one is full of the doctrine of the truth, he fills the minds of those who hear him, and by what he says, he offers as a full vessel; another cannot say all that he feels, but as long as he teaches it as he can, it is as if he gives a cup to taste. Therefore, placed in the tabernacle of the Lord, that is, in the Church, if you cannot administer the sound doctrine in vessels, then as much as you are able, helped by divine grace, **give to your neighbors goblets of sound doctrine.** [...] Perhaps you may not have bread to help the needy; **but whoever has a tongue has a greater good to distribute: for it is worth more to encourage the soul, which is to live forever, with the food of the word, than to satiate with earthly bread the body which is to die.** Therefore, brothers, do not deny your brethren the alms of your words. (Gregory I. *Homilies on the Gospels*, homily VI: Mt 11:2–10)

SAINT JEROME

The wealth of doctrine: the more it is given away, the more it abounds

But it may be understood of the **wealth of doctrine**: wealth which never fails but the **more of it is given away, the more it abounds.** (Saint Jerome quoted by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea in Mt 5: 38–42*)

II – THE PRIMACY OF THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Theology is the most important science

Since this science [theology] is partly speculative and partly practical, it transcends all others speculative and practical. Now one speculative science is said to be nobler than another, either by reason of its greater certitude, or by reason of the higher worth of its subject-matter. **In both these respects this science surpasses other speculative sciences; in point of greater certitude, because other sciences derive their certitude from the natural light of human reason, which can err; whereas this derives its certitude from the light of divine knowledge, which cannot be misled: in point of the higher worth of its subject-matter because this science treats chiefly of those things which by their sublimity transcend human reason;** while other sciences consider only those things which are within reason's grasp. Of the practical sciences, that one is nobler which is ordained to a further purpose, as political science is nobler than military science; for the good of the army is directed to the good of the State. **But the purpose of this science, in so far as it is practical, is eternal bliss; to which as to an ultimate end the purposes of every practical science are directed. Hence it is clear that from every standpoint, it is nobler than other sciences.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 1, a.5)

BENEDICT XVI

Without the light of truth, charity degenerates into sentimentalism

Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity. That light is both the light of reason and the light of faith, through which the intellect attains to the natural and supernatural truth of charity: it grasps its meaning as gift, acceptance, and communion. **Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality.** (Benedict XVI. *Caritas in veritate*, no. 3, June 29, 2009)

The Church has always venerated the divine Scriptures in the same way as she venerates the Body of the Lord

The Church does not live on herself but on the Gospel, and in the Gospel always and ever anew finds the directions for her journey. This is a point that every Christian must understand and apply to himself or herself: **only those who first listen to the Word can become preachers of it. Indeed, they must not teach their own wisdom but the wisdom of God**, which often appears to be foolishness in the eyes of the world (cf. 1Cor 1:23). **The Church knows well that Christ lives in the Sacred Scriptures. For this very reason – as the Constitution stresses – she has always venerated the divine Scriptures in the same way as she venerates the Body of the Lord** (cf. *Dei Verbum*, n. 21). (Benedict XVI. *Address to the International Congress for the XL anniversary of the Dogmatic constitution Dei Verbum*, September 16, 2005)

JOHN PAUL II

True theology proceeds from the faith and aims at leading to the faith – the intellectual formation of priests is based on theology

The intellectual formation of the future priest is based and built above all on the study of sacred doctrine, of theology. The value and genuineness of this theological formation depend on maintaining a scrupulous respect for the nature of theology. The synod fathers summarized this as follows: **'True theology proceeds from the faith and aims at leading to the faith'**. This is the conception of theology which has always been put forward by the Church and, specifically, by her magisterium. This is the line followed by the great theologians who have enriched the Church's thinking down the ages. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 53, March 25, 1992)

The study of theology is not an external and secondary dimension – one grows in spiritual life and prepares to fulfill the pastoral ministry

Intellectual formation has its own characteristics, but it is also deeply connected with, and indeed can be seen as a necessary

expression of, both human and spiritual formation: It is a fundamental demand of the human intelligence by which one ‘participates in the light of God’s mind’ and seeks to acquire a wisdom which in turn opens to and is directed toward knowing and adhering to God (*Gaudium et Spes*, 15). [...] The present situation [...] strongly demands a high level of intellectual formation, such as will enable priests to proclaim, in a context like this, the changeless Gospel of Christ and to make it credible to the legitimate demands of human reason. [...] **The commitment to study, which takes up no small part of the time of those preparing for the priesthood, is not in fact an external and secondary dimension of their human, Christian, spiritual and vocational growth. In reality, through study, especially the study of theology, the future priest assents to the word of God, grows in his spiritual life and prepares himself to fulfill his pastoral ministry.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 51, March 25, 1992)

The whole of Theology is ordered to nourishing the faith

Saint Thomas is extremely clear when he affirms that **the faith is as it were the habitus of theology**, that is, its permanent principle of operation, and that the whole of theology is ordered to nourishing the faith. **The theologian is therefore, first and foremost, a believer, a person of faith. But the theologian is a believer who asks himself questions about his own faith (*fides quaerens intellectum*), with the aim of reaching a deeper understanding of the faith itself.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 53, March 25, 1992)

Theology: a study to communicate to others the Christian faith and outlook

In reflecting maturely upon the faith, **theology moves in two directions. The first is that of the study of the word of God:** the word set down in holy writ, celebrated and lived in the living tradition of the Church, and authoritatively interpreted by the Church’s magisterium. Hence the importance of studying sacred Scripture ‘which should be the soul, as it were, of all theological the Fathers of the Church, the liturgy, the history of the Church and the teachings of the magisterium. The

second direction is that of the human person, who converses with God: **the person who is called ‘to believe’, ‘to live’, ‘to communicate’ to others the Christian faith and outlook. Hence the study of dogmatic and moral theology, of spiritual theology, of canon law and of pastoral theology.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastor dabo vobis*, no. 54, March 25, 1992)

PIUS X

Sacred theology has the first place

No one is unaware that among the many and varied subject matters offered to a spirit avid for the truth, Sacred theology has the first place. [...] Work with intrepidity in the study of natural things, for, just as the ingenious inventions and the undertakings full of efficacy of today cause admiration, later on they will be objects of permanent approval and praise. But all this without any detriment to the sacred studies. (Pius X. *Motu proprio Sacrorum Antistitum*, no. 1, September 1, 1910)

There are large numbers of Christians today who are entirely ignorant of those truths necessary for salvation

It is a common complaint, unfortunately too well founded, that there are large numbers of Christians in our own time who are entirely ignorant of those truths necessary for salvation. And when we mention Christians, We refer not only to the masses or to those in the lower walks of life – for these find some excuse for their ignorance in the fact that the demands of their harsh employers hardly leave them time to take care of themselves or of their dear ones – but **We refer to those especially who do not lack culture or talents and, indeed, are possessed of abundant knowledge regarding things of the world but live rashly and imprudently with regard to religion.** It is hard to find words to describe how profound is the darkness in which they are engulfed and, what is most deplorable of all, how tranquilly they repose there. They rarely give thought to God, the Supreme Author and Ruler of all things, or to the teachings of the faith of Christ. **They know nothing of the Incarnation of the Word of God, nothing of the perfect restoration of the human race which He**

accomplished. Grace, the greatest of the helps for attaining eternal things, the Holy Sacrifice and the Sacraments by which we obtain **grace, are entirely unknown to them.** They have no conception of the malice and baseness of sin; hence they show no anxiety to avoid sin or to renounce it. And so **they arrive at life's end** in such a condition that, lest all hope of salvation be lost, the priest is obliged to give in the last few moments of life a summary teaching of religion, a time which should be devoted to stimulating the soul to greater love for God. And even this as too often happens only when the dying man is not so sinfully ignorant as to look upon the ministrations of the priest as useless, and then calmly faces the fearful passage to eternity without making his peace with God. (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 2, April 15, 1905)

Christian teaching reveals God, and the truly remarkable dignity of man also

All this becomes evident on a little reflection. **Christian teaching reveals God** and His infinite perfection with far greater clarity than is possible by the human faculties alone. Nor is that all. This same Christian teaching also **commands us to honor God by faith**, which is of the mind, **by hope**, which is of the will, **by love**, which is of the heart; and thus the whole man is subjected to the supreme Maker and Ruler of all things. The truly remarkable dignity of man as the son of the heavenly Father, in Whose image he is formed, and with Whom he is destined to live in eternal happiness, is also revealed **only by the doctrine of Jesus Christ. From this very dignity, and from man's knowledge of it**, Christ showed that men should love one another as brothers, and should live here **as become children of light**, 'not of revelry and drunkenness, not in debauchery and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy' (Rom 13:13). He also bids us to place all our anxiety and care in the hands of God, for He will provide for us; He tells us to help the poor, to do good to those who hate us, and to prefer the eternal welfare of the soul to the temporal goods of this life. (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 4, April 15, 1905)

SIXTUS V

The knowledge of theology is of the

greatest assistance to the Church in exposing and refuting errors and heresies

And, indeed, **the knowledge and use of so salutary a science**, which flows from the fertilizing fountains of the sacred writings, the sovereign Pontiffs, the holy Fathers and the councils, **must always be of the greatest assistance to the Church, whether with the view of really and soundly understanding and interpreting the Scriptures, or more safely and to better purpose reading and explaining the Fathers, or for exposing and refuting the various errors and heresies;** and in these late days, when those dangerous times described by the Apostle are already upon us, when the blasphemers, the proud, and the seducers go from bad to worse, erring themselves and causing others to err, there is surely a very great need of confirming the dogmas of Catholic faith and confuting heresies. (Sixtus V quoted by Leo XIII. *Encyclical Aeterni Patris*, no. 15, August 4, 1879)

III – TRUE CHARITY EMANATES FROM THE STUDY OF THEOLOGY

BENEDICT XVI

In order to offer love to our brothers and sisters, we must be afire with it from the furnace of divine charity

In Sacred Scripture, the summons to love of neighbour is tied to the commandment to love God with all our heart, all our soul and all our strength (cf. Mk 12:29–31). Thus, love of neighbour – if based on a true love for God – corresponds to the commandment and the example of Christ. It is possible, then, for the Christian, through his or her dedication, to bring others to experience the bountiful tenderness of our heavenly Father, through an ever deeper conformation to Christ. **In order to offer love to our brothers and sisters, we must be afire with it from the furnace of divine charity: through prayer, constant listening to the word of God, and a life centred on the Eucharist.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the members of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta*, February 9, 2013)

We must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God

It often happens that **Christians are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment**, continuing to **think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society**. In reality, not only can **this presupposition** no longer be taken for granted, but it is often **openly denied**. Whereas **in the past it was possible to recognize a unitary cultural matrix**, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, **today this no longer seems to be the case** in large swathes of society, because of a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people. We cannot accept that salt should become tasteless or the light be kept hidden (cf. Mt 5:13–16). The people of today can still experience the need to go to the well, like the Samaritan woman, in order to hear Jesus, who invites us to believe in him and to draw upon the source of living water welling up within him (cf. Jn 4:14). **We must rediscover a taste for feeding ourselves on the word of God, faithfully handed down by the Church**, and on the bread of life, offered as sustenance for his disciples (cf. Jn 6:51). (Benedict XVI. *Motu Proprio Porta fidei* no. 2–3, October 11, 2011)

It is important for the People of God to be properly taught and trained to approach the Sacred Scriptures

We see clearly, then, **how important it is for the People of God to be properly taught and trained to approach the sacred Scriptures** in relation to the Church's living Tradition, and to recognize in them the very word of God. Fostering such an approach in the faithful is very important from the standpoint of the spiritual life. **Here it might be helpful to recall the analogy drawn by the Fathers of the Church between the word of God which became 'flesh' and the word which became a 'book'**. (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 18, September 30, 2010)

The necessity of intellectual charity: as the great mendicant saints and theologians

New issues enlivened the discussion in the universities that came into being at the end

of the 12th century. Minors and Preachers did not hesitate to take on this commitment. As students and professors they entered the most famous universities of the time, set up study centres, produced texts of great value, gave life to true and proper schools of thought, were protagonists of scholastic theology in its best period and had an important effect on the development of thought. **The greatest thinkers, Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bonaventure, were Mendicants** who worked precisely with this dynamism of the new evangelization which also renewed the courage of thought, of the dialogue between reason and faith. Today too a 'charity of and in the truth' exists, **an 'intellectual charity' that must be exercised to enlighten minds and to combine faith with culture**. The dedication of the Franciscans and Dominicans in the medieval universities is an invitation, dear faithful, **how important it is for the People of God to be properly taught and trained to approach the sacred Scriptures**, with respect and conviction, on the fundamental questions that concern Man, his dignity and his eternal destiny. Thinking of the role of the Franciscans and the Dominicans in the Middle Ages, of the spiritual renewal they inspired and of the breath of new life they communicated in the world, a monk said: **'At that time the world was ageing. Two Orders were born in the Church whose youth they renewed like that of an eagle'** (Burchard of Ursperg, *Chronicon*). (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, January 13, 2010)

JOHN PAUL II

The lack of adequate formation causes many obstacles for the message of salvation

First of all, **the greatest challenge of our age comes from a growing separation between faith and reason, between the Gospel and culture**. The studies dedicated to this immense area are increasing day by day in the context of the new evangelization. **Indeed, the message of salvation encounters many obstacles stemming from erroneous concepts and a serious lack of adequate formation**. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Inter munera academiaram*, no. 2, January 28, 1999)

JOHN XXIII

The solemn duty and truest function of the Church: to propagate the truth of Jesus Christ to the peoples

To propagate the truth of Jesus Christ is the truest function of the Church. Indeed, 'it is the solemn duty of the Church to impart to [...] peoples, so far as possible, the outstanding blessings of her life and her teaching, from which a new social order should be derived, based on Christian principles' (Encyclical letter *Fidei donum*). Therefore, in mission territories, the Church takes the most generous measures to encourage social welfare projects, to support welfare work for the poor, and to assist Christian communities and the peoples concerned. **Care must be taken, however, not to clutter and obstruct the apostolic work of the missions with an excessive quantity of secular projects.** Economic assistance must be limited to necessary undertakings which can be easily maintained and utilized, and to projects whose organization and administration can be easily transferred to the lay men and women of the particular nation, thus **allowing the missionaries to devote themselves to their task of propagating the faith, and to other pursuits aimed directly at personal sanctification and eternal salvation.** (John XXIII. *Encyclical Princeps pastorum*, no. 22, November 28, 1959)

PIUS XII

To enkindle men's souls with the charity of Christ, you must be first illumined with truth. Devote yourselves to sacred studies

If you wish to be the light of truth, which comes from Christ, you must yourselves be first illumined with that truth. It is for this that you are devoting yourselves to sacred studies. **If you would enkindle men's souls with the charity of Christ, you must first glow with that same charity yourselves;** this is the purpose of your religious and ascetical training. (Pius XII. *Address to the Ecclesiastic Institutes of Rome*, June 24, 1939)

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Our faith is revolutionary – A Christian who is not revolutionary is not a Christian! – Help me to keep making a racket!

Throughout the ages, stories of heroes – whether true or legendary – have thrilled the hearts of the young. As a result of the disinterested courage and idealism characteristic of their age group, adolescents dream of great undertakings. To such hearts, burning with desire for heroism, the Church has always presented models that would stimulate true valor, perfect audacity, and authentic generosity – in a word, sanctity. Who is not touched by the courageous lives of young people such as Saint Agnes, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, and Saint Maria Goretti? Or by the youthful resolutions carried on to maturity with the determination of a Saint Ignatius or Saint Francis? Which of them did not face risks with heroic bravery? These saints are an example for youth, and adults, of all times. They fought and won the greatest of all battles – the struggle against oneself, against one’s passions and weaknesses – with the arms of prayer, sacrifice, and virtue.

At a certain point in history, there suddenly appeared another type of ‘heroism’ characterized by a dubious abnegation with regard to dangerous utopias, the difficult achievement of which would be at the cost of uncertain means, and would give even more uncertain fruits. Historians tend to reveal how behind this so-called disinterestedness there were often concealed corrupt personal interests, or the desire to satisfy the worst passions. All this because in these ‘puppet-heroes’ there was no real giving of themselves to an ideal, but rather egoism manipulated by hidden hands, with very specific ideological intentions. The cry of ‘revolution’ – whether to the sound of the bayonet and guillotine, under the hammer and sickle, or in any of the thousand and one facets shown throughout the last centuries – has been the perfect excuse to maneuver the most perverse instincts, often with the desire to destroy the Catholic Church, good customs, or venerable and millenary institutions. Because of all of this, the word ‘revolution’ has connotations that no Catholic can accept...

Which brings to mind the young saints mentioned earlier...would it be conceivable that one of them brandish the flag of some revolution? Can this be considered the war-cry of sanctity? Lately, we have heard another variant of the word ‘revolution’. Now the expression used is ‘hacer lío’, which signifies ‘make a racket, or make a mess, or even stir up hell!’ Within the Church ‘making a racket’ is insistently being promoted. Making a racket on the streets, in the diocese, in families, in society.... Stirring up, making a racket, a mess... was this Jesus’ plan for his Church? What to think of all this? And the most surprising was to hear at the end of his trip to the Continent of Hope, the one who should be the ‘Sweet Christ on Earth’ say: ‘help me to keep making a mess’ (Paraguay, July 11, 2015).

FRANCIS

Dear friends, **faith is revolutionary and today I ask you: are you open to entering into this revolutionary wave of faith? Only by entering into this wave will your young lives make sense** and so be fruitful! (*Homily for Youth in Brazil, Waterfront of Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro, 25 July, 2013*)

Let me tell you what I hope will be the outcome of World Youth Day: I hope there will be noise [lío]. Here there will be noise, I’m quite sure. Here in Rio there will be plenty of noise, no doubt about that. But I want you to make yourselves heard [quiero lío] in your dioceses. [Note: The original Spanish lío is better translated as ‘make a racket’] (*Meeting with young people from Argentina in Rio de Janeiro, 25 July, 2013*)

In this day and age unless Christians are revolutionaries they are not Chris-

tians. (*Address To Participants in the Ecclesial Convention of the Diocese of Rome*, June 17, 2013)

With all frankness I tell you: I don't know exactly why young people protest, first of all. Secondly, I don't like a young person who doesn't protest, because **a young person has the illusion of a utopia, and a utopia is not always wrong**, isn't it? A utopia is to breathe and to look forward, right? A young person has more freshness and less life experience, isn't it? Sometimes life experience slows us down. But the young person has more freshness to say things his way... **A young person is essentially non-conformist, and this is very beautiful**. But this is in general, all youth. I would say, in general, we have to listen to the young people, give them space to express themselves, and take care of them so they don't get manipulated. (*Interview with 'O Globo'*, Rio de Janeiro, July 29, 2013)

We Christians have something very lovely, a guide to action, a program we could call revolutionary. I earnestly recommend that you read it: the Beatitudes in Saint Matthew chapter 5 (cf. Mt 5:3) and in Saint Luke chapter 6 (cf. Lk 6:20); and the Last Judgment passage in Saint Matthew chapter 25. This is what I told the young people at Rio de Janeiro: With these passages, you have the plan of action. (*Address to the participants in the World Meeting of Popular Movements*, Rome, October 28, 2014)

The Church, her sons and daughters, are part of the identity of the peoples of Latin America. An identity which here, as in other countries, some powers are committed to erasing, at times **because our faith is revolutionary, because our faith challenges the tyranny of mammon**. (*Address, Participation at the Second World Meeting of Popular Movements*, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, July 9, 2015)

'Giving of oneself' means letting all the power of that love which is God's Holy Spirit take root in our lives, opening our hearts to his creative power. And giving of oneself even in the most difficult moments as on that Holy Thursday of the Lord when he perceived how they weaved a plot to betray him; but he gave himself, he gave himself for us with his plan of salvation. When we give of ourselves, we discover our true identity as children of God in the image of the Father and, like him, givers of life; we discover that we are brothers and sisters of Jesus, to whom we bear witness. This is what it means to evangelize; **this is the new revolution – for our faith is always revolutionary – this is our deepest and most enduring cry**. (*Homily*, Holy Mass for the Evangelization of Peoples, Bicentenary Park, Quito, Ecuador, July 7, 2015)

'Help me to keep making a mess'. (*The Pope meets with the daughters of his first boss*, Zenit, July 11, 2015)

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I – THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE CHRISTIAN

JOHN PAUL II

This idea of Christ as a revolutionary, the subversive man from Nazareth, does not tally with the Church's catechesis

In fact, today there occur in many places – the phenomenon is not a new one – ‘re-readings’ of the Gospel, the result of theoretical speculations rather than authentic meditation on the word of God and a true commitment to the Gospel. They cause confusion by diverging from the central criteria of the faith of the Church, and some people have the temerity to pass them on, under the guise of catechesis, to the Christian communities. In some cases either Christ's divinity is passed over in silence, or some people in fact fall into forms of interpretation at variance with the Church's faith. Christ is said to be merely a ‘prophet’, one who proclaimed God's Kingdom and love, but not the true Son of God, and therefore not the centre and object of the very Gospel message. In other cases people claim to show Jesus as politically committed, as one who fought against Roman oppression and the authorities, and also as one involved in the class struggle. This idea of Christ as a political figure, a revolutionary, as the subversive man from Nazareth, does not

tally with the Church's catechesis. (John Paul II. *Address, Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate*, no. I.4, January 28, 1979)

BENEDICT XVI

Christians should deepen their knowledge of the faith and live consistently with it

For the future of the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean it is important that Christians have a deeper knowledge and adopt an appropriate lifestyle as Jesus' disciples, simple and joyful with a firm faith rooted in the depths of their heart and nourished by prayer and the sacraments. In fact, the Christian faith is nourished above all by the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist, in which is brought about a unique and special community encounter with Christ, his life and his Word. [...] In a special way, the frequently recurring phenomena of exploitation and injustice, corruption and violence, are a pressing appeal to Christians to live their faith consistently and to strive to receive a firm doctrinal and spiritual formation, thereby helping to build a more just, more human and more Christian society. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Commission For Latin America*, January 20, 2007)

JOHN PAUL II

We need a praying and adoring faith, shown in moral integrity of life

The mystical doctor [Saint John of the Cross], overcoming these obstacles, helps, with his example and his doctrine, to **strengthen the Christian faith with the fundamental qualities of the adult faith**, as Vatican Council II wishes: **a personal faith**, free and convinced, embraced with the whole being; an ecclesial faith, confessed and celebrated in the communion of the Church; **a praying and adoring faith**, matured in the experience of communion with God; a faith that is solid and committed, **shown in moral integrity of life** and in the dimension of service. **This is the faith we need**, and of which the Saint of Fontiveros gives his personal testimony and his always current teachings. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Master in the Faith*, no. 7, December 14, 1990)

The attachment to Christ should be strengthened by unshakable fidelity to the Gospel

My thoughts then turn to **Saint Aloysius Gonzaga**, Co-Patron of the Diocese, whom I had the opportunity to honor in Castiglione delle Stiviere, his birthplace, on the occasion of the fourth centenary of his death. Still today, **this ardent young man, follower of Christ, addresses a pressing exhortation to us of coherence and fidelity to the Gospel**, reminding us that God must have priority in our lives. [...] Following in the footsteps of so many Saints and Blesseds, may **the Christians of Mantua proceed in their journey of faith, every day building up their attachment to Christ** and reinforcing the bonds of a fraternal union, **strengthened by their unshakable fidelity to the Gospel**. (John Paul II. *To the Bishop of Mantua*, no. 3, June 10, 2004)

The Church needs prayerful souls who ceaselessly sing the praises of the Most Holy Trinity

In this time of great shifts and changes, Croatia **needs men and women with a living faith, who can bear witness to the love of God for man**, and who are prepared to devote their energies to the service of the Gospel. Your

nation needs apostles who will go among the people bearing the Good News; Croatia **needs prayerful souls who ceaselessly sing the praises of the Most Holy Trinity and raise petitions to 'God our Saviour, who wills that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth'** (cf. 1Tim 2:4). (John Paul II. *Message to the Bishops' Conference of Croatia*, no. 3, October 4, 1998)

Be convinced Christians!

What was the interior strength that formed your saints, and therefore **continues to be valid to raise an authentic Christian? The response is simple: the conviction of the faith!** The Saints were and are people entirely convinced of the absolute, decisive and exclusive value of the message of Christ. **This conviction led them to embrace and follow Him, without hesitation, without uncertainty, without useless regression, even in the midst of struggles and suffering, with the help of the grace of God, always invoked and never rejected.** Conviction! This is the great word! This is the secret and the strength of the Saints! **The Saints acted as a consequence. And so it should be with all Christians in all times, but especially today in our times, so demanding and critical, in which logical and personalized convictions are lacking, the faith is debilitated and finally gives way.** [...] Dearest faithful of Umbria: This is the exhortation I wish to make to you, together with your bishops, in the ever lively remembrance of your Saints: **Be convinced Christians!** (John Paul II. *Address to pilgrims from the Umbria region*, no. 2-3, May 17, 1980)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

'Be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect'

The Lord Jesus, the divine Teacher and Model of all perfection, **preached holiness of life to each and every one of His disciples of every condition.** He Himself stands as the author and consummator of this holiness of life: **'Be you therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect'** (Mt. 5:48). Indeed He sent the Holy Spirit upon all men that He might move them inwardly to love God with their whole heart and their whole soul, with all their

mind and all their strength (cf. Mk 12:30) and that they might love each other as Christ loves them (cf. Jn 13:34; 15:12). **The followers of Christ** are called by God, not because of their works, but according to His own purpose and grace. They are justified in the Lord Jesus, because in the baptism of faith **they truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature**. In this way they are really made holy. Then too, **by God's gift, they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received**. They are warned by the Apostle to live 'as becomes saints' (Eph 5:3), and to put on 'as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved a heart of mercy, kindness, humility, meekness, patience' (Col 3:12), and to possess the fruit of the Spirit in holiness (cf. Gal 5:22; Rom 6:22). Since truly we all offend in many things (cf. Jas 3:2) we all need God's mercies continually and we all must daily pray: 'Forgive us our debts' (1Mt 6:12, Cfr. S. Irenaeus, *adv. Haer.*, 111 24, 1: PG 7, 966 B; Harvey 2, 13i, ed. Sagnard, *Sources Chr.*, p 398). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 40, November 21, 1964)

PIUS XI

The true Christian lives according to the eternal principles of justice

Hence **the true Christian**, product of Christian education, **is the supernatural man who thinks, judges and acts constantly and consistently in accordance with right reason illumined by the supernatural light of the example and teaching of Christ**; in other words, to use the current term, the true and finished man of character. **For, it is not every kind of consistency and firmness of conduct based on subjective principles that makes true character, but only constancy in following the eternal principles of justice**, as is admitted even by the pagan poet when he praises as one and the same 'the man who is just and firm of purpose' (Horatio, *Odae III*, 3, 1: *lustum et tenacem propositi virum*). And on the other hand, there cannot be full justice except in giving to God what is due to God, as the true Christian does. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 96, December 31, 1929)

LEO XIII

Faith must preserve and nourish the moral life

This justice, **in order to be advantageous to salvation, is nourished by Christian faith**. 'The just man liveth by faith' (Gal 3:2). '**Without faith it is impossible to please God**' (Heb 10:6). Consequently **Jesus Christ, the creator and preserver of faith, also preserves and nourishes our moral life**. This He does chiefly by the ministry of His Church. To Her, in His wise and merciful counsel, He has entrusted certain agencies which engender the supernatural life, protect it, and revive it if it should fail. **This generative and conservative power of the virtues that make for salvation is therefore lost, whenever morality is dissociated from divine faith**. A system of morality based exclusively on human reason robs man of his highest dignity and lowers him from the supernatural to the merely natural life. Not but that man is able by the right use of reason to know and to obey certain principles of the natural law. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Tametsi futura prospicientibus*, no. 11, November 1, 1900)

II – VIRTUES THAT SHOULD CHARACTERIZE THE YOUTH OF THE CHURCH

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Parents should not permit insolence in their children

Give him not his own way in his youth, and close not your eyes to his follies. Bend him to the yoke when he is young, thrash his sides while he is still small, **lest he become stubborn, disobey you, and leave you disconsolate**. Discipline your son, make heavy his yoke, lest his folly humiliate you. (Sir 30:11-13)

JOHN PAUL II

Obedience without reserve is the mark of the saints

Dearest brethren, my thoughts go directly to Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, and to the example he left us. Yesterday, commemorating the

four hundredth anniversary of his death in Castiglione delle Stiviere, I remembered how his life was entirely fulfilled because he lived in total and constant fidelity to God, in the generous fulfillment of the **divine will**. His existence was a yes without reserve to Christ, renewed in joy and in sorrow, imitating Mary, the Virgin of the Annunciation. How can we fail to recall that at just ten years of age, in the Church of the Annunciation in Florence, he offered himself totally to God? **The Fiat of Mary became his Fiat**, he commended himself to the cares of his Mother and, **as an obedient son, he followed her footsteps** with humility and docile abandon. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, Pastoral visit to Mantua, no. 1-2, June 23, 1991)

Young people should be willing to live and die for Christ

‘We die for Christ. All of us. **We die willingly for not denying our holy Faith!**’ Were they perhaps deluded? Were they behind the times? No, dear young people, they were men, authentic men, strong, decisive and coherent, deeply rooted in their history, they were men who intensely loved their city, who were strongly linked to their families, among them were young people, who, like yourselves desired joy, happiness. [...] And they, with lucidity and firmness, opted for Christ! [...] **Faced with the suggestions of certain contemporary ideologies that exalt and proclaim theoretical and practical atheism, I ask you, young people of Otranto and of Pulla: Are you willing to repeat, with full conviction and conscience, the words of the Blessed Martyrs: ‘We choose to die any kind of death for Christ, rather than denying him?’ To be willing to die for Christ implies the decision to accept with generosity and coherence the demands of Christian life, that is, it means living for Christ.** The Blessed Martyrs left us – and above all, have left you – **two fundamental testimonies: love of the earthly homeland, and the authenticity of the Christian faith.** (John Paul II. *Address to youth*, no. 2-3, October 5, 1980)

The faith of a young person should be strong, joyful, and hardworking

Be young people of faith! Of true, profound Christian faith! [...] **May your faith, young people, be sure, that is to say, based on the**

word of Christ, on the deep knowledge of the Gospel message, and especially in the life, **the person, and the work of Christ**; and in the same way, on the interior testimony of the Holy Spirit. **May your faith be strong; may it not waver, not vacillate when faced with doubts**, with uncertainties that philosophical systems or fashionable currents suggest to you; may it not compromise with certain conceptions that wish to present Christianity as if it were merely an ideology of a historical character, and therefore, put on the same level as many others that have already been surpassed. **May your faith be joyful, as based on the certainty of possessing a divine gift.** When you pray and dialogue with God, and when you speak to people, show the joy of this enviable possession. **May your faith be hardworking, may it be shown and made visible in active and generous charity towards the brothers who live crushed by suffering and necessity; may it be shown in your serene adherence to the teaching of the Church**, Mother and Master of the truth; may it be expressed in your willingness towards all the initiatives of apostolate in which you are invited to participate for the expansion and the building of the Kingdom of Christ. (John Paul II. *Address to youth*, no. 3, October 5, 1980)

JOHN XXIII

The formation of youth requires piety in order to combat indiscipline

We advise young people, also, to contemplate attentively this glorious Saint [Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother] as he, for the short time he lived on earth, experienced and overcame his own difficulties. **This exhortation is all the more opportune for young people, given that young people are, by nature, adverse to discipline, lovers of pleasure, forgetful of the things of the other life (Col 3:1), and too avid for material goods.** Although Saint Gabriel, in his life in the word, was not withdrawn from diversions, nonetheless, they never separated him from God. Through his example, **our dear young people will learn to ‘serve the Lord with gladness’ (cf. Psalm 99:1), at the same time as ordering the affections of the heart and the actions of life according to the norms of modesty and temperance.** May he be for them, in a special way, teacher of **integrity of customs today, when so many dangers**

threaten the virtue of chastity, and on all sides there arise incentives to evil, through the progress of modern technology. **Therefore, to be victorious in the fight for chastity, honor with lively piety the Immaculate Virgin Mary and confide in her protection, as Saint Gabriel did.** (John XXIII. *Letter to the Superior General of the Passionists on the Centenary of Saint Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother*, February 27, 1962)

PIUS XII

Formation of youth: in prayer, in sacrifice and in the fulfillment of duties

Young ladies of Spanish Catholic Action! [...] And all – dearest daughters, older and younger; daughters that the Pope esteems so much – **be at all moments obedient, faithful and generous; make of your youth, in imitation of Mary Most Holy, a perfumed and pure flower; be the joy and consolation of all; do not let yourselves be seduced by the alluring invitations of a corrupt world, the first echoes of which you may be hearing now; be formed solidly in prayer, in sacrifice and in the fulfillment of your daily duties; in such a way that you will never be unworthy of those who, in much more difficult times, have gone before you. [...] But Spain is much more beautiful in the Christian virtues that characterize her, in the purity of her customs, in the integrity of the family, in fidelity to the Church, in her firm adhesion to a Faith for which she has shown she knows how to die; Spain is much more beautiful in her Saints. May this flame never die out in Spanish hearts, may this longing for sanctity live and grow, and to obtain it, be saints yourselves and then sanctify all those around you.** (Pius XII. *Radio message to girls, aspirants and young ladies of Spanish Catholic Action*, November 27, 1955)

Youth should prepare themselves for the narrow way

A spirit of faith and sacrifice; a life of piety and of continual progress in the forefront; adhesion, respect and love of the Church; a heart as big as the world that are at the moment, young Catholics from around the world. If in other times the battle-cry: 'For

Saint James and for Spain! (*¡Santiago y cierra España!*)' conquered the enemies of the faith, if still yesterday the Apostle did not abandon those who invoked him, be certain that today and always his spirit and his protection will lead you again to victory in spiritual battles and will help you overcome the snares that are laid everywhere for you. Especially for you, young people, because they know you are a powerful and gallant force in the present and a radiant and sure promise for the future. '*Igitur via peregrinalis est res optima sed augusta*' **'The pilgrim's way is excellent, but narrow'**, as was stated in the sermon of the Codex Calixtinus (Codex Calistinus l. I c. XVII, *Sermo beati Calixte Pape*, fol. 80); but it would be the first time that danger would scare, disarm, or make youth retreat, **and much less a youth like yours, nourished on solid faith, and matured in the ardent climate of sacrifice.** (Pius XII. *Radio message to youth gathered in Compostela*, August 28, 1948)

PIUS XI

The young person's battlefield is his own interior

Young people are, by nature, inclined to exterior works, and **are always willing to throw themselves into the battlefield of action.** It is necessary to make them understand that before thinking of others and of the Catholic cause, **it behooves them to fight for their own interior perfection, through study, and the practice of virtue.** (Pius XI. *Apostolic letter Singulare illud*, June 13, 1926)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Young men: be humble

'I write unto you, young men'. Again and again consider that you are **young men: fight, that you may overcome:** overcome, that you may be crowned: **be lowly, that you fall not in the fight.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Homily on the first Epistle of John*, no. 2, 7)

III – OBEDIENCE IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TRAITS FOR CATHOLICS

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Whoever resists authority brings judgment upon himself

Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgment upon themselves. (Rom 13:1-2)

PAUL VI

Catholics owe obedience to the constituted authority

The presence of Catholics in all the States seeks to represent a constructive element of active collaboration and of effective obedience to the constituted authority; it seeks to represent an active element of sure progress within order and love. (Paul VI. *Address to the President of the Republic of Somalia*, October 7, 1963)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE

OF THE CHURCH

To refuse to obey authority is to resist God, who appointed it

Authority that governs according to reason places citizens in a relationship not so much of subjection to another person as of obedience to the moral order and, therefore, to God himself who is its ultimate source (cf. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*). Whoever refuses to obey an authority that is acting in accordance with the moral order ‘resists what God has appointed’ (Rom 13:2). Analogously, whenever public authority – which has its foundation in human nature and belongs to the order pre-ordained by God (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 74) – fails to seek the common good, it abandons its proper purpose and so delegitimizes itself. (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 398, June 29, 2004)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

For centuries Christians have distinguished themselves by the fulfilment of their duties

The commitment of Christians in the world has found a variety of expressions in the course of the past 2000 years. One such expression has been Christian involvement in political life: Christians, as one Early Church writer stated, ‘play their full role as citizens’ (*Letter to Diognetus*, 5,5; cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2240). (Congregation For The Doctrine of the Faith. *Doctrinal Note on some questions regarding the participation of Catholics in political life*, no.1, November 24, 2002)

PIUS XII

It is necessary to dissipate the atmosphere of independence and excessive liberty

Promote, in the souls of children and youth, the hierarchical spirit, which does not deny to each age its due development, to dissipate, as much as possible, that atmosphere of independence and excessive liberty that in our days the youth breathe and which seeks to lead it to reject all authority and all control, seek to foment and form the sense of responsibility and recalling that liberty is not the only human value, although it is counted among the first, but rather that it has its intrinsic limits in the obligatory norms of honesty, and extrinsic limits in the corresponding rights of others, of each one individually as well as of society taken as a whole. (Pius XII. *Radio message to participants in the Inter-American Congress of Catholic Education*, October 6, 1948)

PIUS X

A vice common to the enemies of the faith: repudiating all respect and obedience for authority

What truly is the point of departure of the enemies of religion for the sowing of the great and serious errors by which the faith of so many is shaken? They begin by denying that man has fallen by sin and been cast down from his former position. [...] It is moreover

a vice common to the enemies of the faith of our time especially that they repudiate and proclaim the necessity of repudiating all respect and obedience for the authority of the Church, and even of any human power, in the idea that it will thus be more easy to make an end of faith. Here we have the origin of Anarchism, than which nothing is more pernicious and pestilent to the order of things whether natural or supernatural. (Pius X. *Encyclical Ad Diem illud laetissimum*, no. 22, February 2, 1904)

PIUS IX

To resist authority is to resist the ordering made by God Himself

Take pains to impress on the Christian people a due obedience and subjection to rulers and governments. Do this by teaching, in accordance with the warning of the Apostle (Rom 12:1-2), that all authority comes from God. Whoever resists authority resists the ordering made by God Himself, consequently achieving his own condemnation; disobeying authority is always sinful except when an order is given which is opposed to the laws of God and the Church. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 22, November 19, 1846)

The very nature of human society obligates its members to obey the lawfully established authority

Therefore, warn your faithful that the very nature of human society obligates its members to obey its lawfully established authority; nothing in the precepts of the Lord on this subject, which are proclaimed in holy scripture, can be altered. For it is written: 'Be subject to every human institution for God's sake, to the king as supreme or to governors as sent by

him to punish wrongdoers and to praise those who do right. For it is God's will that by doing right, you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Be as free men, yet without using freedom as a pretext for evil, but be as servants of God' (1Pet 2:13f). And again: 'Let ever soul be subject to the higher authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, he who resists authority resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur their own condemnation' (Rom 13:1f). (Pius IX. *Encyclical Nostis et nobiscum*, no. 19, November 19, 1846)

GREGORY XVI

Certain teachings are being spread: the torches of treason are being lit everywhere

We have learned that certain teachings are being spread among the common people in writings which attack the trust and submission due to princes; the torches of treason are being lit everywhere. Care must be taken lest the people, being deceived, are led away from the straight path. May all recall, according to the admonition of the apostle that 'there is no authority except from God; what authority there is has been appointed by God. Therefore he who resists authority resists the ordinances of God; and those who resist bring on themselves condemnation' (Rom 13.2). Therefore both divine and human laws cry out against those who strive by treason and sedition to drive the people from confidence in their princes and force them from their government. (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 17, August 15, 1832)

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The most serious of the evils that afflict the world these days are youth unemployment and the loneliness of the old

Saint Pius X warned about pastors only committed 'to doing good, above all to resolving the problems of the people,' but who were concerned 'greatly about nourishment and care of the body, while silencing the salvation of the soul and the gravest obligations of the Christian faith.' This admonition, made in a time when society was incomparably more Christian than it is today, makes us recall the words of the Divine Master: 'Man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord' (Deut 8:3).

What should we think of the worsening of this situation in our days? Should more emphasis be put on another aspect? Or rather would it be best to strongly insist in this sense?

In a world where family values tend to disappear, where the love of God is given secondary importance – when not entirely put aside – and where the divine precepts are taken with callous indifference, being obeyed only by a minority, what should the most urgent preoccupation of the Church be? It would seem that She should put stress upon impeccable catechetical formation, the transmission of Her holy doctrine to Her disoriented children, lost in this materialistic and atheistic world...

Or should the attention perhaps be focused on unemployment and the isolation of the elderly, on poverty and corruption? Could these evils be the result of a society without faith and without God? Should we not get to the root of the evil? Or is it better to just silence the symptoms? Holy Mother Church has the right answers...

FRANCIS

The most serious evils currently afflicting the world are unemployment among the young and the solitude in which the elderly are left. The elderly need care and companionship; the young need work and hope. However, they have neither the one nor the other, and the trouble is that they are no longer seeking for them. They have been crushed by the present. Tell me: can one live crushed by the present? Without any memory of the past or any desire to look to the future by building a project, a future, a family? Is it possible to continue in this way? **This, in my opinion, is the most urgent problem facing the Church.** (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari, L'Osservatore Romano, 9/10/2013*) (La Repubblica, October 1, 2013)[See notes 1 and 2]¹

[Juan Berretta:] **What are the greatest evils afflicting the world today?**

¹ **Note 1:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that these are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), and also in the *L'Osservatore Romano* (weekly English ed., no.41: 9/10/2013), thus lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine should be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must above all not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

[Francis:] **Poverty, corruption, trafficking of humans...** I might be mistaken about the statistics, but what would you say if I asked you, what is the greatest expenditure in the world after food, clothing and medicine? The fourth is cosmetics and the fifth, pets. This is serious, eh. The care for pets is a sort of programmed type of love, that is, I can program the loving response of a dog or cat, and that way I don't need to have the experience of a reciprocal human love. I am exaggerating, don't take this literally, but it is worrisome. (*Interview with La Voz del Pueblo*, May 27, 2015) (English summary)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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I – THE GREATEST EVILS OF OUR TIMES ARE OF A SPIRITUAL NATURE

PIUS X

Ignorance of divine things is the chief cause of the present weakness of souls and the serious evils that result from it

Now, more than ever before, the prediction of the Apostle to the elders of the Church

of Ephesus seems to be verified: 'I know that . . . fierce wolves will get in among you, and will not spare the flock' (Acts 20:29). **Those who still are zealous for the glory of God are seeking the causes and reasons for this decline in religion. Coming to a different explanation, each points out, according to his own view, a different plan for the protection and restoration of the kingdom of God on earth. But** it seems to Us, Venerable Brethren, that while we should not overlook other considerations, We are forced to agree with those who hold that **the chief cause of the**

present indifference and, as it were, infirmity of soul, and the serious evils that result from it, is to be found above all in ignorance of things divine. This is fully in accord with what God Himself declared through the prophet Hosea: 'And there is no knowledge of God in the land. Cursing and lying and killing and theft and adultery have overflowed: and blood hath touched blood. Thereafter shall the land mourn, and everyone that dwelleth in it shall languish' (Hos 4:1-3). (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 1, April 15, 1905)

Apostasy from God is the terrible and deep rooted malady to blame for the disastrous state of human society today

Then again, to omit other motives, **We were terrified beyond all else by the disastrous state of human society today.** For who can fail to see that **society is at the present time, more than in any past age, suffering from a terrible and deep-rooted malady** which, developing every day and eating into its inmost being, is **dragging it to destruction?** You understand, Venerable Brethren, **what this disease is – apostasy from God,** than which in truth nothing is more allied with ruin, according to the word of the Prophet: 'For behold they that go far from Thee shall perish' (Ps 72:26). We saw therefore that, in virtue of the ministry of the Pontificate, which was to be entrusted to Us, We must hasten to find a remedy for this great evil, considering as addressed to Us that Divine command: 'Lo, I have set thee this day over the nations and over kingdoms, to root up, and to pull down, and to waste, and to destroy, and to build, and to plant' (Jer 1:10). But, cognizant of Our weakness, We recoiled in terror from a task as urgent as it is arduous. (Pius X. *Encyclical E supremi apostolatus*, no.2-3, October 4, 1903)

PIUS XI

The greatest and most destructive scourges of the social order of today lie within the supernatural order, but are not perceived by 'the sensual man'

It is surprising, then, that we should no longer possess that security of life in which we can place our trust and that there remains only

the most terrible uncertainty, and from hour to hour added fears for the future? Instead of regular daily work there is idleness and unemployment. That blessed tranquility which is the effect of an orderly existence and in which the essence of peace is to be found no longer exists, and, in its place, the restless spirit of revolt reigns. As a consequence industry suffers, commerce is crippled, the cultivation of literature and the arts becomes more and more difficult, and what is worse than all, Christian civilization itself is irreparably damaged thereby. In the face of our much praised progress, **we behold with sorrow society lapsing back slowly but surely into a state of barbarism.** We wish to record, in addition to the evils already mentioned, **other evils which beset society and which occupy a place of prime importance but whose very existence escapes the ordinary observer, the sensual man – he who, as the Apostle says, does not perceive 'the things that are of the Spirit of God' (1Cor 2:14), yet which cannot but be judged the greatest and most destructive scourges of the social order of today.** We refer specifically to those evils which transcend the material or natural sphere and lie within the supernatural and religious order properly so-called; in other words, those evils which affect the spiritual life of souls. **These evils are all the more to be deplored since they injure souls whose value is infinitely greater than that of any merely material object.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ubi arcano*, no. 15-16, December 23, 1922)

When examined with Christian eyes, nothing can be compared to the loss of souls

Minds of all, it is true, are affected almost solely by temporal upheavals, disasters, and calamities. But if we examine things critically with Christian eyes, as we should, **what are all these compared with the loss of souls?** Yet it is not rash by any means to say that the whole scheme of social and economic life is now such as to put in the way of vast numbers of mankind most serious obstacles which prevent them from caring for **the one thing necessary;** namely, their eternal salvation. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Quadragesimo anno*, no. 130, May 15, 1931)

Those who repudiate the supreme authority of God destroy the basis of human society

In fact, because the supreme and eternal authority of God, which commands and forbids, is despised and completely repudiated by men, the result is that the consciousness of Christian duty is weakened, and that faith becomes tepid in souls or entirely lost, and this afterward affects and ruins the very basis of human society. [...] To this is added the clever and lamentable sect of those who, denying and hating God, declare themselves the enemies of the Eternal, and who insinuate themselves everywhere. They discredit and uproot all religious belief from souls. Finally, they trample on every human and Divine right. And while they cast scorn on the hope of heavenly reward, they incite men to seek, even by illicit means, false earthly happiness, and therefore drive them with brazen temerity to the dissolution of the social order, causing disorder, cruel rebellions and even the conflagration of civil war. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ingravescentibus malis*, no. 4,7, September 29, 1937)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

A grave error: the separation between faith and life

This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age. Long since, the Prophets of the Old Testament fought vehemently against this scandal (cf. Is 58: 1-12) and even more so did Jesus Christ Himself in the New Testament threaten it with grave punishments. (cf. Mt 23:3-23, Mk 7:10-13). (Denzinger-Hünemann 4343. *Vatican Council II*, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, no. 43, December 7, 1965)

PIUS XII

The greatest sin of our time: the loss of the sense of sin

Perhaps the greatest sin in the world today is that men have begun to lose the sense of sin. (Pius XII. *Radio Message to participants in the National Catechetical Congress of the United States in Boston*, October 26, 1946)

The greatest kind of sin: open and implacable hatred against God and His Church

For if We experience bitter sorrow at the feeble loyalty of the good in whose souls, tricked by a deceptive desire for earthly possessions, the fire of divine charity grows cool and gradually dies out, much more is Our heart deeply grieved by the machinations of evil men who, as if instigated by Satan himself, are now more than ever zealous in their open and implacable hatred against God, against the Church and above all against him who on earth represents the Person of the divine Redeemer [...] But, in truth, hatred of God and of those who lawfully act in His place is the greatest kind of sin that can be committed by man created in the image and likeness of God and destined to enjoy His perfect and enduring friendship forever in heaven. Man, by hatred of God more than by anything else, is cut off from the Highest Good and is driven to cast aside from himself and from those near to him whatever has its origin in God, whatever is united with God, whatever leads to the enjoyment of God, that is, truth, virtue, peace and justice (cf. STh. II-II, q.34, a.2). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Haurietis aquas*, no. 117- 118, May 15, 1956)

LEO XIII

The source of evils lies chiefly in despising and setting aside the authority of the Church

Now, the source of these evils lies chiefly, We are convinced, in this, that the holy and venerable authority of the Church, which in God's name rules mankind, upholding and defending all lawful authority, has been despised and set aside. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilio*, no. 2, April 21, 1878)

GREGORY XVI

Indifferentism has produced many of the evils that afflict the Church

Now we examine another prolific cause of evils by which, we lament, the Church is at present afflicted, namely indifferentism,

or that base opinion which has become prevalent everywhere through the deceit of wicked men, that eternal salvation of the soul can be acquired by any profession of faith whatsoever, if morals are conformed to the standard of the just and the honest. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2730. Gregory XVI, *Encyclical Mirari vos*, August 15, 1832)

JOHN PAUL II

Today too many people have a bitter experience of a society without values, which results in hostility to the individual

This brings me naturally to that other form of poverty: moral destitution. [...] the means of social communication often transmit indulgent messages which excuse everything and result in an unrestrained permissiveness. Thus the dignity and stability of the family are not recognized or are changed. Many young people are coming to consider almost everything as objectively indifferent: the only reference is what suits the convenience of the individual, and quite often the end justifies the means. Now, as we can see, a society without values rapidly grows 'hostile' to the individual who becomes the victim of personal profit, of a brutal exercise of authority, of fraud and crime. **Today too many people have a bitter experience of this**, and I know that statesmen are conscious of these serious problems which they must face each day. (John Paul II. *Address to the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See*, January 16, 1993)

We must ask ourselves what our responsibilities are regarding today's evils

Let us confess, even more, our responsibilities as Christians for the evils of today. **We must ask ourselves what our responsibilities are regarding atheism, religious indifference, secularism, ethical relativism, the violations of the right to life**, disregard for the poor in many countries. (John Paul II. *Homily*, Day of Pardon, March 12, 2000)

Today's problems: religious indifference, loss of the transcendent sense of human life, loss of respect for life and the family,

a crisis of obedience to the Church's Magisterium

How can we remain silent, for example, about the religious indifference which causes many people today to live as if God did not exist, or to be content with a vague religiosity, incapable of coming to grips with the question of truth and the requirement of consistency? To this must also be added the widespread loss of the transcendent sense of human life, and confusion in the ethical sphere, even about the fundamental values of respect for life and the family. The sons and daughters of the Church too need to examine themselves in this regard. To what extent have they been shaped by the climate of secularism and ethical relativism? And what responsibility do they bear, in view of the increasing lack of religion, for not having shown the true face of God, by having 'failed in their religious, moral, or social life?' It cannot be denied that, for many Christians, the spiritual life is passing through a time of uncertainty which affects not only their moral life but also their life of prayer and the theological correctness of their faith. Faith, already put to the test by the challenges of our times, is sometimes disoriented by erroneous theological views, the spread of which is abetted by the crisis of obedience vis-à-vis the Church's Magisterium. (John Paul II. *Apostolic Letter Tertio millennio adveniente*, November 10, 1994)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The most urgent needs today are resolved in the light of the ideals of the Gospel

This council has set forth the dignity of the human person, and the work which men have been destined to undertake throughout the world both as individuals and as members of society. There are a number of particularly urgent needs characterizing the present age, needs which go to the roots of the human race. To a consideration of these in the light of the Gospel and of human experience, the council would now direct the attention of all. Of the many subjects arousing universal concern today, it may be helpful to concentrate on these: marriage and the family, human progress, life in its economic, social and

political dimensions, the bonds between the family of nations, and peace. **On each of these may there shine the radiant ideals proclaimed by Christ.** By these ideals may Christians be led, and all mankind enlightened, as they search for answers to questions of such complexity. (Vatican Council II. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 46, December 7, 1965)

PIUS XI

We are witnessing a war against the Church, with most grievous damage to souls

However, we should recognize with sorrow that, despite your diligent and assiduous care, within these regions also – as happens disgracefully in many others, – **a war is occurring, at times silently, at times blatantly, against that which is most precious to Holy Mother Church, with the most grievous damage to souls.** The integrity of the family is attacked at its foundations by frequent attempts against the sanctity of marriage; **Christian education of the youth, interfered with and at times neglected, there as in other nations, is now seriously compromised by errors against faith and morals and by calumnies against the Church,** which is presented as an enemy to progress, liberty and the interests of the people. (Pius XI. *Apostolic Letter Con singular complacencia to the Bishops of the Philippines*, January 18, 1939)

CARD. JOSEPH RATZINGER

Dictatorship of relativism: the evil of our times

How many winds of doctrine have we known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many ways of thinking. **The small boat of the thought of many Christians has often been tossed about by these waves – flung from one extreme to another:** from Marxism to liberalism, even to libertinism; from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so forth. Every day new sects spring up, and what Saint Paul says about human deception and the trickery that strives to entice people into error

(cf. Eph 4:14) comes true. Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas **relativism, that is, letting oneself be ‘tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine’, seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.** (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. *Mass Pro eligendo Romano Pontifice*, April 18, 2005)

II – THE LACK OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN THE CRISIS OF SOCIETY

JOHN PAUL II

Sound catechetics and trustful openness to the Magisterium aid in restoring the proper sense of sin: the first way of facing today’s grave spiritual crisis

The restoration of a proper sense of sin is the first way of facing the grave spiritual crisis looming over man today. But the sense of sin can only be restored through a clear reminder of the unchangeable principles of reason and faith which the moral teaching of the church has always upheld. There are good grounds for hoping that a healthy sense of sin will once again flourish, especially in the Christian world and in the church. **This will be aided by sound catechetics, illuminated by the biblical theology of the covenant, by an attentive listening and trustful openness to the Magisterium of the Church,** which never ceases to enlighten consciences, and by an ever more careful practice of the sacrament of penance. (John Paul II. *Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 18, December 12, 1984)

The Church has particular responsibility in forming the necessary ethical and religious values

Since then, many things have changed, especially in recent years. **The world today is ever more aware that solving serious national and international problems is not**

just a matter of economic production or of juridical or social organization, but also calls for specific ethical and religious values, as well as changes of mentality, behavior and structures. The Church feels a particular responsibility to offer this contribution and, as I have written in the Encyclical *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, there is a reasonable hope that the many people who profess no religion will also contribute to providing the social question with the necessary ethical foundation. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Centesimus annus*, no. 60, May 1, 1991)

Education of the moral conscience is a pressing requirement that cannot be renounced

‘Our era needs such wisdom more than bygone ages if the discoveries made by man are to be further humanized. For the future of the world stands in peril unless wiser people are forthcoming’ (*Gaudium et Spes*, no. 15). The education of the moral conscience, which makes every human being capable of judging and of discerning the proper ways to achieve self-realization according to his or her original truth, thus becomes a pressing requirement that cannot be renounced. Modern culture must be led to a more profoundly restored covenant with divine Wisdom. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Familiaris consortio*, no. 8, November 22, 1981)

Today it is more necessary than ever the mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the stable principle and fixed centre of the mission that God himself has entrusted to man. We must all share in this mission and concentrate all our forces on it, since it is more necessary than ever for modern mankind. If this mission seems to encounter greater opposition nowadays than ever before, this shows that today it is more necessary than ever and, in spite of the opposition, more awaited than ever. Here we touch indirectly on the mystery of the divine ‘economy’ which linked salvation and grace with the Cross. It was not without reason that Christ said that ‘the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force’ (Mt 11: 12). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptor hominis*, no. 11, March 4, 1979)

BENEDICT XVI

A satisfactory solution for problems requires the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society

This dynamic of charity received and given is what gives rise to the Church’s social teaching, which is *caritas in veritate in re sociali*: the proclamation of the truth of Christ’s love in society. This doctrine is a service to charity, but its locus is truth. Truth preserves and expresses charity’s power to liberate in the ever-changing events of history. It is at the same time the truth of faith and of reason, both in the distinction and also in the convergence of those two cognitive fields. Development, social well-being, the search for a satisfactory solution to the grave socio-economic problems besetting humanity, all need this truth. What they need even more is that this truth should be loved and demonstrated. Without truth, without trust and love for what is true, there is no social conscience and responsibility, and social action ends up serving private interests and the logic of power, resulting in social fragmentation, especially in a globalized society at difficult times like the present. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Caritas in veritate*, no. 5, June 29, 2009)

The present crisis challenges the Church to devise effective ways of proclaiming the path of salvation

Among these, I would mention in the first place the need for a comprehensive study of the crisis of modernity. European culture in recent centuries has been powerfully conditioned by the notion of modernity. The present crisis, however, has less to do with modernity’s insistence on the centrality of man and his concerns, than with the problems raised by a ‘humanism’ that claims to build a *regnum hominis* detached from its necessary ontological foundation. A false dichotomy between theism and authentic humanism, taken to the extreme of positing an irreconcilable conflict between divine law and human freedom, has led to a situation in which humanity, for all its economic and technical advances, feels deeply threatened [...] A third issue needing to be investigated concerns the nature of the contribution which

Christianity can make to the humanism of the future., and thus of modernity, challenges the Church to devise effective **The question of man, and thus of modernity, challenges the Church to devise effective ways of proclaiming to contemporary culture the 'realism' of her faith in the saving work of Christ. Christianity must not be relegated to the world of myth and emotion, but respected for its claim to shed light on the truth about man, to be able to transform men and women spiritually, and thus to enable them to carry out their vocation in history.** (Benedict XVI. *Speech to the participants in the First European Meeting of University Lecturers*, June 23, 2007)

Young generations need to recognize in Jesus Christ the purpose of the whole of human history

To proclaim faith in the Word made flesh is, after all, at the heart of the Church's mission, and the entire ecclesial community needs to rediscover this indispensable task with renewed missionary zeal. Young generations have an especially keen sense of the present disorientation, magnified by the crisis in economic affairs which is also a crisis of values, and so they in particular need to recognize in Jesus Christ 'the key, the centre and the purpose of the whole of human history' (*Gaudium et Spes*, 10). (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, December 31, 2011)

Facing the ignorance of deepest spiritual roots: open yourselves to the action of the Holy Spirit so that no one is left without the indispensable spiritual food

I note with pleasure that one of the **pastoral initiatives** that you **consider most urgently necessary for the Church** in Ecuador is the realization of the 'great mission' [...] The call that the Lord Jesus addressed to his disciples, sending them out to **preach his message of salvation** and to make disciples of all the peoples (cf. Mt 28:16-20) must be a constant cause of meditation and the *raison d'être* of all pastoral action for the entire ecclesial community. Today too, as in all times and places, men and women need a personal encounter with Christ, in which they can experience the beauty of his

life and the truth of his message. To face the numerous challenges of your mission **amid a cultural and social environment that seems to forget the deepest spiritual roots** of its identity, I ask you to **open yourselves with docility to the action of the Holy Spirit** so that under the impetus of his divine power the missionary zeal of the first Gospel preaching, as well as of the first proclamation of the Gospel in your regions, may be renewed. **This requires that you make a generous effort to spread the Word of God in such a way that no one is left without this indispensable spiritual food**, the source of life and light. The reading of and meditation on Sacred Scripture, in private or in the community, will lead to the intensification of Christian life, as well as to a renewed apostolic impulse in all the faithful. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the Bishops of Ecuador on their ad limina visit*, no. 2, October 16, 2008)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Anguish at the urgency of problems cannot blur what is essential: man does not live on bread alone, but on God's Word

The feeling of anguish at the urgency of the problems cannot make us lose sight of what is essential nor forget the reply of Jesus to the Tempter: **'It is not on bread alone that man lives, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'** (Mt 4:4, cf. Deut 8:3). Faced with the urgency of sharing bread, **some are tempted to put evangelization into parentheses, as it were, and postpone it until tomorrow: first the bread, then the Word of the Lord.** It is a fatal error to separate these two and even worse to oppose the one to the other. In fact, the Christian perspective naturally shows they have a great deal to do with one another (cf. GS, 39; Pius XI, *Quad. Anno*). To some it even seems that the necessary struggle for human justice and freedom in the economic and political sense constitutes the whole essence of salvation. For them, the Gospel is reduced to a purely earthly gospel. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Liberation Theology*, August 6, 1984)

Pius XI

Catechetical apostolate is more urgent in the current conditions

The catechetical apostolate appears to be more necessary and urgent in the current conditions of your country and of others, where, due to diverse reasons, so many children and youth, in the cities, villages and on farms grow up without religious formation. (Pius XI. *Apostolic Letter Con singular complacencia to the Bishops of the Philippines on Catholic Action*, January 18, 1939)

Pius XII

We must make every effort to lead back to Christ those brethren who have strayed from the right path

Consider the immense need of our time. We must make every effort to lead back to Christian principles those brethren who have strayed through error or been blinded by passions, to enlighten nations with the light of Christian doctrine, to guide them according to Christian norms and to form in them more Christian consciences, and lastly to urge them to struggle for the triumph of truth and justice. (Pius XII. *Apostolic exhortation Menti nostrae*, September 23, 1950)

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The poor are the flesh of Christ; and poverty is a theological category

Love for the poor is no novelty within the Church of Christ, although some try to present it as a recent innovation, something that sprung up in the past few years... In fact, it was the Church that promoted works of charity all over the world, often faced with severe criticism from the pagans who, with their hedonistic outlook, scoffed at the followers of Christ. But Christians always persevered in following in the footsteps the Divine Redeemer, who set the example and left us that divine law of charity: we should encounter the image of Christ Himself in those who suffer!

Nonetheless, the divine call to conversion was directed to all, rich or poor; and the kind of poverty that merited the title of 'beatitude' was poverty of the spirit, consisting in detachment from the things of the world and in humility.

So, when faced with certain biased outlooks, we just might ask: Are there poor people who are actually rich in spirit? Do rich people who are detached from their goods exist? Is the 'option for the poor' exclusive and excluding? Furthermore, if the idea of the 'flesh of Christ' has a relationship with the Mystical Body: is the poverty of the peripheries what makes a person part of this Body?

As always, the teachings of the Magisterium are a light to us all. Let us have a look at what the Mystical Body of Christ is, and who its true members are.

FRANCIS

The second question: 'And when you give alms, do you touch the hand of the person you are giving them to or do you toss the coin at him or her?' **This is the problem: the flesh of Christ, touching the flesh of Christ, taking upon ourselves this suffering for the poor. Poverty for us Christians is not a sociological, philosophical or cultural category, no. It is theological. I might say this is the first category, because our God, the Son of God, abased himself, he made himself poor to walk along the road with us. This is our poverty: the poverty of the flesh of Christ, the poverty that brought the Son of God to us through his Incarnation. A poor Church for the poor begins by reaching out to the flesh of Christ. If we reach out to the flesh of Christ, we begin to understand something, to understand what this poverty, the Lord's poverty, actually is; and this is far from easy.** (*Pentecost Vigil with the Ecclesial Movements*, May 18, 2013)

My brother Domenico was saying to me that here you have Adoration. That bread too needs to be heard, because Jesus is present and hidden in the simplicity and meekness of bread. And here is **Jesus hidden in these boys and girls**, in these children, in these people. **On the altar we adore the Flesh of Jesus; in the people we find the wounds of Jesus. Jesus hidden in the Eucharist and Jesus hidden in these wounds.** They need to be heard! Maybe not so much in newspapers as news; there they take notice for one, two, three days, then something else comes up, and another thing.... The wounds should be heard by those who call themselves Christian. **The Christian adores Jesus, the Christian seeks Jesus, the Christian knows how to recognize the wounds of Jesus. And today, all of us, here, need to say: "These wounds must be heard!"** But there is something else that gives us hope. **Jesus is present in the Eucharist, here is the Flesh of Jesus; Jesus is present among you, it is the Flesh of Jesus: the wounds of Jesus are present in these people.** (*To the sick and disabled children assisted at the Seraphic Institute*, October 4, 2013)

Today, in this place where people struggle with drug addiction, **I wish to embrace each and every one of you, who are the flesh of Christ...** (*Visit to Saint Francis of Assisi of the Providence of God Hospital – V.O.T, July 24, 2013*)

The poor, the abandoned, the sick and the marginalized are the flesh of Christ. (Homily, Canonization of Maria Guadalupe Garcia Zavala, May 12, 2013)

Dear friends, **let us not forget the flesh of Christ which is in the flesh of refugees: their flesh is the flesh of Christ.** (*Address to participants in the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, May 24, 2013*)

We can do all the social work we like, and people can say: 'how good the Church is, what good social work the Church does!' But if we say we do this because those people are the flesh of Christ, it gives rise to a scandal. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae, June 1, 2013*)

Today, humanity is in danger, the human person. **The flesh of Christ is in danger.** Look, **every person for us, and even more so if marginalized, if sick, is the flesh of Christ.** (*Message to Caritas International Executive Committee, May 16, 2013*)

Then he spoke of another thing, about the Incarnation of the Lord. John the Apostle is clear: 'He who says that the Word did not become flesh, is not from God! He is from the devil'. He is not ours, he is the enemy! Because first there was heresy – let's say the word among us – and this is what the Apostle condemns: that the Word did not become flesh. No! The incarnation of the Word is at the foundation: it is Jesus Christ! God and man, Son of God and Son of man, true God and true man. And thus the first Christians understood and they must have really argued a great deal in order to maintain these truths: the Lord is God and man; the Lord Jesus is God made flesh. **It is the mystery of Christ's flesh: one doesn't understand love for thy neighbour, one doesn't understand love for thy brother, if one doesn't understand this mystery of Incarnation.** I love my brother because he too is Christ, is Christlike, is the flesh of Christ. I love the poor, the widow, the slave, those in prison.... Let's consider the 'protocol' by which we will be judged: Matthew 25. I love all these people, because these people who suffer are the flesh of Christ, and it will do us good, who are on this path of unity, to touch the flesh of Christ. To go to the fringes, right where there are so many needs, or – let's say it better – there are so many needy, so many needy... (*Address, Meeting with an Evangelical Pastor, Caserta, July 28, 2014*)

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**I – IS CARE FOR THE POOR SOMETHING NEW?
ARE RICHES EVIL IN THEMSELVES?**

JOHN PAUL II

Love for the poor is not something new: the whole tradition of the Church bears witness to the exercise of Christian charity

Here I would like to indicate one of them: the option or love of preference for the poor. This is an option, or a special form of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 42, for the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Jesus came to call to conversion including the rich – the poverty He declared blessed is made up of detachment

But he also wished to be near to those who, though rich in the goods of this world, were excluded from the community as ‘publicans and sinners’, for he had come to call them to conversion (cf. Lk 19:1–10, Mk 2:13–17). It is this sort of poverty, made up of detachment, trust in God, sobriety and a readiness to share, that Jesus declared blessed. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Libertatis Conscientia*, no. 66, March 22, 1986)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Who oppresses the poor blasphemes his Maker

He who oppresses the poor blasphemes his Maker, but he who is kind to the needy glorifies him. (Prov 14:31)

Be mindful of the poor

Only, we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do. (Gal 2:10)

No partiality

There is no partiality with God. (Rom 2:11)

The Lord made the great as well as the small

For the Lord of all shows no partiality, nor does he fear greatness, Because he himself made the great as well as the small, and he provides for all alike. (Wis 6:7)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Word speaks of voluntary humility as ‘poverty in spirit’

The precept of detachment from riches is obligatory for entrance into the Kingdom of heaven. All Christ’s faithful are to ‘direct their affections rightly, lest they be hindered in their pursuit of perfect charity by the use of worldly things and by an adherence to riches which is contrary to the spirit of evangelical poverty’ (LG 4/3). [...] “The Word speaks of voluntary humility as ‘poverty in spirit’; the Apostle gives an example of God’s poverty when he says: ‘For your sakes he became poor.’” (Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *De beatitudinibus* 1; cf. 2Cor 8:9). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2544-2546)

JOHN XXII

Erroneous and heretical: to declare that Jesus Christ and His apostles did not possess anything either in particular or even in common

Since among some learned men it often happens that doubt is again raised as to whether should be branded as heretical to affirm persistently that our Redeemer and Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles did not possess anything either in particular or even in common, even though there are different and adverse opinions on that question, we, in a desire to put an end to this controversy, declare on the advice of our brethren by this perpetual edict that a persistent assertion of this kind shall henceforth be branded as erroneous and heretical, since it expressly contradicts Sacred Scripture, which in many passages

asserts that they did have some possessions; and since with regard to the aforementioned it **openly submits that Sacred Scripture itself, by which surely the articles of orthodox faith are approved, contains a ferment of falsehood and consequently, in so far as in it lies, completely voiding the faith of Scripture it renders the Catholic faith,** by destroying its approval, doubtful and uncertain. (Denzinger–Hünemann 930. *John XXII*, Edict Cum inter nonnullos, November 13, 1323)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The Lord chose both the rich and the poor

But the Lord chose afterwards orators also; but they would have been proud, if He had not first chosen fishermen; He **chose rich men; but they would have said that on account of their riches they had been chosen, unless at first He had chosen poor men.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, 66, no. 4)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Preference given to the poor, without exclusion

In its positive meaning the ‘Church of the poor’ **signifies the preference given to the poor, without exclusion,** whatever the form of their poverty, because they are preferred by God. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Libertatis nuntius, on certain aspects of the ‘Liberation Theology’*, no. 9)

CELAM – APARECIDA DOCUMENT

The preferential option for the poor is neither exclusive nor excluding

Hence, ‘the preferential option for the poor is implicit in the Christological faith in the God who became poor for us, so as to enrich us with his poverty.’ This option arises out of our faith in Jesus Christ, God made man, who has become our brother (cf. Heb 2:11-12). Yet **it is neither exclusive nor excluding.** (V General Episcopal Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean, CELAM. *Aparecida Document*, no. 392)

True human promotion cannot be reduced to particular aspects

We also understand that true human promotion cannot be reduced to particular aspects: ‘It must be well rounded; it must foster the development of each man and of the whole man’ (*Gaudium et Spes* 76). (V General Episcopal Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean, CELAM. *Aparecida*, Document, no. 399)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The temptation to reduce the Gospel to an earthly gospel

The different theologies of liberation are situated between the ‘preferential option for the poor’, forcefully reaffirmed without ambiguity after Medellín at the Conference of ‘Puebla’ (cf. ‘*Gaudium et Spes*’, n.39; Pius XI, *Quadragesimo Anno*) **on the one hand, and the temptation to reduce the Gospel to an earthly gospel on the other.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Libertatis nuntius*, on certain aspects of the ‘Theology Liberation’, no. 5, August 6, 1984)

Option for the poor: far from being a sign of particularism – cannot be expressed by reductive sociological and ideological categories

The **special option for the poor**, far from being a sign of particularism or sectarianism, manifests the universality of the Church’s being and mission. This option **excludes no one.**

This is the reason why **the Church cannot express this option by means of reductive sociological and ideological categories which would make this preference a partisan choice and a source of conflict.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation*, *Libertatis conscientia*, no. 68, March 22, 1986)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Man’s horizons are not limited only to the temporal order

For **man’s horizons are not limited only to the temporal order;** while living in the context of human history, **he preserves intact his**

eternal vocation. (Vatican Council II, Pastoral constitution. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 76, December 7, 1965)

LEO XIII

Virtue: common inheritance of men, within the reach of the rich and poor

The true worth and nobility of man lie in his moral qualities, that is, in virtue; that virtue is, moreover, the common inheritance of men, equally within the reach of high and low, rich and poor; and that virtue, and virtue alone, wherever found, will be followed by the rewards of everlasting happiness. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Rerum novarum*, no. 24, May 15, 1891)

The two classes should dwell in harmony. A great mistake: that one class is naturally hostile to another

The great mistake made in regard to the matter now under consideration is to take up with the notion that class is naturally hostile to class, and that the wealthy and the working men are intended by nature to live in mutual conflict. So irrational and so false is this view that the direct contrary is the truth. Just as the symmetry of the human frame is the result of the suitable arrangement of the different parts of the body, so in a State is it ordained by nature that these two classes should dwell in harmony and agreement, so as to maintain the balance of the body politic. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Rerum Novum*, no. 19, May 15, 1891)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

Not all the poor are blessed

‘Blessed’, it says, ‘are the poor’. **Not all the poor are blessed; for poverty is of itself neutral: there can be evil or good people who are poor.** (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Treatise on the Gospel of Saint Luke*, Book V, no. 53)

Not all poverty is holy, nor is all richness criminal

In truth, **not all poverty is holy, nor is all richness criminal.** (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Treatise on the Gospel of Saint Luke*, Book VIII, no. 13)

Riches may be a hindrance for the evil; or a great help for virtue in the good

It is necessary to know that there is no sin in goods; but in those who do not know how to use them; because riches may serve as a hindrance for the evil, or as a great help for the virtue of the good. (Saint Ambrose. *Treatise on the Gospel of Saint Luke*, Book VIII, no. 85)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Amongst the number of the rich are counted those who, without riches, are caught up in the desire to have them

He [the Lord] calls rich the one who yearns for temporal goods and takes pride in them. Contrasting to these rich are the poor of spirit, to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs [...] It must be understood that amongst the number of those [the rich] are counted even those who, although not having riches, are all caught up in the desire to have them. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Quaestiones in Evangelium secundum Lucum*, Book II, no. 47)

SAINT CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

The abundance of necessary things keeps the soul free, capable of making good use of what is at hand

The same holds good also in the case of poverty. For it compels the soul to desist from necessary things, I mean contemplation and from pure sinlessness, forcing him, who has not wholly dedicated himself to God in love, to occupy himself about provisions; as, again, **health and abundance of necessities keep the soul free and unimpeded, and capable of making a good use of what is at hand.** (Saint Clement of Alexandria. *Book IV*, Ch. 5)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Riches are good if they advance the practice of virtue; poverty is praiseworthy if it frees from vices

Therefore, **riches are good, to the extent that they advance the practice of virtue**, but if this measure is departed from, so that the

practice of virtue is hindered by them, then they are not to be numbered among goods, but among evils. [...] So, poverty is praiseworthy according as it frees man from the vices in which some are involved through riches. Moreover, in so far as it removes the solicitude which arises from riches, it is useful to some, namely, those disposed to busy themselves with better things. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book III, Ch. 133, no. 1. 3)

Poverty and riches are not to be judged evil in themselves; the use of them may be evil

And since neither riches, nor poverty, nor any external thing is in itself man's good, but they are only so as they are ordered to the good of reason, nothing prevents a vice from arising out of any of them, when they do not come within man's use in accord with the rule of reason. Yet they are not to be judged evil in themselves; rather, the use of them may be evil. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Book III, Ch. 134, no. 6)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

I blame not those who have houses, and lands, and wealth: be masters and not slaves of your riches

Now if I demand this of you, it will seem perhaps to most of you grievous and burdensome; because therefore of your infirmity I speak not of such perfection, but desire you not to be nailed to riches; and as I, because of the infirmity of the many, retire somewhat from (demanding) the excess of virtue, I desire that you do so and much more on the side of vice. I blame not those who have houses, and lands, and wealth, and servants, but wish them to possess these things in a safe and becoming way. And what is 'a becoming way'? As masters, not as slaves; so that they rule them, be not ruled by them; that they use, not abuse them. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint John*, Homily 19, no. 3)

II – WHAT IS THE MYSTICAL BODY OF CHRIST? WHY DOES THE CHURCH EVANGELIZE?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Word became flesh; from his fullness we have all received

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace. (Jn 1:14, 16)

To be clothed with Christ, one must be baptized

For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:26–28)

Christ is the head of the Body

He is the head of the body, the church. (Col 1:18)

GREGORY I

Christ took the Church to Himself, and forms with Her one mystical Person

Our Redeemer has shown Himself to be one with the Holy Church, which He has taken to Himself, for of Him it is said, *Who is the Head of us all* (Eph 4:15) and of the Church it is written, *the Body of Christ, Which is the Church* (Col 1: 24). (Gregory I. *Preface*, Vol. 1, 14)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

We are made Christ; if He is the head we are the members

Let us rejoice, then, and give thanks that we are made not only Christians, but Christ. Do ye understand, brethren, and apprehend the grace of God upon us? Marvel, be glad, we are made Christ. For if He is the head, we

are the members: the whole man is He and we. [...] But above he had said, 'Until we all come together into the unity of faith, and to the knowledge of the Son of God, to the perfect man, to the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ' (Eph 4:14). The fullness of Christ, then, is head and members. **Head and members, what is that? Christ and the Church.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Tractates on Saint John*, Tractate 21, no. 8)

LEO XIII

At His baptism Christ was pleased to prefigure His Church

At this time, then (that is, at His baptism), He was pleased to prefigure His Church, in which those especially who are baptized receive the Holy Ghost (S. Aug. *De Trin.* I, 15, c. 26). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Divinum Illud Munus*, May 9, 1897)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

One participates in the grace of Christ by Baptism

Grace is a participation in the life of God. It introduces us into the intimacy of Trinitarian life: **by Baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ, the Head of his Body.** As an 'adopted son' he can henceforth call God 'Father', in union with the only Son. He receives the life of the Spirit who breathes charity into him and who forms the Church. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1997)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The sacraments of the Church bestow us with the virtue of Christ's Passion

The sacraments of the Church derive their power specially from Christ's Passion, the virtue of which is in a manner united to us by our receiving the sacraments. It was in sign of this that from the side of Christ hanging on the Cross there flowed water and blood, the former of which belongs to Baptism, the latter to the Eucharist, which are the principal sacraments. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica III*, q. 62, a.5)

The members form one mystic person with the Head, Christ

The head and members are as one mystic person; and therefore Christ's satisfaction belongs to all the faithful as being His members. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica III*, q. 48, a.2, ad 1)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The life of Christ is imparted to His Body through the sacraments

By communicating His Spirit, Christ made His brothers, called together from all nations, mystically the components of His own Body. In that Body the life of Christ is poured into the believers who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ who suffered and was glorified. (cf. Saint Thomas Aquinas. *STh III*, q. 62, a.5, ad1) (Vatican Council II. *Lumen gentium*, no. 7, November 21, 1964)

PIUS XII

Those who are divided in faith or government cannot live in the unity of the Mystical Body, nor receive the life of the Spirit

Actually only those are to be included as members of the Church who have been baptized and profess the true faith, and who have not been so unfortunate as to separate themselves from the unity of the Body, or been excluded by legitimate authority for grave faults committed. 'For in one spirit' says the Apostle, 'were we all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free' (1Cor 12:13). **As therefore in the true Christian community there is only one Body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one Baptism, so there can be only one faith** (cf. Eph 4:5). And therefore, if a man refuse to hear the Church, let him be considered – so the Lord commands – as a heathen and a publican (cf. Mt 18:17). It follows that **those who are divided in faith or government cannot be living in the unity of such a Body, nor can they be living the life of its one Divine Spirit.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Mystici Corporis Christi*, no. 22, June 29, 1943)

LEO XIII

The Church: common Mother of rich and poor, whose patrimony is guarded as inheritance of the poor

Thus, by degrees, came into existence the patrimony which the Church has guarded with religious care as the inheritance of the poor. Nay, in order to spare them the shame of begging, the Church has provided aid for the needy. The common Mother of rich and poor has aroused everywhere the heroism of charity, and has established congregations of religious and many other useful institutions for help and mercy, so that hardly any kind of suffering could exist which was not afforded relief. [...] But no human expedients will ever make up for the devotedness and self sacrifice of Christian charity. Charity, as a virtue, pertains to the Church; for virtue it is not, unless it be drawn from the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ; and whosoever turns his back on the Church cannot be near to Christ. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Rerum Novarum*, no. 30, May 15, 1891)

PIUS IX

Charity is especially to bring those in error back to the Mystical Body of the Church

But, God forbid that the sons of the Catholic Church ever in any way be hostile to those who are not joined with us in the same bonds of faith and love; [...] and they should especially endeavor to snatch them from the darkness of error in which they unhappily lie, and lead them back to Catholic truth and to the most loving Mother the Church, who never ceases to stretch out her maternal hands lovingly to them, and to call them back to her bosom so that, [...] they may attain eternal salvation. (Denzinger 1678, Pius IX, *Encyclical Quanto conficiamur moerore*, August 10, 1863)

BENEDICT XVI

The Word became man so that man might become a son of God

Incarnation derives from the Latin *incarnatio*. Saint Ignatius of Antioch – at the end of the first century – and, especially, Saint Irenaeus used this term in reflecting on the Prologue to the Gospel according to Saint John, in particular in the sentence ‘the Word became flesh’ (Jn 1:14). Here the word ‘flesh’, according to the Hebrew usage, indicates man in his whole self, the whole man, but in particular in the dimension of his transience and his temporality, his poverty and his contingency. This was in order to tell us that the salvation brought by God, who became man in Jesus of Nazareth, affects man in his material reality and in whatever situation he may be. God assumed the human condition to heal it from all that separates it from him, to enable us to call him, in his Only–Begotten Son, by the name of ‘Abba, Father’, and truly to be children of God. Saint Irenaeus stated: ‘For this is why the Word became man, and the Son of God became the Son of man: so that man, by entering into communion with the Word and thus receiving divine sonship, might become a son of God’ (*Adversus Haereses*, 3, 19, 1; cf. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 460). (Benedict XVI. *General Audience*, January 9, 2013)

PAUL VI

The Church will evangelize the world primarily by her fidelity to the Lord Jesus, by the witness of sanctity

It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, in other words, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus– the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity. (Paul VI. *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 41, December 8, 1975)

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What matters is to eradicate hunger and to educate, without bothering about religion

Saint John Chrysostom compares the education of a child with the fashioning of a wonderful statue for God. According to this Doctor of the Church, the privileged mission confided to parents is to bring their child to the practice of virtue, teaching him or her to love the true God and ‘to mark all that it says and does with the sign of the cross.’

Omission in this field – without doubt one of the most important – produces the sad results that we experience in today’s society. Consequently, the Popes have not hesitated to qualify such omission as dangerous, harmful, unjust and even as a serious fault.

Therefore, even if one hears that the most important thing is not letting children go hungry or giving them an education, is it true that we can be indifferent to the religious education of children? Is it enough to give them bodily nourishment in order to fulfill the mission that the Lord confided to parents? If they are educated in any religious belief, will they end up being good Christians?

All of these questions have already been answered by the divinely wise Magisterium of the Church; and even if certain statements to please people far and wide are made, we do possess the necessary elements to make the right choice.

FRANCIS

I believe we need to promote a culture of encounter all around the world. All around the world. So that everyone feels the need to give to humanity the ethical values that humanity needs today. [...] Each religious confession keeps its own beliefs. But according to the values of its own faith, work for others. And we all encounter with each other to work for the rest. **If there is a child who is hungry and has no education, what should interest us is that he be fed, and be given an education. If this education is given by Catholics, protestants, orthodox or Jews it doesn’t matter to me; what matters to me is that he be educated and his hunger taken away.** (*Interview with the Globo TV Network in Brasil, July 29, 2013*)

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I – THE STUDY OF CATHOLIC DOCTRINE: A DUTY AND RIGHT OF ALL

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Parents who do not teach their children Catholic doctrine sin gravely

Is it necessary to learn the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ?

It certainly is necessary to learn the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ, and those who fail to do so are guilty of a grave breach of duty.

Are parents and guardians bound to send their children and those dependent on them to catechism?

Parents and guardians are bound to see that their children and dependents learn Christian Doctrine, and they are **guilty before God if they neglect this duty.** (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 5-6, On Christian Doctrine)

BENEDICT XVI

Integral education cannot omit religious teaching

The above-mentioned religious indifferentism and the easy temptation of lax morals, as well as the ignorance of the Christian tradition with its rich spiritual patrimony, exert a powerful influence on the new generations. **Young people have the right, from the beginning of the process of their formation, to be educated in faith and sound morals. For this reason, the integral education of the youngest cannot omit religious teaching at school as well.** A solid religious formation will also serve as an effective shield against the advance of sects or other religious groups widespread today. (Benedict XVI. *Address to members of the Bishops' Conference of Puerto Rico on the ad limina visit*, June 30, 2007)

LEO XIII

The education of youth should begin from an early stage

Now, the training of youth most conducive to the defense of true faith and religion and to the preservation of morality must find its beginning from an early stage within the circle of home life. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilio*, no. 14, April 21, 1878)

PIUS XII

Formation that deliberately neglects to direct youth to the heavenly country is an injustice

On the other hand, a formation which forgot or, worse still, deliberately neglected to direct the eyes and hearts of youth to the heavenly country would be an injustice to youth, an injustice against the inalienable duties and rights of the Christian family and an excess to which a check must be opposed, in the interests even of the people and of the State itself. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no. 67, October 20, 1939)

JOHN PAUL II

It is not correct to say that faith is an option for a mature age

May it not happen, dearest parents who are listening to me, that your offspring arrive at human, civil and professional maturity and remain still as children in religious matters! It is not correct to say that the faith is a choice to be made at a mature age. True choice implicates knowledge, and there can never be a choice between things that were not proposed wisely and adequately. Catechist parents, the Church has confidence in you, and expects much of you. (John Paul II. *Mass for catechists*, no. 4, July 5, 1980)

Education of religious conscience is a right of the person

At school, the citizen is formed through cultural and professional preparation. The education of religious conscience is a right of the human

person. A youth needs to be guided toward all dimensions of culture and also desires to find at school the possibility of knowing the fundamental problems of existence. Among these, the first place is held by the problem of the response that he must give to God. It is impossible to arrive at authentic options of life, when one intends to ignore religion, which has so much to say, or if one wishes to limit it to a vague and neutral instruction. [...] The Church, in defending this responsibility of the school, has never taught of and does not think of privileges: She advocates for an ample integral education and for the rights of the family and the person. (John Paul II. *Mass for catechists*, no. 4, July 5, 1980)

Every baptized person has the right to receive a truly Catholic formation

From the theological point of view every baptized person, precisely the reason of being baptized, has the right to receive from the Church instruction and education enabling him or her to enter on a truly Christian life; and from the viewpoint of human rights, every human being has the right to seek religious truth and adhere to it freely. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesi tradendae*, no.14, October 16, 1979)

Every disciple of Christ has the right to receive the word of the faith without amputations

The students of Catholic schools have the right to receive permanent, profound, systematic and qualified catechism adapted to the requirements of their age and cultural preparation. And this religious teaching should be integral in its contents, for every disciple of Christ has the right to receive the word of the faith neither amputated, nor falsified, nor reduced, rather complete and integral, in all its rigor and in all its vigor. (John Paul II. *Address to teachers and students of the Massimo and Santa Maria Institutes in Rome*, no.3. February 9, 1980)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Religious education should address all categories of the faithful

Master and educator of the faith, the priest

will ensure that catechesis is a privileged part of Christian education in families, in religious education, in the formation of apostolic movements, etc., and that it is addressed to all the categories of the faithful: children, adolescents, adults, the elderly. Moreover, he will know how to transmit catechetical teaching with the use of all those didactic aids and instruments, as well as means of communication that may be effective so the faithful, in a manner suited to their disposition, ability, age, and practical conditions of life, may be able to learn the Christian doctrine in full and put it into practice in the most fitting way. (Congregation for the Clergy. *Directory on the ministry and life of Priests*, no. 65, pg. 90, February 11, 2013)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Young people should be motivated to know and love God

This sacred synod likewise declares that children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God. Consequently it earnestly entreats all those who hold a position of public authority or who are in charge of education to see to it that youth is never deprived of this sacred right. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum educationis*, no. 1, October 28, 1965)

Christian education promotes maturity of the human person while seeking to instill the gift of Faith

Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education. A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person as just now described, but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:23) especially in

liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph 4:22-24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum educationis*, no. 2, October 28, 1965)

Children should be taught the Catholic faith from their early years

It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum educationis*, no. 3, October 28, 1965)

II – EDUCATION IS A DUTY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

PIUS XI

It is the right and duty of the Church to watch over the education of her children

Again it is the inalienable right as well as the indispensable duty of the Church, to watch over the entire education of her children, in all institutions, public or private, not merely in regard to the religious instruction there given, but in regard to every other branch of learning and every regulation in so far as religion and morality are concerned. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 23, December 31, 1929)

Watchfulness to protect the children of the Church from the dangers of the world

Nor should the exercise of this right be considered undue interference, but rather maternal care on the part of the Church in protecting her children from the grave danger of all kinds of doctrinal and moral evil. Moreover this watchfulness of the Church not merely can create no real inconvenience, but must on the contrary confer valuable assistance in the right ordering and well-being

of families and of civil society; for it keeps far away from youth the moral poison which at that inexperienced and changeable age more easily penetrates the mind and more rapidly spreads its baneful effects. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 24, December 31, 1929)

LEO XIII

A grave and fatal error: to exclude the Church from the education of youth

To exclude the Church, founded by God Himself, from life, from laws, from the education of youth, from domestic society is a grave and fatal error. A State from which religion is banished can never be well regulated. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Immortale Dei*, no. 32, November 1, 1885)

Religion should give shape and direction to all branches of knowledge

It is necessary to teach religion to children, but not only at specified times. **All their teaching should occur in an atmosphere of Christian piety.** If it is otherwise, if this sacred inspiration does not penetrate the spirits of the teachers and of the students, the instruction will produce only little fruit and will often even have seriously harmful consequences. [...] The knowledge of many subjects should always go hand in hand with the care of the spirit. **Religion should give shape and direction to all branches of knowledge.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Militantis ecclesiae*, no. 18, August 1, 1897)

PIUS XI

The Church was able to save treasures of culture, civilization and literature thanks to Her mission to educate

But if we wonder that the Church in all times has been able to gather about her and educate hundreds, thousands, millions of students, no less wonderful is it to bear in mind what she has done not only in the field of education, but in that also of true and genuine erudition. **For, if so many treasures of culture, civilization and literature have escaped destruction, this is due to the action by which the Church, even in times long past and uncivilized, has shed**

so bright a light in the domain of letters, of philosophy, of art and in a special manner of architecture. All this the Church has been able to do because her mission to educate extends equally to those outside the Fold, seeing that all men are called to enter the kingdom of God and reach eternal salvation. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 25-26, December 31, 1929)

JOHN PAUL II

Catechesis: one of the primary tasks of the Church

The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, **He gave the apostles a final command – to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded.** He thus entrusted them with the mission and power to proclaim to humanity what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and touched with their hands, concerning the Word of Life. **He also entrusted them with the mission and power to explain with authority what He had taught them, His words and actions, His signs and commandments.** And He gave them the Spirit to fulfill this mission. Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ. The Church has not ceased to devote her energy to this task. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesi tradendae*, no.1, October 16, 1979)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Church has the responsibility of announcing the way of salvation to all men

In a special way, the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not merely because she must be recognized as a human society capable of educating, but especially because she has the responsibility of announcing the way of

salvation to all men, of communicating the life of Christ to those who believe, and, in her unflinching solicitude, of assisting men to be able to come to the fullness of this life. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum Educationis*, no. 3, October 28, 1965)

The Church is obliged to give her children an education that imbues them with the spirit of Christ

The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ and at the same time do all she can to promote for all peoples the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum educationis*, no. 3, October 28, 1965)

Grave responsibility of the Church to care for the moral and religious education of all her children

Feeling very keenly the weighty responsibility of diligently caring for the moral and religious education of all her children, the Church must be present with her own special affection and help for the great number who are being trained in schools that are not Catholic. This is possible by the witness of the lives of those who teach and direct them, by the apostolic action of their fellow-students, but especially by the ministry of priests and laymen who give them the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances and provide spiritual aid in every way the times and conditions allow. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum educationis*, no. 7, October 28, 1965)

The task of enlightening the knowledge of students with the light of faith

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. **But its proper function is [...] order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually**

acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum educationis*, no. 8, October 28, 1965)

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Religious liberty does not impede the right/duty of the Church to teach the faith

In Catholic schools, as everywhere else, the religious freedom of non-Catholic pupils must be respected. This clearly does not affect the right/duty of the Church 'in [its] public teaching and witness to [its] faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word' (*Dignitatis Humanae*, 4). (Congregation for Catholic Education. *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools*, no. 16, May 5, 2009)

III – THE IMPORTANCE OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

There is no superior art than educating children soundly

For nothing is equal to the soul. Because, 'What is a man profited,' says He, 'if he shall gain the whole world, but lose his own soul.' But because the love of money hath overturned and cast down all, and hath thrust aside the strict fear of God, having seized upon the souls of men. like some rebel chief upon a citadel; therefore we are careless both of our children's salvation, and of our own, looking to one object only, that having become wealthier,[...] For our children are less esteemed than cattle; and we take care of horses and asses rather than of children. [...] out if we have set a tutor over a child's soul, we take at once, and at random, whoever comes in our way. And yet than **this art there is not another greater. For what is equal to training the soul, and forming the mind of one that is young?** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily LIX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, no. 7)

Use all of your time in preparing admirable statues for God

I have told you already that vice is hard to drive away for this reason, that no one takes thought for his children, no one discourses to them about virginity and sobriety or about contempt of wealth and fame, or of the precepts laid down in the Scriptures. **What will become of boys when from earliest youth they are without teachers?** If grown men, after being nurtured from the womb and continuing their education to old age, still do not live righteously, **what wrong will not children, accustomed from the threshold of life to empty words, commit?** In our own day every man takes the greatest pains to train his boy in the arts and in literature and speech. But to exercise this child's soul in virtue, to that no man any longer pays heed. **I shall not cease exhorting and begging and supplicating you before all else to discipline your sons from the first. If thou dost care for thy son, show it thus, [...]** Raise up an athlete for Christ! I do not mean by this, hold him back from wedlock and send him to desert regions and prepare him to assume the monastic life. It is not this that I mean. I wish for this [...]. **To each of you fathers and mothers I say, [...]** so must you proceed. **Like the creators of statues do you give all your leisure to fashioning these wondrous statues for God.** And, as you remove what is superfluous and add what is lacking, inspect them day by day, to see what good qualities nature has supplied so that you will increase them, and what faults so that you will eradicate them. And, first of all, take the greatest care to banish licentious speech; for love of this above all frets the souls of the young. Before he is of an age to try it, **teach thy son to be sober and vigilant and to shorten sleep for the sake of prayer, and with every word and deed to set upon himself the Seal of the Faith.** (Saint John Chrysostom, *On Vainglory and the Raising of Children*, no. 17-19, 22)

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

A form of education that ignores the religious dimension is incomplete

A form of education that ignores or marginalises the moral and religious dimension of the person is a hindrance to full education, because

'children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God.' (Congregation for Catholic Education. *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools*, no. 1, May 5, 2009)

BENEDICT XVI

Religious teaching may not be reduced to a generic sociology of religions

And the teaching in question cannot be reduced to a generic sociology of religions, because there is no such thing as generic, non-denominational religion. Thus, not only does denominational religious teaching in state schools do no damage to the secularism of the State, but in addition it guarantees the right of their parents to choose the education for their children, thereby contributing to promote the common good. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the new Ambassador of Brazil to the Holy See*, October 31, 2011)

JOHN PAUL II

At the apex of all interest should be the Person, work and message of Jesus Christ

At the center of school teaching, at the apex of all interest, should be the Person, work and message of Christ: He is our true Master (cf. Mt 23:8-10), He is our way, truth and life (cf. Jn 14:6), He is our Redeemer and Saviour (cf. Eph 1:7, Col 1:14). **An irreplaceable obligation and priority, for teachers as well as for students, is that of knowing Jesus, studying, analyzing and meditating the Sacred Scripture; not as a mere history book, but as a perpetual testimony of He who Lives, because Jesus has risen and is 'seated at the right hand of the Father'.** (John Paul II. *Address to teachers and students of the Massimo and Santa Maria Institutes in Rome*, no.4, February 9, 1980)

Catholic teaching is very important at all levels of education

This very quick outline would be sufficient to highlight the importance that I give to all

Catholic teaching in general, at its diverse levels, and in particular to Catholic university thought today. The Catholic ambience that you desire is situated much beyond a simple exteriority. It implies the will to form towards a Christian perspective of the world; a particular way to learn about reality and even to undertake all of your studies, no matter how diverse they may be. I speak here, as you well understand, of a perspective that goes beyond the limits and methods of the particular sciences to arrive at the understanding that you should have of yourselves, of your role within society and the meaning of your life. (John Paul II. *Speech on the visit to the Institut Catholique in Paris*, no.4, June 1, 1980)

PAUL VI

Catholic teaching may not remain on a merely intellectual level

No one will deny that **this instruction must be given to form patterns of Christian living and not to remain only notional**. Truly the effort for evangelization will profit greatly – at the level of catechetical instruction given at church, in the schools, where this is possible, and in every case in Christian homes. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 44, December 8, 1975)

PIUS XI

Parents have the duty to seek schools that form their children in true Catholic doctrine

Let it be loudly proclaimed and well understood and recognized by all, that Catholics, no matter what their nationality, in agitating for Catholic schools for their children, are not mixing in party politics, but are engaged in a religious enterprise demanded by conscience. They do not intend to separate their children either from the body of the nation or its spirit, but to educate them in a perfect manner, most conducive to the prosperity of the nation. Indeed a good Catholic, precisely because of his Catholic principles, makes the better citizen, attached to his country, and loyally submissive to constituted civil authority in every legitimate form of government. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 85, December 31, 1929)

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Without Catholic education, students are deprived of an essential element of their formation

A concept of the human person being open to the transcendent necessarily includes the element of religious education in schools: it is an aspect of the right to education (cf. CIC can.799). **Without religious education, pupils would be deprived of an essential element of their formation and personal development, which helps them attain a vital harmony between faith and culture.** (Congregation for Catholic Education, Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools, no. 10, May 5, 2009)

PIUS XII

An education indifferent to Christianity is a crime of high treason against the King of kings

Such an education might seem perhaps to the rulers responsible for it, a source of increased strength and vigor; it would be, in fact, the opposite, as sad experience would prove. **The crime of high treason against the 'King of kings and Lord of lords' (1Tim 6:15, cf. Apoc 19:6) perpetrated by an education that is either indifferent or opposed to Christianity, the reversal of 'Suffer the little children to come unto me' (Mt 19:14), would bear most bitter fruits.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no. 68, October 20, 1939)

The formation of youth that alienates from Christ is a scandal

The same Christ Who pronounced the words 'Suffer little children to come unto me' has threatened, for all His mercy and goodness, with fearful evils, those who give scandal to those so dear to His heart. **Now what scandal is more permanently harmful to generation after generation, than a formation of youth which is misdirected towards a goal that alienates from Christ 'the Way and the Truth and the Life' and leads to open or** Such an education might seem perhaps to the? (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no. 68-69, October 20, 1939)

An educational system that proclaims apostasy from Christ pronounces a sentence of condemnation against itself

A system of education that should not respect the sacred precincts of the Christian family, protected by God's holy law, that should attack its foundations, bar to the young the way to Christ, to the Savior's fountains of life and joy (cf. Is 12:3), that should consider apostasy from Christ and the Church as a proof of fidelity to the people or a particular class, would pronounce against itself the sentence and would experiment in time the undeniable truth of the prophet's word: 'They that depart from thee, shall be written in the earth' (Jer 12:13). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi pontificatus*, no.70, October 20, 1939)

PIUS XI

Exclusion of religion is contrary to the fundamental principles of education

From this it follows that the so-called 'neutral' or 'lay' school, from which religion is excluded, is contrary to the fundamental principles of education. Such a school moreover cannot exist in practice; it is bound to become irreligious. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 79, December 31, 1929)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Religious instruction should be taken with the same seriousness as other disciplines

It is necessary, therefore, that religious instruction in schools appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigor as other disciplines. It must present the Christian message and the Christian event with the same seriousness and the same depth with which other disciplines present their knowledge. It should not be an accessory alongside of these disciplines, but rather it should engage in a necessary inter-disciplinary dialogue. This dialogue should take place above all at that level at which every discipline forms the personality of students. [...] Through inter-disciplinary dialogue religious instruction in schools underpins, activates,

develops and completes the educational activity of the school. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 73, April 17, 1998)

IV – THE BENEFITS OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION FOR YOUTH

PIUS XI

There is no education more perfect than Christian education

In fact, since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that **there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end**, and that in the present order of Providence, **since God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, who alone is 'the way, the truth and the life (Jn 14:6),'** there can be **no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 7, December 31, 1929)

Christian education is unsurpassable for it aims at securing the Supreme Good for souls

From these same principles, the excellence, we may well call it the unsurpassed excellence, of the work of Christian education becomes manifest and clear; for after all it aims at securing the Supreme Good, that is, God, for the souls of those who are being educated, and the maximum of well-being possible here below for human society. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 8, December 31, 1929)

For a Catholic school to be worthy of its title, it is necessary that all the teaching and the whole organization of the school be regulated by the Christian spirit

For the mere fact that a school gives some religious instruction (often extremely stunted), does not bring it into accord with the rights of the Church and of the Christian family, or make it a fit place for Catholic students. To be this, it is **necessary that all the teaching and the whole organization of the school, and its**

teachers, syllabus and text-books in every branch, be regulated by the Christian spirit, under the direction and maternal supervision of the Church; so that Religion may be in very truth the foundation and crown of the youth's entire training; and this in every grade of school, not only the elementary, but the intermediate and the higher institutions of learning as well. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 80, December 31, 1929)

LEO XIII

Necessity of forming young people in the fear of God

Young people, unaccustomed to the fear of God, will not endure the restraint of an upright life, they will not venture even to deny anything to their passions, and will easily be seduced into troubling the State. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Nobilissima gallorum gens*, no. 3, February 8, 1884)

PIUS XI

When religion is banished from education, materialism is fostered

When religion is banished from the school, from education and from public life, when the representatives of Christianity and its sacred rites are held up to ridicule, are we not really fostering the materialism which is the fertile soil of Communism? Neither force, however well organized it be, nor earthly ideals however lofty or noble, can control a movement whose roots lie in the excessive esteem for the goods of this world. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 78, March 19, 1937)

JOHN PAUL II

Catholic parents should give preference to Catholic schools

Together with and in connection with the family, the school provides catechesis with possibilities that are not to be neglected. In the unfortunately decreasing number of countries in which it is possible to give education in the faith within the school framework, the Church has the duty to do so as well as possible. This of

course concerns first and foremost the Catholic school: it would no longer deserve this title if, no matter how much it shone for its high level of teaching in non-religious matters, there were justification for reproaching it for negligence or deviation in strictly religious education. Let it not be said that such education will always be given implicitly and indirectly. **The special character of the Catholic school, the underlying reason for it, the reason why Catholic parents should prefer it, is precisely the quality of the religious instruction integrated into the education of the pupils.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesi tradendae*, no. 69, October 16, 1979)

Religious instruction enables the advance in the students' spiritual formation

I express the fervent wish that, [...] all Catholic pupils may be enabled to advance in their spiritual formation with the aid of a religious instruction dependent on the Church, but which, according to the circumstances of different countries, can be offered either by the school or in the setting of the school, or again within the framework of an agreement with the public authorities regarding school timetables, if catechesis takes place only in the parish or in another pastoral center. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesi tradendae*, no. 69, October 16, 1979)

Catholic education prepares one to assume future responsibilities

I am delighted to know that your Government is willing to help families [...] to continue the programs of religious instruction in secondary schools. **Indeed, the young generations must benefit from a sound formation to prepare them to assume their responsibilities in the society of the future.** (John Paul II. *Address to H.E. Mr. Georges Santer*, Ambassador of Luxembourg to the Holy See, December 16, 2004)

Catholic schools form exemplary citizens

At times, unfortunately, when one speaks of the 'Catholic' school, it is considered only as a rival, or even in opposition, to other schools, especially the State schools. But this is not true! **The Catholic school has always intended**

and intends to form Christians who are also exemplary citizens, capable of applying the entire contribution of their intelligence, their seriousness, and their competence for the right and ordered construction of the civil community. (John Paul II. *Address to teachers and students of the Massimo and Santa Maria Institutes of Rome*, no. 2, February 9, 1980)

Catholic teaching enlightens the sciences with the light of faith

The Church exhorts the responsibility of lay persons in the formation of the youth in the light of the faith. And one of the privileged fields of this formation continues to be the Catholic school [...] Every time that the Church emphasizes the interest and the advantage of Catholic teaching, it logically supposes that it may do so in a manner that realizes its objectives: create an atmosphere animated by an evangelical spirit of liberty and charity, permitting youth to develop their human personality and their being as baptized, so that the knowledge they acquire gradually from the world, from life and from man, be illuminated by faith. (John Paul II. *Address to the members of the Central Office for Catholic Teaching in Holland*, October 17, 1980)

A Christian vision of man and the world

By assuring high quality teaching, Catholic schools present a Christian vision of man and of the world that offers young people the chance for a fruitful dialogue between faith and reason. Likewise, it is their duty to transmit values to be assimilated and values to be discovered, 'with the awareness that all human values find their fulfillment and consequently their unity in Christ'. (John Paul II. *Address to the participants in the International Congress of the Catholic Schools of Europe*, no. 1, April 28, 2001)

Catholic schools cooperate for a transformation of all society

Cultural upheavals, the making relative of moral values and the worrisome weakening of the family bond generate a sincere anxiety in young people, which is inevitably reflected in their way of living, learning and planning their future. Such a context invites European

Catholic schools to propose an authentic educational programme that will permit young people not only to acquire a human, moral and spiritual maturity, but also to commit themselves effectively to the transformation of society, while also being concerned about working for the coming of the Kingdom of God. (John Paul II. *Address to the participants in the International Congress of the Catholic Schools of Europe*, no. 2, April 28, 2001)

Teaching the doctrine of the Church affirms true human dignity

Ensuring the clear teaching of the fundamental truths presented by the moral doctrine of the Church, we will be promoting a new affirmation of the dignity of the human person, a correct understanding of conscience, which is the only solid basis for the exercise of human freedom, as well as the base for living together in solidarity and civic harmony. All this constitutes an essential service for the common good. How can modern society free itself from the increasing decadence of its destructive behavior – which includes the violation of the rights of the human person – without recovering the inviolable character of the moral norms that must, always and everywhere, guide human conduct? (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Brazil*, no. 3, October 18, 1995)

Catholic schools prepare youth for the highest ideals

In a civilization that at times experiences the temptation of leveling man and society, and possessing the technical means to do so, it is more necessary than ever to promote – especially for young people hungering for reasons to live – educational spaces. [...] The Catholic school, without seeking predominance and much less triumphalism, has the ambition to simultaneously promote the most vast and profound acquisition of knowledge possible, demanding and persevering education of the true human liberty, and the preparation of children and adolescents for the highest ideals: Jesus Christ and the message of the Gospel. (John Paul II. *Address to the members of the Council of the World Union of Catholic Teachers*, April 18, 1983)

BENEDICT XVI

Religious teaching is a necessary value for the person's integral formation.

Among these areas of mutual collaboration I would like to stress here, Mister Ambassador, that of education to which the Church has contributed with countless educational institutions whose prestige is recognized by society as a whole. **The role of education cannot, in fact, be reduced to the mere transmission of knowledge and skills that aim to form a professional but must include all the aspects of the person, from his social side to his yearning for the transcendent. For this reason it is appropriate to reaffirm**, as was confirmed in the above-mentioned Agreement of 2008, that far from implying that the State assumes or imposes a specific religious creed, **denominational religious teaching in state schools, means recognition of religion as a necessary value for the person's integral formation.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to the new ambassador of Brazil to the Holy See*, October 31, 2011)

The religious dimension makes it possible to transform knowledge into wisdom

The religious dimension is in fact intrinsic to culture. It contributes to the overall formation of the person and makes it possible to transform knowledge into wisdom of life. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the Catholic religion teachers*, April 25, 2009)

The teaching of the Catholic religion capacitates the person to discover goodness

Thanks to the teaching of the Catholic religion, school and society are enriched with true laboratories of culture and humanity in which, by deciphering the significant contribution of Christianity, the person is equipped to discover goodness and to grow in responsibility, to seek comparisons and to refine his or her critical sense, to draw from the gifts of the past to understand the present better and to be able to plan wisely for the future. (Benedict XVI. *Address to the Catholic religion teachers*, April 25, 2009)

CONGREGATION FOR CATHOLIC EDUCATION

Marginalization of religious education harms students

The marginalization of religious education in schools is equivalent to assuming – at least in practice – an ideological position that can lead pupils into error or do them a disservice. Moreover, if religious education is limited to a presentation of the different religions, in a comparative and 'neutral' way, it creates confusion or generates religious relativism or indifferentism. (Congregation for Catholic Education. *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Confereneces of Religious Education in Schools*, no. 12, May 5, 2009)

Incentive for the development of personal and social responsibility

Moral formation and religious education also foster the development of personal and social responsibility and the other civic virtues; they represent, therefore, an important contribution to the common good of society. (Congregation for Catholic Education, *Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conference of Religious Education in Schools*, no. 10, May 5, 2009)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Education to promote the good of the earthly city and the spreading of the Kingdom

So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum educationis*, no. 8, October 28, 1965)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Religious instruction provides responses to key questions

Those students who are searching, or who

have religious doubts, can also find in religious instruction the possibility of discovering what exactly faith in Jesus Christ is, what response the Church makes to their questions, and gives them the opportunity to examine their own choice more deeply. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 75, April 17, 1998)

Religious instruction has a missionary role for students who are non-believers

In the case of students who are non-believers, religious instruction assumes the character of a missionary proclamation of the Gospel and is ordered to a decision of faith, which catechesis, in its turn, will nurture and mature. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 75, April 17, 1998)

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Hopefully we'll have to sell off churches in order to give food to the poor

If there is a place in the world where anyone, rich or poor, can feel welcomed without restrictions, it is in a Catholic church. There, material splendor is at the service of the glory of God and at everyone's reach – one may calmly enjoy the splendor of the church better than anyone could at palaces or museums. In it, the Father's arms reach out toward all, so that through artistic beauty and the magnificence of the liturgy, all might have the opportunity to elevate their hearts toward Him, with the holy liberty of the children of God. This is a true alms for the poor, for more importantly than anything else, they receive the words of eternal life without suffering discrimination.

Obviously, as a loving mother, the Holy Church is also available to help in their material necessities. One dimension is inseparable from the other, and segregating either dimension would deform its deepest pastoral significance, as has been demonstrated in the history of the Church during the last two thousand years.

It is therefore a good idea to remember what the Magisterium teaches us, so that we don't allow ourselves to be deceived by persuasive speeches that may appear poetic and even well-intentioned, but which, in the end, is nothing other than cheap demagogy.

FRANCIS

The Church is Mother, and must never forget the tragedy of her children. She too must be poor, to become fruitful and to respond to so much suffering. A poor Church is a Church that practices a voluntary simplicity in her own life – in her institutions, in the lifestyle of her members – to break down walls of separation, especially those that separate us from the poor. This takes prayer and action. Let us pray intensively to the Lord to awaken us, to make our Christian families agents in this revolution of family closeness that is now so necessary. **This is what the Church has been made of since the very beginning. And let us not forget that the judgement of the needy, the small and the poor prefigures the judgement of God (Mt 25:31-46).** (*General Audience*, June 3, 2015)

Caritas is not just a first aid agency [for emergency situations]. In times of war or of crisis, we need to heal the wounded, we need to cure the sick, mend the consequences of so much wealth. But we also need to care for development. To the extent that is possible, develop – after putting things in order, obviously, along the way we see what needs to be done. But a lot of money is needed for this! **Hopefully you will spend all, and we'll have to sell off churches in order to give food to the poor.** (*Address to the Caritas Internationalis Representative Council*, May 16, 2013 – English summary)

Poverty, Pope Francis said, is the great teaching that Jesus gave us. [...] He concluded his address by saying how much he wished that the city of Rome could shine with the light of its compassion and its welcome for those who are suffering, who are fleeing from war and death, and respond with a smile to all those who have lost hope. Pope Francis said he wished for the same on the part of the Church community in Rome so that it may be more attentive, caring and considerate towards the poor and vulnerable and recognize in them the face of our Lord. **How I wish, he said, that Christians could kneel in veneration when a poor person enters the church.** (*Video Message broadcast at a theatre performance 'Se non fosse per te' organized by Caritas Roma*, April 28, 2015 – English)

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I – LOVE OF CHRIST IS THE CAUSE OF LOVE FOR THE POOR

SACRED SCRIPTURE

That which is offered to Christ is never a waste

Now when Jesus was in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came up to him with an alabaster jar of costly perfumed oil, and poured it on his head while he was reclining at table. When the disciples saw this, they were indignant and said, ‘**Why this waste? It could have been sold for much, and the money given to the poor.**’ Since Jesus knew this, he said to them, ‘**Why do you make trouble for the woman? She has done a good thing for me. The poor you will always have with you; but you will not always have me.**’ (Mt 26:6-11)

You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me

Mary took a liter of costly perfumed oil made from genuine aromatic nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and dried them with her hair; the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then **Judas the Iscariot**, one (of) his disciples, and the one who would betray him, said, ‘**Why was this oil not sold for three hundred days’ wages and given to the poor?**’ He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief and held the money bag and used

to steal the contributions. So Jesus said, ‘**Leave her alone. Let her keep this for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have Me.**’ (Jn 12:1-8)

BENEDICT XVI

Gestures of authentic devotion to Christ benefit the entire Church

Mary’s gesture is the expression of great faith and love for the Lord; it is not enough for her to wash the Teacher’s feet with water; she sprinkles on them a great quantity of the precious perfume which as Judas protested it would have been possible to sell for 300 denarii. She did not anoint his head, as was the custom, but his feet: Mary offers Jesus the most precious thing she has and with a gesture of deep devotion. **Love does not calculate, does not measure, does not worry about expense, does not set up barriers but can give joyfully; it seeks only the good of the other, surmounts meanness, pettiness, resentment and the narrow-mindedness that human beings sometimes harbour in their hearts.** Mary stood at the feet of Jesus in a humble attitude of service, the same attitude that the Teacher himself was to assume at the Last Supper, when, the fourth Gospel tells us, he ‘**rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet**’ (Jn 13:4-5), so that, he said, ‘**you also should do as I have done to you**’ (v. 15): the rule of the community

of Jesus is that of love which knows how to serve to the point of offering one's life. And the scent spread: 'the house' the Evangelist remarks, 'was filled with the fragrance of the ointment' (Jn 12:3). The meaning of Mary's action, which is a response to God's infinite Love, spreads among all the guests; **no gesture of charity and authentic devotion to Christ remains a personal event or concerns solely the relationship between the individual and the Lord. Rather, it concerns the whole Body of the Church, it is contagious: it instills love, joy and light.** (Benedict XVI. *Eucharistic Celebration on the Fifth Anniversary of the death of John Paul II*, March 29, 2010)

JOHN PAUL II

Christ values the honor paid to him

A woman, whom John identifies as Mary the sister of Lazarus, pours a flask of costly ointment over Jesus' head, which provokes from the disciples – and from Judas in particular (cf. Mt 26:8, Mk 14:4, Jn 12:4) – an indignant response, as if this act, in light of the needs of the poor, represented an intolerable 'waste'. But Jesus' own reaction is completely different. **While in no way detracting from the duty of charity towards the needy**, for whom the disciples must always show special care – 'the poor you will always have with you' (Mt 26, 11; Mk 14:7; cf. Jn 12:8) – **he looks towards his imminent death and burial, and sees this act of anointing as an anticipation of the honour which his body will continue to merit even after his death, indissolubly bound as it is to the mystery of his person.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 47, April 17, 2003)

BENEDICT XVI

To be preserved from perversion of heart it is necessary to assume Jesus' point of view

In effect, **the possibilities to pervert the human heart are truly many. The only way to prevent it consists in not cultivating an individualistic, autonomous vision of things, but on the contrary, by putting oneself always on the side of Jesus, assuming his point of view.**

We must daily seek to build full communion with him. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, October 18, 2006)

A pretext of the aid for the poor may hide evil intentions

'He came to his own home, and his own people received him not' (Jn 1:11) **Mary's action is in contrast to the attitude and words of Judas who, under the pretext of the aid to be given to the poor, conceals the selfishness and falsehood of a person closed into himself, shackled by the greed for possession and who does not let the good fragrance of divine love envelop him. Judas calculates what one cannot calculate, he enters with a mean mindset the space which is one of love, of giving, of total dedication. And Jesus, who had remained silent until that moment, intervenes defending Mary's gesture:** 'Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial (Jn 12:7). **Jesus understands that Mary has intuited God's love and points out that his 'hour' is now approaching, the 'hour' in which Love will find its supreme expression on the wood of the Cross: the Son of God gives himself so that many may have life.** (Benedict XVI. *Eucharistic Celebration on the fifth anniversary of the death of John Paul II*, March 29, 2010)

II – WORKS OF CHARITY ACCORDING TO THE CHURCH

JOHN XXIII

Supernatural spirit: distinguishing characteristic of the Church's works of charity

What ensures your works of charity their true worth, gives so much glory to God, and merits predilections on earth and in heaven, is the supernatural spirit. This is the characteristic that distinguishes it from all other charitable and philanthropic institutions, to which we are pleased to pay a tribute of respect and congratulations. We would like to believe that the soul of these institutions aspires to be in perfect harmony with the doctrine of the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes. However, while for civil institutions, assistance itself is the goal to be reached, for the Christian, it is a means,

precious yes, but **only a means to fulfill the double commandment of charity**: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ,and with all your soul and with all your heart. [...] You shall love your neighbor as yourself’ (Mt 22:37-39). Through charity, the Christian comes closer to God, and intensely sanctifies his own soul. While commenting the Gospel of the Wedding at Cana, on occasion of the station in Santo Spirito in Sassia, on the first Sunday after the Octave of the Epiphany in 1208, Our former, glorious predecessor Innocent III, using an agreeably allegorical form, affirmed: **‘Certainly, if a work of mercy is not accompanied by a sentiment of charity, it helps, it is true, the one who receives it, but it is not of profit to the one who practices it.** And so then it is only water and not wine; because, as the Apostle says ‘If I give away all I have, but have not love, I gain nothing.’ (1Cor 13:3). On the contrary, **if mercy proceeds from charity, then the water turns into wine**, because the action of charity transforms into warmth the heart which was cold, makes delectable that which was insipid, and luminous that which was dark; in this way, the water is transformed morally into wine; and that which is naturally good, becomes even better, to the point of meriting the eternal reward.’ (John XXIII. *Address to the delegates of the Works of Mercy of Rome*, February 21, 1960)

BENEDICT XVI

In the Church, charity is not a kind of social assistance

The Church’s deepest nature is expressed in her three-fold responsibility: of **proclaiming the word of God** (*kerygma-martyria*), celebrating the **sacraments** (*leitourgia*), and exercising the ministry of **charity** (*diakonia*). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable. **For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Deus caritas est*, no. 25, December 25, 2005)

Charity involves spiritual actions accomplished in the light of the Holy Spirit

Charity and justice are not only social but also spiritual actions, accomplished in the

light of the Holy Spirit. We can thus say that the Apostles confronted this situation with great responsibility. They took the following decision: seven men were chosen; the Apostles prayed the Holy Spirit to grant them strength and then laid their hands on the seven so that they might dedicate themselves in a special way to this ministry of charity. Thus in the life of the Church, the first steps she took, in a certain way, reflected what had happened in Jesus’ public life at Martha and Mary’s house in Bethany. Martha was completely taken up with the service of hospitality to offer to Jesus and his disciples; Mary, on the contrary, devoted herself to listening to the Lord’s word (cf. Lk 10:38-42). In neither case were the moments of prayer and of listening to God, and daily activity, the exercise of charity in opposition. Jesus’ reminder, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful. Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her’ (Lk 10:41-42) and, likewise, the Apostles’ reflection: ‘We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word’ (Acts 6:4), show the priority we must give to God. [...] **In any case activity undertaken to help one’s neighbor, ‘the other’, is not to be condemned, but it is essential to stress the need for it to be imbued also with the spirit of contemplation.** (Benedict XVI. *General Audience*, April 25, 2012)

JOHN PAUL II

The essential significance of almsgiving: its value for conversion

We are here touching the heart of the problem. **In Holy Scripture and according to the evangelical categories, ‘alms’ means in the first place an interior gift.** It means the attitude of opening ‘to the other’. Precisely this attitude is an indispensable factor of ‘metanoia’, that is, conversion, just as prayer and fasting are also indispensable. Saint Augustine, in fact, expresses himself well: ‘how quickly the prayers of those who do good are granted! And this is man’s justice in the present life: fasting, alms, prayer’ (*Enarrat. in Ps 42:8*): prayer, as an opening to God; fasting, as an expression of self-mastery also in depriving oneself of something, in saying ‘no’ to oneself; and finally alms, as opening ‘towards others’. **The Gospel draws**

this picture clearly when it speaks to us of repentance, of ‘metanoia’. Only with a total attitude—in his relationship with God, with himself and with his neighbour—does man reach conversion and remain in the state of conversion. ‘Alms’ understood in this way has a meaning which is in a certain sense decisive for this conversion. [...] **It is very easy, in fact, to falsify the idea,** as we noted at the beginning. **Jesus also gave a warning about the superficial, ‘exterior’ attitude of almsdeeds** (cf. Mt 6:4, Lk 11:41). **This problem is still a living one.** If we realize the essential significance that ‘alms’ has for our conversion to God for the whole of Christian life, **we must avoid, at all costs, all that falsifies the meaning of alms, mercy, works of charity,** all that may distort their image in ourselves. In this field, it is very important to cultivate interior sensitivity as regards the real needs of our neighbour, in order to know in what we must help him, how to act in order not to wound him, and how to behave in order that what we give, what we bring to his life, may be a real gift, a gift not dimmed by the ordinary negative meaning of the word ‘alms’. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3-4, March 28, 1979)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The soul is a nobler thing than the body: there is no use of money, while the soul is poor; neither harm from poverty, when the soul is rich

Why then do you mourn, being in a state of poverty? Why do you wail keeping a feast, for indeed it is an occasion of feasting. Why do you weep, **for poverty is a festival, if you be wise.** Why do you lament, thou little child; for such a one we should call a little child. Did such a person strike you? What is this, he made you more able to endure? But did he take away your money? He has removed the greater part of your burden. But has he cut off your honor? Again you tell me of another kind of freedom. Hear even those without teaching wisdom touching these things, and saying: you have suffered no ill, if you show no regard to it. But has he taken away that great house of yours, which has enclosures about it? But behold the whole earth is before you, the public buildings, whether you would have them for delight, or for use. And what is more pleasing or more beautiful than

the firmament of Heaven. How long are you poor and needy? It is not possible for him to be rich, who is not wealthy in his soul; like as it is not possible for him to be poor, who has not the poverty in his mind. For if **the soul is a nobler thing than the body, the less noble parts have not power to affect it after themselves;** but the noble part draws over unto herself, and changes those that are not so noble. For so the heart, when it has received any hurt, affects the whole body accordingly; if its temperament be disordered, it mars all, if it be rightly tempered, it profits all. And if any of the remaining parts should have become corrupt, while this remains sound, it easily shakes off what is evil in them also. And that I may further make what I say more plain, what is the use, I pray you, of verdant branches, when the root is withering? And what is the harm of the leaves being withered above, while this is sound? So also here **there is no use of money, while the soul is poor; neither harm from poverty, when the soul is rich.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 80 on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*)

COMPENDIUM OF THE SOCIAL DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

Caution with ideological positions: the illusion that it is possible to entirely eliminate the problem of poverty

Human misery is a clear sign of man’s natural condition of frailty and of his need for salvation. Christ the Saviour showed compassion in this regard, identifying himself with the ‘least’ among men (cf. Mt 25:40, 45). ‘It is by what they have done for the poor that Jesus Christ will recognize his chosen ones. When ‘the poor have the good news preached to them’ (Mt 11:5), it is a sign of Christ’s presence’. Jesus says: ‘You always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me’ (Mt 26:11, cf. Mk 14:7, Jn 12:8). He makes this statement not to contrast the attention due to him with service of the poor. **Christian realism, while appreciating on the one hand the praiseworthy efforts being made to defeat poverty, is cautious on the other hand regarding ideological positions and Messianistic beliefs that sustain the illusion that it is possible to eliminate the problem of poverty completely from this world.** This

will happen only upon Christ's return, when he will be with us once more, for ever. In the meantime, the poor remain entrusted to us and it is this responsibility upon which we shall be judged at the end of time (cf. Mt 25:31-46). (Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, no. 183)

III – ECCLESIASTICAL GOODS ARE ADMINISTERED FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI

All that pertains to the Sacrifice must be precious

I entreat you more than if it were a question of myself that, when it is becoming and it may seem to be expedient, you humbly beseech the clerics to venerate above all the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Name and written words which sanctify the body. **They ought to hold as precious the chalices, corporals, ornaments of the altar, and all that pertain to the Sacrifice. And if the most holy Body of the Lord be lodged very poorly in any place, let It according to the command of the Church be placed by them and left in a precious place, and let It be carried with great veneration and administered to others with discretion. The Names also and written words of the Lord, wherever they may be found in unclean places, let them be collected, and they ought to be put in a proper place.** (Saint Francis of Assisi. *Letter to all the Custodes*)

How poor the chalices and linens where the Lord is sacrificed! – Our Lord's Body is left in wretched places

Let all those who administer such most holy mysteries, especially those who do so indifferently, **consider among themselves how poor the chalices, corporals, and linens may be where the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is sacrificed. And by many It is left in wretched places** and carried by the way disrespectfully, received unworthily and administered to others indiscriminately. Again His Names and written words are sometimes trampled under foot, for the sensual man

perceiveth not these things that are of God (1Cor 2:14). Shall we not by all these things be moved with a sense of duty **when the good Lord Himself places Himself in our hands** and we handle Him and receive Him daily? **Are we unmindful that we must needs fall into His hands?** (Saint Francis of Assisi. *Letter to Clerics – English*)

The Eucharist must be put in a precious place, and not improperly reserved

Let us then at once and resolutely correct these faults and others; and wheresoever **the most holy Body of our Lord Jesus Christ** may be improperly reserved and abandoned, let It be removed thence and let It **be put and enclosed in a precious place.** (Saint Francis of Assisi. *Letter to Clerics – English*)

JOHN PAUL II

The Church never feared 'extravagance' while celebrating the Eucharist in a setting worthy of so great a mystery

Like the woman who anointed Jesus in Bethany, **the Church has feared no 'extravagance', devoting the best of her resources to expressing her wonder and adoration before the unsurpassable gift of the Eucharist. No less than the first disciples charged with preparing the 'large upper room', she has felt the need, down the centuries and in her encounters with different cultures, to celebrate the Eucharist in a setting worthy of so great a mystery.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, no. 48, April 17, 2003)

Poverty is not a rejection of material goods, but submission of all goods to God and his plan

On the subject of evangelical poverty, the synod fathers gave a concise yet important description, presenting it as the subjection of all goods to the supreme good of God and his kingdom. In reality, only the person who contemplates and lives the mystery of God as the one and supreme good, as the true and definitive treasure, can understand and practice **poverty, which is certainly not a matter of despising or rejecting material goods but of a loving and responsible**

use of these goods and at the same time an ability to renounce them with great interior freedom – that is, with reference to God and his plan. [...] Being personally involved in the life of the community and being responsible for it, the priest should also offer the witness of a total ‘honesty’ in the administration of the goods of the community, which he will never treat as if they were his own property, but rather something for which he will be held accountable by God and his brothers and sisters, especially the poor. Moreover, his awareness of belonging to the one presbyterate will be an incentive for the priest to commit himself to promoting both a more equitable distribution of goods among his fellow priests and a certain common use of goods (cf. Acts 2:42-47). (John Paul II. *Apostolic Exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 30, March 25, 1992)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Ecclesiastical goods must not be applied only for the poor

Moreover ecclesiastical goods are to be applied not only to the good of the poor, but also to the divine worship and the needs of its ministers. Hence it is said (XII, qu.2, can. de redivibus): ‘Of the Church’s revenues or the offerings of the faithful only one part is to be assigned to the bishop, two parts are to be used by the priest, under pain of suspension, for the ecclesiastical fabric, and for the benefit of the poor; the remaining part is to be divided among the clergy according to their respective merits.’ (Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II-II, q. 185. a. 7)

LATERAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL IX)

God contemplates the bishop in the administration of the goods of the Church

Let the bishop have the care of all ecclesiastical business, and let him dispense these things as in the sight of God. (Denzinger-Hünermann 712. Lateran Council I, *Canons*, March 27, 1123)

URBAN V

Papal condemnation of Denis Foulechat: errors regarding the state of perfection and poverty

[Art. 4, concl. 3:] This blessed, indeed most blessed and sweetest law, namely, the law of love, takes away all propriety and power.

I retract on this as false, erroneous, heretical, since Christ and the Apostles observed that law most perfectly, and also many others of different conditions observed that law, and these had property and dominions [...] This corollary, if it includes this law of love till the exclusion of all property and right of possession, as the conclusion affirms, I consider false, erroneous and heretical, and contrary to the will of the Church. (Denzinger-Hünermann 1087. *Retraction Imposed on Denis Foulechat by the Constitution Ex supernae clementiae*, December 23, 1368)

JOHN PAUL II

Possession and administration of temporal goods is a right of the Church for a threefold purpose

The Church has always claimed the right to possess and administer temporal goods. However, she does not ask for privileges in that area, but rather the possibility to use the means at her disposal for a threefold purpose: ‘to order divine worship; to provide decent support for the clergy and other ministers; to perform the works of the sacred apostolate and of charity, especially towards the needy’ (can. 1254, §2 of the Code of Canon Law). (John Paul II. *Address to a delegation from the Croatian Episcopal Conference and the Government of Croatia*, December 15, 1998)

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If people are wounded, what does Jesus do? Does He rebuke them for being wounded? No, He comes and carries them on his shoulders

Imagine a sick beggar pleading for help at the door of a hospital run by religious. He is immediately welcomed with words of understanding: 'Welcome, my friend, our doors are open to all.' After analyzing his state of health, they soon discover that the poor man suffers from a contagious illness, but that he still has the possibility of being cured. What should be done? For his own good, that of the other patients and all of those involved, it is necessary to isolate him and begin a prolonged and painful treatment. However, the patient does not wish to submit to the necessary quarantine, and even less so, to the difficult treatment involved. So he cries out and complains that he is being put aside, insisting that he does not have the strength to bear such a hard life, and claims that the hospital has failed to provide him with the loving care he had expected... His cries attract the attention of the other patients, as well as the administrator of the hospital.

What reaction would we expect the administrator to have? Would it be an 'act of charity' to bring the sick man to a room with other patients and leave him there without appropriate treatment, exposing others to the risk of contagion? Would someone dare to accuse the administrator of injustice, or a lack of understanding in demanding that the patient accept the necessary treatment in order to remain in the hospital? This is a parable that Jesus could narrate today to certain Pharisees of the third millennium; bearing the sick on one's shoulders does exempt anyone from the duty of applying the necessary remedies...

FRANCIS

The Church always has its doors open: The Church 'is Jesus' house and Jesus welcomes, but not only does He welcome: He goes to find people', just as 'He went to find' that man. 'And if the people are wounded', the Pope asked, 'what does Jesus do? Does He rebuke them for being wounded? No, He comes and carries them on his shoulders'. This, the Pope stated, 'is called mercy'. God speaks of this when He rebukes his people: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice'. [...] And you? Who are you? Who are you, who close the door of your heart to a man, to a woman who wants to improve, to rejoin the People of God, because the Holy Spirit has stirred his or her heart? Even today there are Christians who behave like the doctors of the law and 'do the same thing they did with Jesus', by objecting: 'This one speaks heresy, this one cannot, this one goes against the discipline of the Church, this one goes against the law'. And thus they close the doors to so many people. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae*, March 17, 2015 – Full text in Spanish on Radio Vaticana)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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BENEDICT XVI

Fraternal correction heals wounds

The Gospel text [...] tells us that brotherly love also involves a sense of mutual responsibility. For this reason if my brother commits a sin against me I must treat him

charitably and first of all, speak to him privately, pointing out that what he has said or done is wrong. This approach is known as ‘**fraternal correction**’: it is not a reaction to the offence suffered but is motivated by love for one’s brethren. Saint Augustine comments: ‘Whoever has offended you, in offending you, has inflicted a serious injury upon himself; and

would you not care for a brother's injury?... **You must forget the offence you have received but not the injury of one of your brethren'** (Discourse 82, 7). And what if my brother does not listen to me? In today's Gospel Jesus points to a gradual approach: first, speak to him again with two or three others, the better to help him realize what he has done; if, **in spite of this, he still refuses to listen, it is necessary to tell the community; and if he refuses to listen even to the community, he must be made to perceive that he has cut himself off by separating himself from the communion of the Church. All this demonstrates that we are responsible for each other in the journey of Christian life; each person, aware of his own limitations and shortcomings, is called to accept fraternal correction and to help others with this specific service.** (Benedict XVI. *Angelus*, September 4, 2011)

When faced with evil we should not keep silence, since correction is a work of mercy

The Scriptures tell us: **'Rebuke the wise and he will love you for it.** Be open with the wise, he grows wiser still, teach the upright, he will gain yet more' (Prov 9:8). Christ himself commands us to admonish a brother who is committing a sin (cf. Mt 18:15). **The Church's tradition has included 'admonishing sinners' among the spiritual works of mercy. It is important to recover this dimension of Christian charity. We must not remain silent before evil.** I am thinking of all those Christians who, out of human regard or purely personal convenience, adapt to the prevailing mentality, rather than warning their brothers and sisters against ways of thinking and acting that are contrary to the truth and that do not follow the path of goodness. Christian admonishment, for its part, is never motivated by a spirit of accusation or recrimination. It is always moved by love and mercy, and springs from genuine concern for the good of the other. As the Apostle Paul says: 'If one of you is caught doing something wrong, those of you who are spiritual should set that person right in a spirit of gentleness; and watch yourselves that you are not put to the test in the same way' (Gal 6:1). **In a world pervaded by individualism, it is essential to rediscover the importance of fraternal correction, so that together we**

may journey towards holiness. [...] The Apostle Paul encourages us to seek 'the ways which lead to peace and the ways in which we can support one another' (Rom 14:19) for our neighbour's good, 'so that we support one another' (Rom 15:2), seeking not personal gain but rather 'the advantage of everybody else, so that they may be saved' (1Cor 10:33). **This mutual correction and encouragement in a spirit of humility and charity must be part of the life of the Christian community.** (Benedict XVI, Message for Lent 2012, no. 1-2, given November 3, 2011)

God grants pardon so that in future one ceases to sin

Saint Augustine in his Commentary observed: **'The Lord did also condemn, but condemned sins, not man. For if he were a patron of sin, he would say, 'neither will I condemn you; go, live as you will; be secure in my deliverance; however much you sin, I will deliver you from all punishment'. He said not this** (Io Ev. tract. 33, 6). [...] Therefore, we understand that our real enemy is attachment to sin, which can lead us to failure in our lives. Jesus sent the adulterous woman away with this recommendation: 'Go, and do not sin again'. **He forgives her so that 'from now on' she will sin no more.** (Benedict XVI. *Visit to the Roman Parish of Saint Felicity and her Children*, Martyrs, March 25, 2007)

Habits linked to sin do not create a new world

Saint Luke remarks first of all that the people 'were in expectation' (Lk 3:15). In this way he emphasizes the expectation of Israel and, in those people who had left their homes and their usual tasks, the profound desire for a different world and new words that seem to find an answer precisely in the Precursor's words that may be severe and demanding and yet are full of hope. The baptism John offers is one of repentance, a sign that is an invitation to conversion, to a change of life, because One is coming who will 'baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire' (Lk 3:16). **Indeed it is impossible to aspire to a new world while remaining immersed in selfishness and habits linked to sin.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*, January 10, 2010)

JOHN PAUL II

These words of Jesus cannot be ignored: 'Do not sin again'

Commit yourselves with all your strength to assuring that the unchanging criteria and norms of Christian action become valid in a clear and persuasive manner in the life of the believer. There is a profound abyss between the costumes of a secularized society and the demands of the Gospel. Many are those who wish to participate in ecclesial life, but find no relation between their world and Christian principles. They believe that it is due to a kind of rigidity that the Church maintains its norms, and that this conflicts with the mercy Jesus taught us in the Gospel. Jesus' firm demands, his words: 'Go, and do not sin again' (Jn 8:11), are ignored. Trusting one's personal conscience is often spoken of, forgetting, however, that this conscience is like eye that does not possess light in itself, but only when it gazes toward its true source. (John Paul II. *Allocution to the Episcopal Conference of Germany*, no. 6, November 17, 1980)

The doors are open, but they are narrow

Lent encourages believers to take seriously Jesus' exhortation: 'Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is easy, that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many' (Mt 7:13). What is this 'wide gate' and 'easy way' that Jesus refers to? It is the gate of moral self-sufficiency; the way of intellectual pride. How many people, even amongst Christians, live indifferently and accommodate themselves to a worldly mentality and to the gratification of sin! Lent is an appropriate time to analyze one's own life, in order to renew with greater decisiveness our participation in the sacraments, to make firmer resolutions for a new life, endeavoring, as Jesus taught, to pass through the narrow gate and difficult way that leads to eternal life (cf. Mt 7:14). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, February 16, 1994)

Reinstate the penitent with paternal warnings

Before the consciences of the faithful, who open up to him with a mixture of fear and trust, the

confessor is called to a lofty task which is one of service for penance and human reconciliation. It is a task of understanding the weaknesses and falls of the faithful, assessing their desire for renewal and their efforts to achieve it, discerning the action of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, imparting to them a forgiveness which God alone can grant, 'celebrating' their reconciliation with the Father, portrayed in the parable of the prodigal son, reinstating these redeemed sinners in the ecclesial community with their brothers and sisters, and paternally admonishing these penitents with a firm, encouraging and friendly 'Do not sin again.' (John Paul II. *Apostolic Exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 29, December 2, 1984)

PIUS XI

He who lacks interior virtues is unfit for the apostolate

Those who lack or do not practice the interior virtues [...] may not be considered sufficiently prepared or armed against the dangers and battles of life, nor able to dedicate themselves to the apostolate; rather, just as a 'noisy gong or a clanging cymbal' (1Cor 13,1), they either do not benefit in any way, or perhaps even damage the very cause which they seek to sustain and defend, as has notoriously occurred, and not on only one occasion, in the past. (Pius XI. *Apostolic letter Singulare illud*, June 13, 1926)

PIUS X

Those who use merely complacent words may harm their brothers and sisters

Another way to do harm is that of those who speak of religious matters as if they were to be considered according to the norms and convenience of this passing life, forgetting the eternal life to come: they speak brilliantly of the benefits that the Christian religion has bequeathed to humanity, but not of the obligations it demands; they preach the charity of Jesus Christ our Savior, but say nothing of his justice. The fruit that such preaching produces is insignificant, because any worldlyling who hears it becomes convinced

that he is a good Christian, and that he has no need to change his life, as long as he says: I believe in Jesus Christ. What kind of fruits do such preachers expect to reap? They certainly have no intention other than that of gaining at any cost the favor of their listeners, flattering them, and, as long as they see the church full, they do not care if the souls of the faithful remain empty. Consequently, they do not even mention sin, the four last things, or any other important topic. Rather, to obtain acclaim and applause, they use complacent language, with eloquence more fitting for worldly speeches than an apostolic and sacred sermon. Against such preachers, Saint Jerome wrote (*Ad Nep.*): 'When you teach in the church, you should not merely provoke the acclamation of the congregation, but rather, compunction: may the tears of your listeners should be your praise.' (Pius X. *Motu proprio Sacrorum antistitum*, September 1, 1910)

The toleration of error is not charity

Catholic doctrine tells us that the primary duty of charity does not lie in the toleration of false ideas, however sincere they may be, nor in the theoretical or practical indifference towards the errors and vices in which we see our brethren plunged, but in the zeal for their intellectual and moral improvement as well as for their material well-being. Catholic doctrine further tells us that love for our neighbor flows from the love for God, Who is Father to all and the goal of the whole human family, and for Jesus Christ, whose members we are, to the point that in doing good to others we are doing good to Jesus Christ Himself. (Pius X. *Encyclical Notre charge apostolique*, no. 22, August 15, 1910)

It is worthwhile to cut off a limb in order to save the whole body

For, while Jesus was kind to sinners and to those who went astray, He did not respect their false ideas, however sincere they might have appeared. He loved them all, but He instructed them in order to convert them and save them. Whilst He called to Himself in order to comfort them, those who toiled and suffered, it was not to preach to them the jealousy of a chimerical equality. Whilst He lifted up the lowly, it was not to instill in them

the sentiment of a dignity independent from, and rebellious against, the duty of obedience. Whilst His Heart overflowed with gentleness for the souls of good-will, He could also arm Himself with holy indignation against the profaners of the House of God, against the wretched who scandalize the little ones, against the authorities who crush the people with the weight of heavy burdens without putting out a hand to lift them. He was as strong as He was gentle. He reproved, threatened, chastised, knowing and teaching us that often fear is the beginning of wisdom, and that it sometimes is fitting to cut off a limb to save the body. (Pius X. *Encyclical Notre charge apostolique*, no. 38, August 15, 1910)

Those who silence the teachings of the serious obligations of the Christian faith are mistaken

How mistaken are those who think they are doing service to the Church, and producing fruit for the salvation of souls, when by a kind of prudence of the flesh [...] under the fatal illusion that they are thus able more easily to win over those in error, but really with the continual danger of being themselves lost. The truth is one, and it cannot be halved; it lasts forever, and is not subject to the vicissitudes of the times. 'Jesus Christ, today and yesterday, and the same for ever' (Heb 13:8). And so too are all they seriously mistaken who, occupying themselves with the welfare of the people, and especially upholding the cause of the lower classes, seek to promote above all else the material well-being of the body and of life, but are utterly silent about their spiritual welfare and the very serious duties which their profession as Christians enjoins upon them. They are not ashamed to conceal sometimes, as though with a veil, certain fundamental maxims of the Gospel, for fear lest otherwise the people refuse to hear and follow them. (Pius X. *Encyclical Iucunda Sane*, no. 25-26, March 12, 1904)

God demands an account of those who omit correction

It behooves Us, too, Us especially, to inculcate that other saying so noble and so paternal of Anselm: 'Whenever I hear anything of you displeasing to God and unbecoming

to yourselves, and fail to admonish you, I do not fear God nor love you as I ought.' [...] We should imitate Anselm by renewing Our prayers, counsels, admonitions 'that you think over these things carefully and if your conscience warns you that there is something to be corrected in them that you hasten to make the correction' (Epist., lib. iv. epist. 32). **For nothing is to be neglected that can be corrected, since God demands an account from all not only of the evil they do but also of the correction of evil which they can correct.** And the more power men have to make the necessary correction the more vigorously does He require them, according to the power mercifully communicated to them, to think and act rightly. (Pius X. *Encyclical Communionem rerum*, no. 26, April 21, 1909)

If those called to dedicate themselves to the Church fail to give good example, they will not attract others

Therefore, all who are called upon to direct or dedicate themselves to the Catholic cause, must be sound Catholics, firm in faith, solidly instructed in religious matters, truly submissive to the Church and especially to this supreme Apostolic See and the Vicar of Jesus Christ. **They must be men of real piety, of manly virtue, and of a life so chaste and fearless that they will be a guiding example to all others. If they are not so formed it will be difficult to arouse others to do good and practically impossible to act with a good intention.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Il Fermo Proposito*, no. 11, June 11, 1905)

LEO XIII

The salt must be defended, so the savor may not be lost

Salt must certainly be mingled with the mass which it is to preserve from corruption, but it must at the same time **defend itself against the mass under pain of losing all savor and becoming of no use except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot** (Mt 5:13). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Depuis le jour*, no. 38, September 8, 1899)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

A Christian's purpose is sanctity

This conformation to Christ is the very substance of sanctification and is the specific goal of all Christian life. In order to accomplish this objective, all Christians need the Church's assistance, since she is both *mater et magistra*. The pedagogy of holiness is a goal which is as attractive as it is challenging for all those in the Church who hold responsibilities of government and formation. [...] **In contemporary society, which is marked by cultural, religious and ethnic pluralism, relativism, indifferentism, irenicism, and syncretism, it appears that some Christians have become accustomed to a form of 'Christianity' lacking any real reference to Christ and his Church.** In these circumstances, the pastoral mission is reduced to social concerns which are envisaged in exclusively anthropological terms, often based on a vague appeal to pacificism, universalism or to a loose reference to 'values'. (Congregation for the Clergy. *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, no. 28-29, November 23, 2001)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

The doors are open to those who resolve to sin no more

Should anyone desire Baptism and be **unwilling to correct the habit of sinning, he should be altogether rejected. For nothing is so opposed to the grace and power of Baptism as the intention and purpose of those who resolve never to abandon sin.** Seeing that Baptism should be sought with a view to put on Christ and to be united to Him, it is manifest that **he who purposes to continue in sin should justly be repelled from the sacred font,** particularly since none of those things which belong to Christ and His Church are to be received in vain and since we well understand that, as far as regards sanctifying and saving grace, Baptism is received in vain by him who purposes to live according to the flesh, and not according to the spirit. (Catechism of Trent, no. 2100)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Imitate Jesus by admonishing and warning

Knowing this, then, let us also not intermit to do all things unto them that sin and are remiss, warning, teaching, exhorting, admonishing, advising, though we profit nothing. For Christ indeed foreknew that the traitor was incorrigible, yet nevertheless He ceased not to supply what could be done by Himself, as well admonishing as threatening and bewailing over him. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily LXXX on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*)

SAINT IRENAEUS OF LYONS

A counsel from God Most Merciful: 'Make straight your ways'

This same declaration does Isaias make: 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? Says the Lord, I am full' (Is 1:11). And when He had repudiated holocausts, and sacrifices, and oblations, as likewise the new moons, and the Sabbaths, and the festivals, and all the rest of the services accompanying these, He continues, exhorting them to what pertained to salvation: Wash you, make you clean, take away wickedness from your hearts from before my eyes: cease from your evil ways, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow; and come, let us reason together, says the Lord. [...] But inasmuch as God is merciful, He did not cut them off from good counsel. For after He had said by Jeremiah, 'To what purpose did you bring Me incense from Saba, and cinnamon from a far country? Your whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices are not acceptable to Me' (Jer 6:20). He proceeds: 'Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah. These things says the Lord, the God of Israel, Make straight your ways and your doings, and I will establish you in this place. Put not your trust in lying words, for they will not at all profit you, saying, 'The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord' (Jer7:2-3). (Saint Irenaeus of Lyons. *Against heresies*, no. 1-2, Book IV, Ch. 17)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Jesus desires that we that we change our lives

Neither will I condemn you. What is this, O Lord? Do thou therefore favor sins? Not so, evidently. Mark what follows: Go, henceforth sin no more. Therefore the Lord did also condemn, but condemned sins, not man. For if He were a patron of sin, He would say, Neither will I condemn you; go, live as you will: be secure in my deliverance; how much soever you will sin, I will deliver you from all punishment even of hell, and from the tormentors of the infernal world. He said not this. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Tractate 33 on the Gospel of Saint John*, no. 6)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Fraternal correction is the most important act of charity

Consequently, the correction of a wrongdoer is twofold, one which applies a remedy to the sin considered as an evil of the sinner himself. This is fraternal correction properly so called, which is directed to the amendment of the sinner. Now to do away with anyone's evil is the same as to procure his good: and to procure a person's good is an act of charity, whereby we wish and do our friend well. Consequently fraternal correction also is an act of charity, because thereby we drive out our brother's evil, viz. sin, the removal of which pertains to charity rather than the removal of an external loss, or of a bodily injury, in so much as the contrary good of virtue is more akin to charity than the good of the body or of external things. Therefore fraternal correction is an act of charity rather than the healing of a bodily infirmity, or the relieving of an external bodily need. There is another correction which applies a remedy to the sin of the wrongdoer, considered as hurtful to others, and especially to the common good. This correction is an act of justice, whose concern it is to safeguard the rectitude of justice between one man and another. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 33, a.1)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Do not help the hardened sinner

If you do good, know for whom you are doing it, and your kindness will have its effect. Do good to the just man and reward will be yours, if not from him, from the Lord. **No good comes to him who gives comfort to the wicked, nor is it an act of mercy that he does. Give to the good man, refuse the sinner; refresh the downtrodden, give nothing to the proud man.** No arms for combat should you give him, lest he use them against yourself; with twofold evil you will meet for every good deed you do for him. **The Most High himself hates sinners, and upon the wicked he takes vengeance.** (Sir 12:1-7)

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Who teaches us how to love? The Holy Spirit alone. You can take a thousand courses in catechesis or spirituality, or a thousand courses in yoga or Zen – but all of this will never be able to give you the freedom of the Son

In the Acts of the Apostles, we find the intriguing story of an Ethiopian, minister of the Queen of Candace, who had travelled to Jerusalem to adore the true God. However, this high functionary of the court returned to his country full of uncertainties with respect to the Scriptures, which he meditated on without grasping their true meaning. As he traveled in his carriage, reading the book of the Prophet Isaiah, he paused at this part: ‘Though he was harshly treated, he submitted and opened not his mouth; Like a lamb led to the slaughter or a sheep before the shearers, he was silent and opened not his mouth. Oppressed and condemned, he was taken away, and who would have thought any more of his destiny? When he was cut off from the land of the living, and smitten for the sin of his people’ (Is 53:7-8).

The same Holy Spirit who had inspired his desire to understand the good news about Jesus Christ, also prepared a marvelous response to his questions: He sent Deacon Philip to instruct him in the faith, urging him to approach the carriage. Here, we have the description from the Acts themselves: “Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone instructs me?’ So he invited Philip to get in and sit with him” (Acts 8:30-31).

Then, Philip explained the truth about Jesus Christ, and his words opened the soul of the man to the faith so effectively, that he requested baptism at that very moment. After fulfilling his mission, the Holy Spirit transported Philip to evangelize in the city of Azotus, while ‘the eunuch saw him no more, but continued on his way rejoicing’ (Acts 8:39).

This episode of the early Church shows how God works. He inspires souls, so that some instruct others; consequently, hearts are moved toward the realization of the divine plan. This habitual manner of divine actuation explains the indispensable necessity that the Church has in the preaching of catechesis.

There are those who profess the direct action of the Holy Spirit in souls, regardless of doctrinal teaching. Of course, this could happen – and in fact sometimes does, as we read in the lives of saints – but these kinds of extraordinary methods do not abolish the normal ones, which may certainly not be compared, even casually, with other ‘methods’ that are gravely contrary to the Christian religion. As such, a deeper study of this topic will be advantageous, the responses we need in the magisterial doctrine.

FRANCIS

Thus, here, we can ask: ‘Who teaches us how to love? Who frees us from this hardness?’ The Pope’s answer: ‘the Holy Spirit alone’ can do so. ‘You can take a thousand courses in catechesis, a thousand courses in spirituality, a thousand courses in yoga, Zen and all these things. But all of this will never be able to give you the freedom of the Son’. Only the Holy Spirit ‘moves your heart to say ‘Father’; He alone ‘is capable of casting out, of breaking this hardness of the heart’ and of making it ‘docile to the Lord. Docile to the freedom of love’. (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Martae*, January 9, 2015)

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I – CATECHESIS IS NECESSARY FOR THE ACTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE CHURCH

LEO XIII

The impulses of the Holy Spirit are for the most part felt through the aid and light of the external teaching authority: the Church

These dangers, viz., the confounding of license with liberty, the passion for discussing and pouring contempt upon any possible subject, the assumed right to hold whatever opinions one pleases upon any subject and to set them forth in print to the world, have so wrapped minds in darkness that there is now a greater need of the Church's teaching office than ever before, lest people become unmindful both of conscience and of duty. [...] First, all external guidance is set aside for those souls who are striving after Christian perfection as being superfluous or indeed, not useful in any sense—the contention being that the Holy Spirit pours richer and more abundant graces than formerly upon the souls of the faithful, so that without human intervention He teaches and guides them by some hidden instinct of His own. Yet it is the sign of no small over-confidence to desire to measure and determine the mode of the Divine communication to mankind, since it wholly depends upon His own good pleasure, and He is a most generous dispenser of his own gifts. [...] Moreover, as experience shows, these monitions and impulses of the Holy Spirit are for the most part felt through the medium of the aid and light of an external teaching authority. [...] This, indeed, belongs to the ordinary law of God's loving providence that as He has decreed that men for the most part shall be saved by the ministry also of men, so has He wished that those whom He calls to the higher planes of holiness should be led thereto by men; hence Saint Chrysostom declares 'we are taught of God through the instrumentality of men' (*Homily I in Inscrib. Altar*). (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Testem benevolentiae*, to Cardinal James Gibbons, January 22, 1899)

JOHN PAUL II

Catechesis is a work of the Holy Spirit – a

work that He alone initiates and sustains in the Church

At the end of this apostolic exhortation, the gaze of my heart turns to Him who is **the principle inspiring all catechetical work and all who do this work—the Spirit of the Father and of the Son, the Holy Spirit**. In describing the mission that this Spirit would have in the Church, Christ used the significant words: 'He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you' (Jn 14:26). And He added: 'When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...he will declare to you the things that are to come' (Jn 16:13). **The Spirit is thus promised to the Church and to each Christian as a teacher within**, who, in the secret of the conscience and the heart, makes one understand what one has heard but was not capable of grasping: 'Even now the Holy Spirit teaches the faithful,' said Saint Augustine in this regard, 'in accordance with each one's spiritual capacity. And he sets their hearts aflame with greater desire according as each one progresses in the charity that makes him love what he already knows and desire what he has yet to know' (*In Ioan. Evan. Trac. 97, 1*). Furthermore, the Spirit's mission is also to transform the disciples into witnesses to Christ: 'He will bear witness to me; and you also are witnesses' (Jn 15:26-27). But this is not all. For Saint Paul, who on this matter synthesizes a theology that is latent throughout the New Testament, it is the whole of one's 'being a Christian,' the whole of the Christian life, the new life of the children of God, that constitutes a life in accordance with the Spirit. Only the Spirit enables us to say to God: 'Abba, Father' (Rom 8:15). Without the Spirit we cannot say: 'Jesus is Lord' (1Cor 12:3). From the Spirit come all the charisms that build up the Church, the community of Christians. In keeping with this, Saint Paul gives each disciple of Christ the instruction: 'Be filled with the Spirit' (Eph 5:18). Saint Augustine is very explicit: 'Both (our believing and our doing good) are ours because of the choice of our will, and yet both are gifts from the Spirit of faith and charity' (*Retract I, 23, 2*) **Catechesis, which is growth in faith and the maturing of Christian life towards its fullness, is consequently a work of the Holy Spirit, a work that He alone can initiate and sustain in the Church.** [...] To begin with, it is clear that, when carrying out

her mission of giving catechesis, the Church- and also every individual Christian devoting himself to that mission within the Church and in her name- **must be very much aware of acting as a living, pliant instrument of the Holy Spirit.** To invoke this Spirit constantly, to be in communion with Him, to endeavor to know His authentic inspirations must be the attitude of the teaching Church and of every catechist. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesis tradendae*, no. 72, October 16, 1979)

Catechesis gives growth to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit

The specific aim of catechesis is to develop, with God's help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fullness and to nourish day by day the Christian life of the faithful, young and old. **It is in fact a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation and effectively transmitted by Baptism.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesis tradendae*, no. 20, October 16, 1979)

CELAM – PUEBLA DOCUMENT

The action of the Spirit deepens in catechesis

The action of the Spirit is expressed in the prayer and listening to God's Word, **catechesis deepens**, we celebrate the liturgy, is witnessed in life, **communicates in education** and is shared in the dialogue which seeks to offer all new life brothers who, without merit on our part, receive in the Church as operatives of the first hour. (Third Episcopal Conference of Latin American and Caribbean Bishops. *CELAM – Puebla Document*, no. 566, January 28, 1979)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

The Church, animated by the Holy Spirit, is sent to be the teacher of the faith

Catechesis is an essentially ecclesial act. **The true subject of catechesis is the Church** which, continuing the mission of Jesus the Master and, therefore **animated by the Holy Spirit, is sent to be the teacher of the faith.** **The Church** imitates the Mother of the Lord in **treasuring the Gospel in her heart.** She

proclaims it, celebrates it, lives it, and she **transmits it in catechesis to all those who have decided to follow Jesus Christ.** [...]. She proclaims it, celebrates it, lives it, and she transmits it in catechesis to all those who have decided to follow Jesus Christ. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for catechesis*, no. 78, August 25, 1997)

The Spirit causes the Church to grow and sustains her in proclaiming the Gospel

In virtue of his universal salvific will, **God has ordained that Revelation** should be transmitted to all peoples and to all generations **and should remain always** in its entirety. To fulfil this divine plan, Jesus Christ founded the Church, built on the Apostles. He gave them the Holy Spirit from the Father and sent them to preach the Gospel to the She proclaims it, celebrates it, lives it, and she whole world. [...] **The Spirit causes her to grow constantly in her understanding of the Gospel, prompts her and sustains the task of proclaiming the Gospel in every corner of the world.** (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for catechesis*, no. 42-43, April 17, 1998)

II – PASTORS CANNOT FOREGO CATECHESIS, CONFIDING THAT THE FAITHFUL WILL LEARN OF THE MYSTERIES OF THE FAITH BY THEMSELVES

CODE OF CANON LAW

It is a grave duty of pastors to take care of catechesis

It is a proper and grave duty especially of **pastors of souls to take care of the catechesis of the Christian people** so that the living faith of the faithful becomes manifest and active through doctrinal instruction and the experience of Christian life. (Code of Canon Law, can. 773)

PIUS X

The first duty of all who are entrusted with government of the Church is to instruct the faithful in the things of God

We by no means wish to conclude that a

perverse will and unbridled conduct may not be joined with a knowledge of religion. Would to God that facts did not too abundantly prove the contrary! But We do maintain that **the will cannot be upright nor the conduct good when the mind is shrouded in the darkness of crass ignorance.** A man who walks with open eyes may, indeed, turn aside from the right path, but a blind man is in much more imminent danger of wandering away. Furthermore, there is always some hope for a reform of perverse conduct so long as the light of faith is not entirely extinguished; but if lack of faith is added to depraved morality because of ignorance, the evil hardly admits of remedy, and the road to ruin lies open. How many and how grave are the consequences of ignorance in matters of religion! And on the other hand, **how necessary and how beneficial is religious instruction!** It is indeed vain to expect a **fulfillment of the duties of a Christian by one who does not even know them.** We must now consider upon whom rests the obligation to dissipate this most pernicious ignorance and to impart in its stead the knowledge that is wholly indispensable. There can be no doubt, **Venerable Brethren, that this most important duty rests upon all who are pastors of souls. On them, by command of Christ, rest the obligations of knowing and of feeding the flocks committed to their care; and to feed implies, first of all, to teach.** 'I will give you pastors according to my own heart,' God promised through Jeremias, 'and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine' (Jer 3:15). Hence the Apostle Paul said: 'Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel' (1Cor 1:17), thereby indicating that **the first duty of all those who are entrusted in any way with the government of the Church is to instruct the faithful in the things of God.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 4, April 15, 1905)

The Christian has faith, but requires teaching to develop it and make it bear fruit

It follows, too, that if faith languishes in our days, if among large numbers it has almost vanished, the reason is that the duty of catechetical teaching is either fulfilled very superficially or altogether neglected. It will not do to say, in

excuse, that faith is a free gift of God bestowed upon each one at Baptism. **True enough, when we are baptized in Christ, the habit of faith is given, but this most divine seed, if left entirely to itself, by its own power, so to speak, is not like the mustard seed which 'grows up... and puts out great branches.'** Man has the faculty of understanding at his birth, but he also has need of his mother's word to awaken it, as it were, and to make it active. **So too, the Christian, born again of water and the Holy Spirit, has faith within him, but he requires the word of the teaching Church to nourish and develop it and to make it bear fruit.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 16, April 15, 1905)

A great loss of souls is due to ignorance of divine things

We pray and entreat you to reflect on the **great loss of souls due solely to ignorance of divine things.** You have doubtless accomplished many useful and most praiseworthy works in your respective dioceses for the good of the flock entrusted to your care, but before all else, and **with all possible zeal and diligence and care, see to it and urge on others that the knowledge of Christian doctrine pervades and imbues fully and deeply the minds of all.** Here, using the words of the Apostle Peter, We say, 'According to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God' (1Pt 4:10). (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 27, April 15, 1905)

JOHN PAUL II

The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks

The Church has always considered catechesis one of her primary tasks, for, before Christ ascended to His Father after His resurrection, He gave the apostles a final command – to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to observe all that He had commanded. He thus entrusted them with the mission and power to proclaim to humanity what they had heard, what they had seen with their eyes, what they had looked upon and touched with their hands, concerning the Word of Life. **He also entrusted them with the mission and power to explain with authority what He had taught**

them, His words and actions, His signs and commandments. And He gave them the Spirit to fulfill this mission. Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the Church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in His name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ. The Church has not ceased to devote her energy to this task. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesis tradendae*, no. 1, October 16, 1979)

Catechesis: a sacred duty and an inalienable right

To begin with, it is clear that the Church has always looked on catechesis as a sacred duty and an inalienable right. On the one hand, it is certainly a duty springing from a command given by the Lord and resting above all on those who in the new covenant receive the call to the ministry of being pastors. On the other hand, one can likewise speak of a right: from the theological point of view every baptized person, precisely the reason of being baptized, has the right to receive from the Church instruction and education enabling him or her to enter on a truly Christian life. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesis tradendae*, no. 14, October 16, 1979)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Christians have a right to a Christian education, to strive for the growth of the Mystical Body

Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education. A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person as just now described, but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:23) especially in liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to

the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph 4:22-24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body. [...] Wherefore this sacred synod recalls to pastors of souls their most serious obligation to see to it that all the faithful, but especially the youth who are the hope of the Church, enjoy this Christian education. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Gravissimum educationis*, no. 2, October 28, 1965)

The faith, illumined by teaching, is an effective force in the lives of men

Bishops should take pains that catechetical instruction-which is intended to make the faith, as illumined by teaching, a vital, explicit and effective force in the lives of men-be given with sedulous care to both children and adolescents, youths and adults. In this instruction a suitable arrangement should be observed as well as a method suited to the matter that is being treated and to the character, ability, age, and circumstances of the life of the students. Finally, they should see to it that this instruction is based on Sacred Scripture, tradition, the liturgy, magisterium, and life of the Church. Moreover, they should take care that catechists be properly trained for their function so that they will be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the Church and will have both a theoretical and a practical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of pedagogical methods. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Christus Dominus*, no. 14, October 28, 1965)

LEO XIII

The multitudes must be drawn to diligently learn the precepts of religion

Further, by assiduous teaching and exhortation, the multitude must be drawn to learn diligently the precepts of religion; for which purpose we earnestly advise that by opportune writings and sermons they be taught the elements of those sacred truths in which Christian philosophy is contained. The result of this will be that the minds of men will be made sound by instruction, and will be protected against many forms of error and inducements

to wickedness, especially in the present unbounded freedom of writing and insatiable eagerness for learning. [...] By uniting the efforts of both clergy and laity, **strive, venerable brethren, to make men thoroughly know and love the Church.** (Leo XIII. Encyclical *Humanum genus*, no. 32, April 20, 1884)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Catechesis must lead to the gradual grasping of the whole truth about the divine plan

Who has encountered Christ desires to know him as much as possible, as well as to know the plan of the Father which he revealed. **Knowledge of the faith (*fides quae*) is required by adherence to the faith (*fides qua*).** Even in the human order the love which one person has for another causes that person to wish to know the other all the more. **Catechesis, must, therefore, lead to ‘the gradual grasping of the whole truth about the divine plan’,** by introducing the disciples of Jesus to a knowledge of Tradition and of Scripture, which is ‘the sublime science of Christ’. (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for catechesis*, no. 85, April 17, 1998)

III – CATECHESIS MAY NOT BE COMPARED TO YOGA OR ZEN, WHICH ARE IN REALITY PRACTICES CONTRARY TO RELIGION

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Compared to the supreme good of knowing Christ, all is waste

More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of **knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.** For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things **and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him,** not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, **depending on faith to know him** and the power of his resurrection and (the) sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. (Phil 3:8-11)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The danger of fusing Christian meditation with eastern methods of ‘meditation’: abandoning the idea of the One and Triune God

With the present diffusion of eastern methods of meditation in the Christian world and in ecclesial communities, we find ourselves faced with a pointed renewal of an attempt, which is not free from dangers and errors, to fuse Christian meditation with that which is non-Christian. Proposals in this direction are numerous and radical to a greater or lesser extent. Some use eastern methods solely as a psycho-physical preparation for a truly Christian contemplation; others go further and, using different techniques, try to generate spiritual experiences similar to those described in the writings of certain Catholic mystics. Still others do not hesitate to place that absolute without image or concepts, which is proper to Buddhist theory, on the same level as the majesty of God revealed in Christ, which towers above finite reality. To this end, they make use of a ‘negative theology,’ which transcends every affirmation seeking to express what God is and denies that the things of this world can offer traces of the infinity of God. Thus they propose abandoning not only meditation on the salvific works accomplished in history by the God of the Old and New Covenant, but also the very idea of the One and Triune God, who is Love, in favor of an immersion ‘in the indeterminate abyss of the divinity.’ **These and similar proposals to harmonize Christian meditation with eastern techniques need to have their contents and methods ever subjected to a thorough-going examination so as to avoid the danger of falling into syncretism.** (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Catholic Church on some aspects of Christian meditation*, no. 12, October 15, 1989)

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

Catechesis is an adequate response to the growing influence of sects and new religious movements

In many ways, the sects and the new religious movements with their growing influence

are a challenge to the Church. **An adequate response to this challenge needs** to include an initial proclamation of the Gospel to individuals as well as **a catechesis of the Church's members**, both of which relate to local experiences and desires, **and concentrate on fundamental truths rather than secondary theories.** (Synod of Bishops. *Special assembly for Oceania*, Lineamenta, no. 24, September 26, 1997)

JOHN PAUL II

To sow confusion and uncertainty among Catholics: amalgamating Christian elements with others from Eastern religions and psychological techniques

Another phenomenon of our contemporary culture is that, while continuing to advance the secularization of many aspects of life, one perceives a new demand for spirituality; expression of the religious condition of man, and sign of his quest for answers to the crisis of values in Western society. To this promising panorama we need to respond, offering with fervor to the men and women of our time the riches of which we are the ministers and dispensers, thus contributing to satiate them: 'In the depths of his heart there always remains a yearning for absolute truth and a thirst to attain full knowledge of it' (*Veritatis Splendor*, no. 1). **Keep in mind**, however, that **there are no lack of deviations that have led to Gnostic or pseudo-religious sects and movements, forming a far-reaching cultural fashion that is at times echoed in many sectors of society, and has influence even within Catholic circles.** Therefore, some of them, with a syncretistic perspective, amalgamate Christian and Biblical elements with others drawn from Eastern religions and philosophies, from magic and psychological techniques. **This expansion of sects and new religious groups attracting many of the faithful, and sowing confusion and uncertainty among Catholics, is a motive of pastoral concern.** In this sphere, it is necessary to thoroughly analyze the problem and find pastoral guidelines to deal with it. [...] Besides thinking about the negative influence of these religious fundamentalist groups, **attention should be given to counteracting the causes that drive many faithful to leave the Church.** (John Paul II. *Address to the*

Bishops of the Argentinean Episcopal Conference on their ad limina visit, no. 5, February 7, 1995)

PONTIFICAL COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL

EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESSES

Syncretism in looking for life from the side of death

A good number of Christians go to Mass, in reality, not seeking to find the life of God in the sacrament of the Eucharist, but for other completely human intentions, and social reasons. And in the darkest moments of their lives, they go to pagan sacrifices or black magic to find life and peace there. **These people demonstrate, then, a religious syncretism, looking for life from the side of death.** (Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses, 48th International Eucharistic Congress. *Speech of Msgr. Jean Baptiste Kpiele Somé*, no. 2, October 11, 2004)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Regarding all these branches of knowledge we must fear and shun the fellowship of demons

All arts of this sort, therefore, are either nullities, or are part of a guilty superstition, springing out of a baleful fellowship between men and devils, and are to be utterly repudiated and avoided by the Christian as the covenants of a false and treacherous friendship. 'Not as if the idol were anything,' says the apostle; 'but because the things which they sacrifice they sacrifice to devils and not to God; and **I would not that you should have fellowship with devils**' (1Cor 10:19-20). Now what the apostle has said about idols and the sacrifices offered in their honor, that we ought to feel in regard to all fancied signs which lead either to the worship of idols, or to worshipping creation or its parts instead of God, or which are connected with attention to medicinal charms and other observances **for these are not appointed by God as the public means of promoting love towards God and our neighbor, but they waste the hearts of wretched men in private and selfish strivings after temporal things.** Accordingly, in regard

to all these branches of knowledge, we must fear and shun the fellowship of demons, who, with the Devil their prince, strive only to shut and bar the door against our return. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *On Christian Doctrine*, Book II, ch. 23, no. 36)

IV – THE ESSENTIAL OBJECTIVE OF CATECHESIS IS THE TRANSMISSION OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST. ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE CHURCH CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Man's whole salvation depends upon the knowledge of divine truths

Whereas man's whole salvation, which is in God, depends upon the knowledge of this truth. Therefore, in order that the salvation of men might be brought about more fitly and more surely, it was necessary that they should be taught divine truths by divine revelation. It was therefore necessary that besides philosophical science built up by reason, there should be a sacred science learned through revelation. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 1, a.1)

CATECHISM OF SAINT PIUS X

Catechesis: We receive the doctrine that Jesus Christ taught and committed to his Apostles from the Holy Catholic Church

What is Christian Doctrine?

Christian doctrine is the doctrine which Jesus Christ our Lord taught us to show us the way of salvation.

Is it necessary to learn the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ?

It certainly is necessary to learn the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ, **and those who fail to do so are guilty of a grave breach of duty.**

Are parents and guardians bound to send their children and those dependent on them to catechism?

Parents and guardians are bound to see that their children and dependents learn Christian Doctrine, and they are guilty before God if they neglect this duty.

From whom are we to receive and learn Christian Doctrine?

We are to receive and learn Christian Doctrine from the Holy Catholic Church.

How are we certain that the Christian Doctrine which we receive from the Holy Catholic Church is really true?

We are certain that the doctrine which we receive from the Holy Catholic Church is true, because Jesus Christ, the divine Author of this doctrine, committed it through His Apostles to the Church, which He founded and made the infallible teacher of all men, promising her His divine assistance until the end of time. (Catechism of Saint Pius X, no. 4-8, On Christian Doctrine)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Catechesis seeks to solidify and mature the first adherence to Christ

All evangelizing activity is understood as promoting communion with Jesus Christ. Starting with the 'initial' conversion of a person to the Lord, moved by the Holy Spirit through the primary proclamation of the Gospel, catechesis seeks to solidify and mature this first adherence. It proposes to help those who have just converted 'to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself: to know his 'mystery', the kingdom of God proclaimed by him, the requirements and comments contained in his Gospel message, and the paths that he has laid down for anyone who wishes to follow him'. (Congregation for the Clergy. General Directory for catechesis, no. 80, April 17, 1998)

JOHN PAUL II

The primary and essential object of catechesis is the mystery of Christ

The primary and essential object of catechesis is, to use an expression dear to St. Paul and also to contemporary theology, 'the mystery of Christ.' Catechizing is in a way to lead a person to study this mystery in all its dimensions. [...] Christocentricity in catechesis also means the intention to transmit not one's own teaching or that of some other master, but the teaching of Jesus Christ, the Truth that He communicates or, to put it more precisely, the Truth that He is. We must therefore say that in

catechesis it is Christ, the Incarnate Word and Son of God, who is taught – everything else is taught with reference to Him – and it is Christ alone who teaches – anyone else teaches to the extent that he is Christ’s spokesman, enabling Christ to teach with his lips. Whatever be the level of his responsibility in the Church, every catechist must constantly endeavor to transmit by his teaching and behavior the teaching and life of Jesus. He will not seek to keep directed towards himself and his personal opinions and attitudes the attention and the consent of the mind and heart of the person he is catechizing. Above all, he will not try to inculcate his personal opinions and options as if they expressed Christ’s teaching and the lessons of His life. [...] This teaching is not a body of abstract truths. It is the communication of the living mystery of God. **The Person teaching it in the Gospel is altogether superior in excellence to the ‘masters’ in Israel, and the nature of His doctrine surpasses theirs in every way** because of the unique link between what He says, what He does and what He is. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesis tradendae*, nos. 5-7, October 16, 1979)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The words of revelation clarify the mystery contained in them

In His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (cf. Eph 1:9) by which through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature (cf. Eph 2:18; 2Pet 1:4). Through this revelation, therefore, **the invisible God** (cf.

Col 1:15; 1Tim 1:17) **out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends** (cf. Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15) and lives among them (cf. Bar 3:38), so that He may **invite and take them into fellowship with Himself. This plan of revelation is realized by deeds and words having an inner unity**: the deeds wrought by God in the history of salvation manifest and confirm the teaching and realities signified by the words, **while the words proclaim the deeds and clarify the mystery contained in them.** (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Dei Verbum*, no. 2, November 18, 1965)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Christ commands the disciples to preach

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. (Mt 28:19-20)

Our Savior wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth

This is good and pleasing to God our savior, **who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.** (1 Tim 2:3-4)

Faith comes from what is heard

But not everyone has heeded the good news; for Isaiah says, ‘Lord, who has believed what was heard from us?’ **Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.** (Rom 10:16-18)

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Youth today are in need of three fundamental pillars: education, sport and culture

In the calendar of Catholic Saints there are numerous saints who excelled in the formation of youth. Saints who, in the most varied junctures of history, were called to support and sanctify this often neglected age-group, which God never abandons. Among them, perhaps no one is as renowned for the greatness of his work as Saint John Bosco. Due to his saintly life, full of miracles, and his particular charism for carrying out his mission, this father of the Salesian family became the authority par excellence in the area of youth education. His work, which developed in the midst of adverse circumstances, has spread throughout the world until today.

Our Lady Help of Christians and her Divine Son prepared Saint John Bosco with an abundance of gifts, in order to deeply understand the hearts of the young and interpret their noble aspirations, thus indicating a sure manner for a multitude of abandoned children to be transformed into exemplary Christians. One could truly say that Saint John Bosco dealt with all aspects of the so-called 'integral formation' of the individual. In this regard, many of his teachings come to mind, but one important one suffices: "The first step to educate young people well consists in striving to bring them to confess and receive Communion with proper dispositions. These Sacraments are the strongest supports for youth. Frequent confession and Communion and daily Mass are the columns which should support an educational edifice." Yes, for Saint John Bosco, the main purpose of education was to prepare young people to go to Heaven, guaranteeing at the same time that they live well here on earth. Nowadays, contrary to what one would expect, new theories in the Catholic milieu are bringing up doubts, confusion...and more confusion.

Recently, Francis founded a network called *Scholas Ocurrentes* which aspires to become a worldwide point of reference for youth education. Anyone hearing about an educational movement founded by the pope, would think that the most urgent needs of youth would be at least somewhat similar to those pinpointed by Saint John Bosco over a century ago. Therefore, it is surprising that this entity highlights as its mission: "Technology, arts and sports to boost social integration and the culture of encounter" based on an education that "recuperates an anthropological vision and essential human values, and which embraces the entire reality that young people experience. In other words, a social integration viewed from a holistic standpoint." (*Scholas Ocurrentes*). There are neither religious symbols, nor even a slight mention of God to be found on this page. Rather, an abundance of recurrent clichéd references to integration and encounter....and of course, to the famous 'values' that are never defined, but that everyone 'grabs onto'. Indeed, a motley crew – everything from soccer clubs to an assortment of politicians – huddling under the cover of such ethereal values. However, what are these 'values' worth if they are not founded on the only objective moral basis that exists, which is Catholic morality? And this leads us to other questions: what do young people really need? Of what significance are values without God? How should youth formation be for Christians? These, and many other topics, will be thoroughly defined by the Magisterium, and by Mamma Margherita's son himself.

FRANCIS

Youth today are in need of three fundamental pillars: education, sport and culture. For this reason, *Scholas* brings everything together. We organized a football match. The schools are also doing this and they also organize cultural events. Education, sport and culture. Let's move forward so that nations can create job opportunities for these young people, supported by education, sport and culture. **Sport is important**

because it teaches teamwork. Sport prevents selfishness, it helps us not to be selfish. (*Video Conference with the students of the Scholas Social Network from five continents, September 5, 2014*)

To this end, it is very important to strengthen the bonds: social, family, personal bonds. **Everyone, but most of all the children and young people, need an appropriate setting, a truly human habitat, with suitable conditions for their harmonious personal development and for their integration into the greater habitat of society.** Thus it is imperative to create a strong and extensive 'network' of truly human bonds, which supports children, which opens them to life in a calm and confident manner, **which is an authentic place for encounter, in which the true, the good and the beautiful may find a just balance. If a child does not have all of this, nothing is left for him but the path to delinquency and dependency.** I urge you to continue working to create this human village, ever more human, which offers children a present of peace and a future of hope. (*Address to participants in the International Meeting of Directors of Scholas Occurrentes, September 4, 2014*)

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Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

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Pius XI

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I – IS THERE SUCH A THING AS EDUCATION WITHOUT GOD?

JOHN XXIII

The essence of education consists in collaboration with divine grace

It is a principle of Catholic pedagogy that the **essence of education consists in the collaboration with divine grace**, for the formation of a true and perfect Christian. (John XXIII. *Message to participants in the 7th Inter-American Congress on Catholic Education*, January 10, 1960)

PIUS XI

The wrong way to educate: becoming attached exclusively to passing things of this earth

Indeed never has there been so much discussion about education as nowadays; never have exponents of new pedagogical theories been so numerous, or so many methods and means devised, proposed and debated, not merely to

facilitate education, but to create a new system infallibly efficacious, and capable of preparing the present generations for that earthly happiness which they so ardently desire. The reason is that men, created by God to His image and likeness and destined for Him Who is infinite perfection realize today more than ever amid the most exuberant material progress, the insufficiency of earthly goods to produce true happiness either for the individual or for the nations. And hence they feel more keenly in themselves the impulse towards a perfection that is higher, which impulse is implanted in their rational nature by the Creator Himself. This perfection they seek to acquire by means of education. But **many of them with, it would seem, too great insistence on the etymological meaning of the word, pretend to draw education out of human nature itself and evolve it by its own unaided powers. Such easily fall into error, because, instead of fixing their gaze on God, first principle and last end of the whole universe, they fall back upon themselves, becoming attached exclusively to passing things of earth; and thus their restlessness will never cease till they direct their attention and their efforts to God, the goal of all perfection.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 5-6, December 31, 1929)

PAUL VI

To reduce the Church's mission to the dimensions of a simply temporal project is to lose her fundamental meaning

We must not ignore the fact that many, even generous **Christians** who are sensitive to the dramatic questions involved in the problem of liberation, in their wish to commit the Church to the liberation effort are frequently tempted to reduce her mission to the dimensions of a simply temporal project. They would reduce her aims to a man-centered goal; the salvation of which she is the messenger would be reduced to material well-being. Her activity, forgetful of all spiritual and religious preoccupation, would become initiatives of the political or social order. **But if this were so, the Church would lose her fundamental meaning.** Her message of liberation would no longer have any originality and would easily be open to monopolization and manipulation by ideological systems and political parties. She would have no more authority to proclaim freedom as in the name of God. **This is why we have wished to emphasize,** in the same address at the opening of the Synod, **'the need to restate clearly the specifically religious finality of evangelization.** This latter would lose its reason for existence if it were to diverge from the religious axis that guides it: **the kingdom of God, before anything else, in its fully theological meaning...'** (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 32, December 8, 1975)

Evangelization cannot be contained in the restricted dimension of social or cultural life; it must envisage the whole man

With regard to the liberation which evangelization proclaims and strives to put into practice one should rather say this:

– It cannot be contained in the simple and restricted dimension of economics, politics, social or cultural life; it must envisage the whole man, in all his aspects, right up to and including his openness to the absolute, even the divine Absolute;

– It is therefore attached to a view of man which it can never sacrifice to the needs of any strategy, practice or short-term efficiency.

Hence, when preaching liberation and associating herself with those who are working and suffering for it, **the Church** is certainly not willing to restrict her mission only to the religious field and dissociate herself from man's temporal problems. Nevertheless she **reaffirms the primacy of her spiritual vocation and refuses to replace the proclamation of the kingdom by the proclamation of forms of human liberation** – she even states that her contribution to liberation is incomplete if she neglects to proclaim salvation in Jesus Christ. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 33-34, December 8, 1975)

PIUS X

Christians who live rashly and imprudently with regard to religion

It is a common complaint, unfortunately too well founded, that **there are large numbers of Christians in our own time who are entirely ignorant of those truths necessary for salvation.** And when we mention Christians, We refer not only to the masses or to those in the lower walks of life – for these find some excuse for their ignorance in the fact that the demands of their harsh employers hardly leave them time to take care of themselves or of their dear ones – but We refer to those especially who do not lack culture or talents and, indeed, are possessed of abundant knowledge regarding things of the world **but live rashly and imprudently with regard to religion.** It is hard to find words to describe how profound is the darkness in which they are engulfed and, what is most deplorable of all, how tranquilly they repose there. (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 2, April 15, 1905)

BENEDICT XVI

It is absurd to think that we can truly live by removing God, the source of life, from the picture!

Men and women were created for something great, for infinity. [...] So we can see how absurd it is to think that we can truly live by removing God from the picture! God is the source of life. To set God aside is to separate ourselves from that source and,

inevitably, to deprive ourselves of fulfilment and joy: 'without the Creator, the creature fades into nothingness' (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 36). In some parts of the world, particularly in the West, today's culture tends to exclude God, and to consider faith a purely private issue with no relevance for the life of society. Even though the set of values underpinning society comes from the Gospel – values like the sense of the dignity of the person, of solidarity, of work and of the family –, we see a certain 'eclipse of God' taking place, a kind of amnesia which, albeit not an outright rejection of Christianity, is nonetheless a denial of the treasure of our faith, a denial that could lead to the loss of our deepest identity. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the Twenty-Sixth World Youth Day*, no. 1, August 6, 2010)

Pius XII

Oppose the pernicious efforts which seek to form schools and education on a purely naturalistic foundation

Oppose then, to the pernicious efforts which seek to completely distance religion from education and from schools, or at least to form schools and education on a purely naturalistic foundation, the idea of the task of teaching enriched by the inestimable treasure of a faith which is felt and lived, by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ. **Strive so that your children and youth**, as they progress in the way of years, also receive a religious formation which is ever more ample and well based. [...] Do this in such a way that this instruction is closely united to the holy fear of God, the habit of recollecting oneself in prayer, and the full and conscious participation in the spirit of the liturgical year of Holy Mother Church. (Pius XII. *Radio message for the closing of the Inter-American Congress on Catholic Education*, October 6, 1948)

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

One of the vices of modern pedagogy is to reduce religion to a mere sentiment

One of the defects or vices of modern pedagogy is to reduce religion to a mere

sentiment. Because of this they do not want one to speak with the young people about the eternal truths, nor even to mention death, judgment, and much less hell to them. It is necessary to instruct them profoundly and capacitate them to continue this instruction on their own. **A reform of customs is necessary. This is not attained except by distributing the bread of the Divine Word to the peoples. Catechize the children; inculcate in them the detachment of the things of this earth.** [...] All teachers should teach and promote the study of the diocesan catechism. It is of utmost importance. Twice a year there should be held with all solemnity a catechism exam, and whoever who does not pass it should not be promoted to the other exams. Special awards should be given to those who have outstanding results in this exam. And to better assure this study, special care should be taken in the record of the weekly and monthly marks. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 421)

Without religion there is no fruit to be had among youth

Only religion is capable of beginning and finishing the great work of a true education. **Without religion there is no fruit to be had among youth.** Young souls, in the period of their formation, need to experience the beneficial effects derived from sacerdotal unction. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 428)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

God alone can satisfy the will of man

It is impossible for any created good to constitute man's happiness. For happiness is the perfect good, which lulls the appetite altogether; else it would not be the last end, if something yet remained to be desired. Now the object of the will, i.e. of man's appetite, is the universal good; just as the object of the intellect is the universal true. Hence it is evident that naught can lull man's will, save the universal good. This is to be found, not in any creature, but in God alone; because every creature has goodness by participation. Wherefore God

alone can satisfy the will of man, according to the words of Ps. 102:5: 'Who satisfieth thy desire with good things.' Therefore **God alone constitutes man's happiness.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 2, a. 8)

BENEDICT XVI

The goal of all our pastoral and catechetical work: to help people establish and nurture a living relationship with Christ

People today need to be reminded of the ultimate purpose of their lives. They need to recognize that implanted within them is a deep thirst for God. They need to be given opportunities to drink from the wells of his infinite love. It is easy to be entranced by the almost unlimited possibilities that science and technology place before us; it is easy to make the mistake of thinking we can obtain by our own efforts the fulfillment of our deepest needs. This is an illusion. **Without God, who alone bestows upon us what we by ourselves cannot attain** (cf. *Spe Salvi*, 31), **our lives are ultimately empty.** People need to be constantly reminded to cultivate a relationship with him who came that we might have life in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). **The goal of all our pastoral and catechetical work**, the object of our preaching, and the focus of our sacramental ministry should be to help people establish and nurture that living relationship with 'Christ Jesus, our hope' (1Tim 1:1). (Benedict XVI. *Address for the celebration of Vespers and meeting with the Bishops of the United States of America*, April 16, 2008)

II – HOW CAN WE EDUCATE YOUTH IN A CHRISTIAN WAY?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Education is like a chain of gold

Like a chain of gold is learning to a wise man, like a bracelet on his right arm. (Sir 21:21)

A soul that plots evil: wisdom does not enter

Because into a soul that plots evil wisdom enters not, nor dwells she in a body under

debt of sin. For the holy spirit of discipline flees deceit and withdraws from senseless counsels; and when injustice occurs it is rebuked. (Wis 1:4-5)

Choices during youth determine the future

Train a boy in the way he should go; even when he is old, he will not swerve from it. (Prov 22:6)

Scripture gives wisdom and leads to salvation

But wicked people and charlatans will go from bad to worse, deceivers and deceived. But you, **remain faithful to what you have learned and believed**, because you know from whom you learned it, and that **from infancy you have known (the) sacred scriptures, which are capable of giving you wisdom for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.** All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that one who belongs to God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2Tim 3:13-17)

God educates us so we may share His holiness

Besides this, we have had our earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them. **Should we not (then) submit all the more to the Father of spirits and live?** They disciplined us for a short time as seemed right to them, but he does so for our benefit, in order that we may share his holiness. (Heb 12:9-10)

PIUS XI

Young people should be forewarned against the seductions of the world

This necessary vigilance does not demand that young people be removed from the society in which they must live and save their souls; but that **today more than ever they should be forewarned and forearmed as Christians against the seductions and the errors of the world**, which, as Holy Writ admonishes us, is all 'concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes and pride of life' (1Jn 2:16). Let them

be what Tertullian wrote of the first Christians, and what Christians of all times ought to be, 'sharers in the possession of the world, not of its error'. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 92, December 31, 1929)

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

Confession and Communion are the strongest supports for youth

The first step to educate young people well consists in striving to bring them to confess and receive Communion with proper dispositions. **These Sacraments are the strongest support for youth. Frequent confession and Communion and daily Mass are the pillars which should support an educational edifice,** which is to be far removed from threats and punishment. Do not force young people to frequent the Sacraments, but rather encourage them and facilitate so that they may benefit from them. **On the occasion of spiritual exercises, triduum, novenas sermons, catechisms, etc, there should be emphasis on the beauty, grandeur and holiness of a religion** that provides means that are so easy, so useful to civil society, to the tranquility of the heart and to the salvation of the soul as are the Sacraments. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 428-429)

The supreme end of the educator: saving eternally

Reason and religion are the instruments that the educator should constantly use, teach and practice himself if he wishes to be obeyed and attain his end. **This supreme end consists in making young people good, and saving them eternally. All the rest: letters, science, arts, trades, should be considered means.** (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 423-424)

A Christian educator is he who directs souls to the path of sanctity

What is the obligation of the Christian educator? According to the spirit of Jesus Christ and his morality, **the educator,** whether he be a priest or a teacher, should **avoid giving a**

tainted education to the children Providence has confided to him, he should immediately direct them to the path of sanctity, whose ways are renunciation and generosity. To communicate to them the spirit of sacrifice, he should direct his care, above all, to cultivate their reason and their will, without neglecting any of the other faculties. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 415)

Form the heart to the zeal for the glory of God

Childhood, adolescence and youth are times of an extraordinary flourishing of sentiments and affections. The educator should take advantage of this. The heart has sections that are little explored, almost unknown. One could say that the center of the heart, is love. **It is necessary to purify love, transform human sentimentality into refined and sublime love; in charity, in charity towards God and towards neighbor.** Control anger, help one's neighbor, **subject sensibility to reason, to the teachings of the faith, to the zeal for the glory of God.** (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 411)

Instruction should begin by the knowledge of man's final end

There is no true instruction which is not at the same time education. **Intelligence is the light that God has given us to illuminate our way.** It is at the same time the great instrument for all human work. It is that which distinguishes man from animals. It is the reflection of God. **It is necessary to cultivate and educate it adequately. Instruction progresses alongside human life and work, which always begins, and should begin, by the knowledge of the end, to then proceed to the choice and concrete application of the means which lead to this end.** This thought is what directs all intellectual formation. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 408-409)

Almost all educators completely neglect the sovereign faculty: the will

Wisdom is the art of governing one's own will. The education of the will consist above all

in strengthening it, distancing from it all the obstacles that can obstruct its upright use, and providing occasions and motives for its proper use according to its natural and supernatural life. **All, or almost all educators, see the development of a child`s intelligence as his main privilege.** But this is a lack of prudence, because they ignore or easily lose sight of human nature and the interdependence of our faculties. **They dedicate all their efforts to the development of the cognitive faculty and sentiment,** which they erroneously and harmfully confuse with the faculty to love and on the other hand **they completely neglect the sovereign faculty, the will,** the only source of true and pure love, of which sensibility is no more than a kind of appearance. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 413)

The child, overexcited by an intense culture, is a toy of the evil spirit

The intelligence and the sensibility, overexcited by an intense culture, attract all the powers of the soul, absorbs the young person's whole life, and prematurely acquires an extreme vivacity, coupled with the most refined delicacy. The child like this understands quickly, his imagination is ardent and agile, his memory retains with scrupulous exactitude and effortlessly the smallest details, which leads to learning by rote, his sensibility enchants all around him. **But all of these brilliant qualities disguise the most shameful insufficiency, the most fatal weakness.** The child today, and unfortunately, later the youth, carried away by the immediacy of conceptions, does not know how to think nor to operate with criteria, he lacks good sense, tact, prudence – in a word, practical sense. [...] Too superficial to read the depths of his soul, he sees nothing but the surface, that is to say the passing sensations, and rushing to secure its slightest movements, believes to have firmly decided that which he seems to desire; incapable of dominating himself, he hurries to put it into practice. **A sad and ridiculous toy of the evil spirit, who does not cease to confuse him,** exciting impressions that he, poor blind child, imagines to be firm resolutions, the objects of lengthy meditation! [...] Virtue attracts him, but as it is repugnant to the weakness of his nature, he interprets this repugnance to be a contrary desire. And he

gives in. **In vain the most abundant graces fall upon his soul, because he does not know how to seize them; his conscience is like a stormy sea, constantly agitated by the most contrary currents.** (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 413-414)

Everything should converge toward the formation of the conscience

Formation of the conscience, is then, the forming of this practical intellect of the students, consequently comprehending the moral law, evaluating each action in its light, discovering its consonance or discrepancy with this law and proceeding in accordance with it. **Everything should converge toward this:** readings, conversations, discussions, classes, talks, public and private conferences should all tend toward inculcating within the intelligences an upright judgment about the events and the actions of life. **They should learn to flee from evil and do good** not out of fear, or because others are observing them, but rather for **love of God;** not for reward or punishment from the superior, but for duty of conscience. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 410-411)

Morality: this is what is most important!

Impurity is the vice that causes most damage in youth. Morality: this is what is most important! [...] **It is necessary to always keep the boys busy.** [...] If we do not keep them occupied, they will seek occupation, and certainly with thoughts and things that are not good. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 429)

PIUS XI

The true Christian is the supernatural man who thinks, judges and acts constantly with right reason illumined by the example and teaching of Christ

The proper and immediate end of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, that is,

to form **Christ Himself** in those regenerated by **Baptism**, according to the emphatic expression of the Apostle: 'My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you' (Gal 4:19). For **the true Christian must live a supernatural life in Christ**: 'Christ who is your life' (Col 3:4), and display it in all his actions: 'That the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh' (2Cor 4:2). For precisely this reason, **Christian education takes in the whole aggregate of human life**, physical and spiritual, intellectual and moral, individual, domestic and social, not with a view of reducing it in any way, but **in order to elevate, regulate and perfect it, in accordance with the example and teaching of Christ**. Hence **the true Christian, product of Christian education, is the supernatural man who thinks, judges and acts constantly and consistently in accordance with right reason illumined by the supernatural light of the example and teaching of Christ**; in other words, to use the current term, the true and finished man of character. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 94-96, December 31, 1929)

Education must be directed to man's last end

In fact, since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that **there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man's last end**, and that in the present order of Providence, since God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, who alone is 'the way, the truth and the life', **there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education**. From this we see the supreme importance of Christian education, not merely for each individual, but for families and for the whole of human society, whose perfection comes from the perfection of the elements that compose it. **From these same principles, the excellence, we may well call it the unsurpassed excellence, of the work of Christian education becomes manifest and clear; for after all it aims at securing the Supreme Good, that is, God, for the souls of those who are being educated, and the maximum of well-being possible here below for human society.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 7-8, December 31, 1929)

PIUS XII

Counter the scarcity of principles with an education which capacitates to discern between good and evil

Counter the scarcity of principles of this century, which measures everything by the criteria of success, **with an education which capacitates the young person to discern between truth and error, good and evil, justice and injustice, planting firmly in his soul the pure sentiments of love, of fraternity, of fidelity**. If the dangerous movies today, speaking only to the senses, and in an excessively unilateral manner, bring the risk of producing in souls a state of superficiality and passivity of soul, a good book can complete what is missing here, having an increasing importance in the work of education. (Pius XII. *Radio message for the closing of the Inter-American Congress on Catholic Education*, October 6, 1948)

JOHN XXIII

The overall comportment in life of youth needs to be oriented according to the Christian message

Intellectual catechesis will be of little efficacy unless accompanied by an education that considers not only the intelligence, but also the will and the heart of the adolescent: religion embraces the whole man; it is their overall comportment in life that needs to be oriented according to the Christian message by implementing a complete pedagogy of spiritual life so that the youth become aware of the correspondence that exists between the truths that they are taught to believe and the interior aspirations which spring from their personality towards the ideals of justice, charity and moral rectitude. (John XXIII. *Message to participants in the 7th Inter-American Congress on Catholic Education*, January 10, 1960)

BENEDICT XVI

Without discipline, youth cannot be prepared to face the trials of the future

Suffering is also part of the truth of our life. So, **by seeking to shield the youngest from every difficulty and experience of suffering, we risk**

raising brittle and ungenerous people, despite our good intentions: indeed, the capacity for loving corresponds to the capacity for suffering and for suffering together. We thus arrive, dear friends of Rome, at what is perhaps the most delicate point in the task of education: **finding the right balance between freedom and discipline. If no standard of behaviour and rule of life is applied even in small daily matters, the character is not formed and the person will not be ready to face the trials that will come in the future.** The educational relationship, however, is first of all the encounter of two kinds of freedom, and successful education means teaching the correct use of freedom. As the child gradually grows up, he becomes an adolescent and then a young person; we must therefore accept the risk of freedom and be constantly attentive in order to help him to correct wrong ideas and choices. However, **what we must never do is to support him when he errs, to pretend we do not see the errors or worse, that we share them as if they were the new boundaries of human progress.** (Benedict XVI. *Letter to the faithful of the diocese of Rome on the urgent task of educating young people*, January 21, 2008)

Pius XII

Develop the hierarchical spirit to dissipate the atmosphere of excessive liberty

Develop, in the souls of children and youth, **the hierarchical spirit**, which does not deny to each age group its due development, so as to dissipate, as much as possible, **this atmosphere of independence and excessive liberty which the youth today breathe, and which brings them to reject all authority and all control**, seeking to bring about and form this sense of responsibility and recalling that liberty is not the only human value, although it is among the first, but rather that it has its intrinsic limits in the inevitable norms of honesty, and extrinsically in the correlative rights of the rest, whether it be each one in particular or society taken as a whole. (Pius XII. *Radio message for the closing of the Inter-American Congress on Catholic Education*, October 6, 1948)

Pius XI

Pedagogic naturalism is false. From tender childhood, the mind and the will must be

educated with supernatural means

‘Folly is bound up in the heart of a child and the rod of correction shall drive it away’ (Prov 22:15). Disorderly inclinations then must be corrected, good tendencies encouraged and regulated from tender childhood, and **above all the mind must be enlightened and the will strengthened by supernatural truth and by the means of grace, without which it is impossible to control evil impulses, impossible to attain to the full and complete perfection of education intended by the Church**, which Christ has endowed so richly with divine doctrine and with the Sacraments, the efficacious means of grace. **Hence every form of pedagogic naturalism which in any way excludes or weakens supernatural Christian formation in the teaching of youth, is false.** [...] But alas! it is clear from the obvious meaning of the words and from experience, that what is intended by not a few, is the withdrawal of education from every sort of dependence on the divine law. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 59-60, 62, December 31, 1929)

Educators spend their lives in searching for a universal moral code of education, as if there existed no Decalogue, or no Gospel law

So today we see, strange sight indeed, educators and philosophers who spend their lives in searching for a universal moral code of education, as if there existed no Decalogue, no gospel law, no law even of nature stamped by God on the heart of man, promulgated by right reason, and codified in positive revelation by God Himself in the ten commandments. **These innovators are wont to refer contemptuously to Christian education as ‘heteronomous’, ‘passive’, ‘obsolete’, because founded upon the authority of God and His holy law. Such men are miserably deluded in their claim to emancipate, as they say, the child, while in reality they are making him the slave of his own blind pride and of his disorderly affections, which, as a logical consequence of this false system, come to be justified as legitimate demands of a so-called autonomous nature.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 62-63, December 31, 1929)

The priceless educational treasures are property of the Church

Such are the fruits of Christian education. Their price and value is derived from the supernatural virtue and life in Christ which Christian education forms and develops in man. Of this life and virtue Christ our Lord and Master is the source and dispenser. By His example He is at the same time the universal model accessible to all, especially to the young in the period of His hidden life, a life of labor and obedience, adorned with all virtues, personal, domestic and social, before God and men. Now all this array of priceless educational treasures which We have barely touched upon, is so truly a property of the Church as to form her very substance, since she is the mystical body of Christ, the immaculate spouse of Christ, and consequently a most admirable mother and an incomparable and perfect teacher. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 100-101, December 31, 1929)

III – WHAT ARE GAMES AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION USEFUL FOR?

PIUS XI

The natural faculties are to be developed by coordinating them with the supernatural

The true Christian does not renounce the activities of this life, he does not stunt his natural faculties; but he develops and perfects them, by coordinating them with the supernatural. He thus ennobles what is merely natural in life and secures for it new strength in the material and temporal order, no less than in the spiritual and eternal. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 98, December 31, 1929)

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

Physical education: to make the body a worthy collaborator of the spirit for the glory of God and the good of neighbor

The well-known program of Greco-Roman antiquity never loses its validity: *mens sana in corpore sano*. And this should be understood

in the integral sense: to achieve a proper collaboration between the two components of man. Make the body a worthy collaborator of the spirit for the glory of God and the good of neighbor. [...] Physical education is most suitable, and even necessary, but it should not become a merely mechanical exercise, nor a series of movements which are more or less synchronized, but rather it should be a discipline, a perfecting in every sense, also esthetically. **Agility and robustness of the body so that it can better serve the soul, and social life.** (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 406)

Games which inflame the desire for material interests are not recommendable

Games are made to rest, and avoid bad humors. Because of this, sedentary games are not recommendable, nor those which require too much calculation, nor those which inflame the desire for material interests. [...] Any game which includes the danger of offending God, causing harm to one's neighbor, or to oneself, should be prohibited. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 406-407)

During the time of youth, one should be accustomed to work

My dear sons, man was born to work. Adam was placed in the earthly Paradise so he would cultivate it. The Apostle Saint Paul says: 'Whoever does not work should not eat, *Si quis non vult operari, nec manducet*' (2Thess 3:10). By work we mean the fulfillment of one's duties, whether they be studies, art, or some other occupation. We are all workers. Remember that by work, you can make yourselves meritorious to society and to religion; you can do good to your souls, especially if you offer God the occupations of each day. [...] Remember that your age is the springtime of life. **One who does not accustom himself to work during his youth will be an idler until his old age**, to the dishonor of the fatherland and his relatives, and **perhaps with irreparable damage to his own soul, because idleness brings with it all kinds of vices.** (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 489)

Pius XII

The Church approves of physical culture when it does not lead to the worship of the body

Respond to the exaggerated importance given today to everything that is merely technical and material with an education which always gives first place to spiritual and moral values, the natural and above all the supernatural ones. **The Church, doubtlessly, approves of physical culture, if it is orderly; and it will be orderly when it does not lead to the worship of the body, when it is useful to strengthen the body, and not waste away its energies, when it serves as recreation to the spirit, and is not the cause of weakening or roughening of the spirit, when it provides new stimulus for study of professional work** an when it does not lead to abandoning them, neglecting them, or causing perturbation in the peace which should reign in the sanctuary of the home. **Oppose the immoderate search for pleasure and moral indiscipline – which also seek to invade the ranks of catholic youth, making them forget that they carry with them a fallen nature burdened with the sad inheritance of original sin – the education in self-dominance, sacrifice and renunciation, beginning with the small to later progress to what is great; education in fidelity to the fulfillment of one's own duties, of sincerity, serenity and purity, especially in the years in which development approaches maturity. But may you never forget that this goal cannot be reached without the powerful aid of the Sacraments of Confession and the Most Holy Eucharist, whose supernatural educational value can never be fully appreciated.** (Pius XII. *Radio message for the closing of the Inter-American Congress on Catholic Education*, October 6, 1948)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Christians are called to conflict and fight – not to be laughing and sporting, dissolute and luxurious, and always taking things easily

Yes, for a grievous conflict is at hand, and against the powers unseen is our wrestling; against 'the spiritual wickednesses' (Eph 6:12) our fight, 'against principalities, against powers' our warfare: and it is well for us, if when we are

earnest and sober and thoroughly awakened, we can be able to sustain that savage phalanx. **But if we are laughing and sporting, and always taking things easily, even before the conflict, we shall be overthrown by our own remissness. It becomes not us then to be continually laughing, and to be dissolute, and luxurious, but it belongs to those upon the stage, the harlot women, the men that are trimmed for this intent, parasites, and flatterers; not them that are called unto heaven, not them that are enrolled into the city above, not them that bear spiritual arms, but them that are enlisted on the devil's side. For it is he, yea, it is he, that even made the thing an art, that he might weaken Christ's soldiers, and soften the nerves of their zeal.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 6, on Saint Matthew*)

Life is not a plaything. Spending all our diligence on earthly things is to betray our own salvation

Life is not a plaything: or rather our present life is a plaything, but the things to come are not such; or perchance our life is not a plaything only, but even worse than this. For it ends not in laughter, but rather brings exceeding damage on them who are not minded to order their own ways strictly. [...] Let us therefore become men. **How long are we to crawl on the earth, priding ourselves on stones and stocks? How long are we to play? And would we played only! But now we even betray our own salvation; and as children when they neglect their learning, and practise themselves in these things at their leisure, suffer very severe blows; even so we too, spending all our diligence herein, and having then our spiritual lessons required of us in our works, and not being able to produce them, shall have to pay the utmost penalty.** And there is none to deliver us; though he be father, brother, what you will. But while these things shall all pass away, the torment ensuing upon them remains immortal and unceasing. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 23, on Saint Matthew*)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

The time of life is short; we should then prepare for death

The time of life is short; we should then prepare

for death, which is rapidly approaching and to prepare for that awful moment, let us reflect that everything in this world shall soon end. Hence, the Apostle tells those who suffer in this life to be as if they suffered not, because the miseries of this life shall soon pass away, and they who save their souls shall be happy for eternity; and he exhorts those who enjoy the goods of the earth to be as if they enjoyed them not, because they must one day leave all things; and if they lose their souls, they shall be miserable for ever. (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Sermons for all the Sundays in the Year*, Sermon IX, no. 13, p. 42)

IV – WHAT GOD EXPECTS OF YOUTH IS SANCTITY

PAUL VI

Be generous, pure, respectful and sincere – youth should give free expansion to faith

The Church is particularly anxious that this society should allow free expansion to her treasure ever ancient and ever new, namely faith, and that your souls may be able to bask freely in its helpful light. She has confidence that you will find such strength and such joy that you will not be tempted, as were some of your elders, to yield to the seductions of egoistic or hedonistic philosophies or to those of despair and annihilation, and that in the face of atheism, a phenomenon of lassitude and old age, you will know how to affirm your faith in life and in what gives meaning to life, that is to say, the certitude of the existence of a just and good God. It is in the name of this God and of His Son, Jesus, that we exhort you to open your hearts to the dimensions of the world [...] Be generous, pure, respectful and sincere, and build in enthusiasm a better world than your elders had. (Paul VI. *Address to young men and women of the world at the closing of Vatican Council II*, December 8, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

Without God, the whole world of created values remains suspended in an absolute vacuum

Christ replies to the young man in the Gospel.

He says: 'No one is good but God alone'. We have already heard what the young man had asked: 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' How must I act so that my life will have meaning and value? We could translate his question into the language of our own times. In this context Christ's answer means this: **only God is the ultimate basis of all values; only he gives the definitive meaning to our human existence.** Only God is good, which means this: **in him and him alone all values have their first source and final completion;** he is 'the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end' (Rev 21:6). Only in him do values and their authenticity and definitive confirmation. **Without him – without the reference to God – the whole world of created values remains as it were suspended in an absolute vacuum.** It also loses its transparency, its expressiveness. Evil is put forward as a good and good itself is rejected. Are we not shown this by the very experience of our own time, wherever God has been removed beyond the limits of evaluations, estimations and actions? [...] How I pray that you, my young friends, will hear Christ's reply in the most personal way possible; that you will and the interior path which enables you to grasp it, accept it and undertake its accomplishment! [...] These questions show how **man without God cannot understand himself, and cannot even fulfill himself without God.** Jesus Christ came into the world first of all in order to make each one of us aware of this. **Without him this fundamental dimension of the truth about man would easily sink into obscurity.** However, 'the light has come into the world' (Jn 3:19), 'and the darkness has not overcome it' (Jn 1:5). (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Dilecti amici*, no. 4, March 31, 1985)

Christ calls you to commit yourselves in favor of the good

I know that you often wonder about how to live your life in worthwhile manner; how to behave so that your existence be full and does not fall in a void; how to do something to improve the society in which you live, looking for a remedy for the serious evils that it suffers and that are repugnant to your thirst for sincerity, brotherhood, justice, peace, solidarity. [...] **Christ calls you to commit yourselves in favor of the good, of the destruction of egoism and**

sin in all its forms. He wants you to build a society in which the moral values that God desires to see in the heart and life of man are cultivated. Christ calls you to be faithful children of God, workers of good, of justice, of brotherhood, of love, of honesty and harmony. Christ encourages you to always carry in your spirit and in your actions the essence of the Gospel: love of God and love of man. (John Paul II. *Address to youth of San José, Costa Rica*, March 3, 1983)

**Search for sanctity in study and work!
Your task can be summarized in a word:
sanctity**

Now we can see what is the deepest meaning of study and work at the same time: the search for sanctity. The task which opens up before you, who pursue a Christian witness in University work, can thus be summarized in a word filled with significance: **sanctity**. Sanctity in your studies and through your studies. The work world has need of your holiness of life. [...] And since sin is an obstacle to the love of God – it contaminates the works of man and perturbs the ambiances of his activity, transforming them into places of struggle and hatred – it becomes evident that the Christian will be at the service of the work world only if he fights against the sin which dwells his soul. (John Paul II. *Address to participants in the annual Congress of UNIV*, March 29, 1983)

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

All temporal and eternal good depends on the holy fear of God

Remember, dear young people, that we have been created to know, love and serve God, our Creator, and that all the knowledge of the world and all the riches of the universe are of no use to us whatsoever without the fear of God. All our temporal and eternal good depends on this holy fear. To keep us in the fear of God, prayers, the Sacraments, and the Word of God are of aid to us. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 489-490)

Virtues are the best ornament of a youth

Remember, dear young people that you are the Lord's delight. **Happy is the one who begins to observe the law of God ever since he is small.** God deserves to be loved, because he has created us, he has redeemed us, he conserves us and has granted us innumerable benefits, and has a great reward reserved for the one who keeps his law. **Charity is that which distinguishes the sons of God from the sons of the devil and the world.** The one who gives good counsels to his companions does a great work of charity. Obey your superiors, according to the mandate of God, and all will be well. **The virtues that form the best ornament of a Christian youth are charity, purity, humility and obedience.** (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 416)

Begin to walk valiantly along the path of virtue when young

How difficult it is to uproot a vice that has taken root in youth! [...] Each one of you should strive to acquire good habits, for in this way it will be easy for him to practice virtue. **The habits formed in youth, generally last a lifetime: if they are good, they lead to virtue and they give us the moral security of eternal salvation.** History teaches us that at all times virtue was loved, and those who practiced it were venerated and honored; on the contrary, vice was always reprovved, and those who practiced vices were despised. This should serve as an incentive for us on to flee constantly from vice and practice virtue. **Whoever wants to be great should begin to walk valiantly along the path of virtue when young.** (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 416)

Christians should seek to know the divine will

My sons: God in his eternal councils has destined each one of you to a condition of life with its corresponding graces. As in any other circumstance, also in this one, which is of capital importance, **the Christian should seek to know the divine will**, imitating Jesus Christ, who declared that he had come to the earth solely to fulfill the will of His eternal Father. **It is very important then, my dear ones, that you seek to see clearly, so as not to labor in**

occupations which the Lord does not will for you. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 422)

Detach yourselves form earthly things to rise toward heaven

My sons, **detach yourselves from earthly things**. Imitate the little birds when they want to leave the nest. They start to leave the edge of the nest, they flap their little wings, they try to lift into the air, testing their strength. So also should you: flap your wings a little to rise toward heaven... **Begin with little things, with what is necessary for your eternal salvation**. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 412)

The world is most ungrateful. Do not expect recompense form the world, but only from God

Young people, accustom yourselves to saying to the devil: I cannot, I have only one soul! **This is true Christian logic**. Because of this purity of intention, do that which pleases God, obey God. The benefit is: **the world is most ungrateful**, it is impossible to keep it happy; **the best counsel that can be given is to not expect recompense form the world, but only from God**. (Saint John Bosco. *Biografía y escritos (Biography and Writings)*, Second edition, Madrid: BAC, 1967, pg. 410-411)

SAINT AMBROSE OF MILAN

There is no danger more hidden than the sweet pleasures of the world

But what sea is more cruel than our fickle world? What sea so changeable, so deep, so swiftly stirred by the breath of impure spirits? [...] **I assure you that there is no danger more hidden than the sweet pleasures of the world**. While charming and seducing the soul, they destroy you, and – so to speak – dash to pieces your mind and your intelligence on the rocks of bodily pleasure. (Saint Ambrose of Milan. *Commentary of Saint Ambrose of Milan on the Gospel according to Saint Luke*, Book IV, no. 3, pg. 91)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The things of this life are like smoke

Do you see not even the eyes of the body, that when they abide in smoke they are always weeping; but when they are in clear air, and in a meadow, and in fountains and gardens, they become more quick sighted and more healthy? Like this is the soul's eye also, for should it feed in the meadow of spiritual oracles, it will be clear and piercing, and quick of sight; **but should it depart into the smoke of the things of this life, it will weep without end, and wail both now and hereafter**. For indeed the things of this life are like smoke. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 2 on Saint Matthew*)

BENEDICT XVI

What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy

I hope that among those of you listening to me today there are some of the future saints of the twenty-first century. **What God wants most of all for each one of you is that you should become holy**. He loves you much more than you could ever begin to imagine, and he wants the very best for you. And **by far the best thing for you is to grow in holiness**. Perhaps some of you have never thought about this before. Perhaps some of you think being a saint is not for you. Let me explain what I mean. When we are young, we can usually think of people that we look up to, people we admire, people we want to be like. It could be someone we meet in our daily lives that we hold in great esteem. Or it could be someone famous. We live in a celebrity culture, and young people are often encouraged to model themselves on figures from the world of sport or entertainment. My question for you is this: what are the qualities you see in others that you would most like to have yourselves? What kind of person would you really like to be? **When I invite you to become saints, I am asking you not to be content with second best. I am asking you not to pursue one limited goal and ignore all the others**. Having money makes it possible to be generous and to do good in the world, but on its own, it is not enough to make us happy. Being highly skilled in some activity or profession is good, but it will not satisfy us unless we aim for something greater

still. It might make us famous, but it will not make us happy. **Happiness is something we all want, but one of the great tragedies in this world is that so many people never find it, because they look for it in the wrong places.** The key to it is very simple – true happiness is to be found in God. **We need to have the courage to place our deepest hopes in God alone,** not in money, in a career, in worldly success, or in our relationships with others, but in God. **Only he can satisfy the deepest needs of our hearts.** (Benedict XVI. *Address to pupils for the Celebration of Catholic Education*, September 17, 2010)

V – THE CHURCH IS CALLED TO EVANGELIZE CULTURE

PAUL VI

Cultures are to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel

The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, are certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures, **the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them.** The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. **Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture,** or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. **But this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed.** (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 20, December 8, 1975)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Church has used the discoveries of different cultures to spread the message of Christ to all nations

There are many ties between the message

of salvation and human culture. For God, revealing Himself to His people to the extent of a full manifestation of Himself in His Incarnate Son, has spoken according to the culture proper to each epoch. Likewise **the Church,** living in various circumstances in the course of time, **has used the discoveries of different cultures so that in her preaching she might spread and explain the message of Christ to all nations, that she might examine it and more deeply understand it, that she might give it better expression in liturgical celebration and in the varied life of the community of the faithful.** [...] **The Gospel of Christ constantly renews the life and culture of fallen man,** it combats and removes the errors and evils resulting from the permanent allurements of sin. **It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. By riches coming from above, it makes fruitful, as it were from within, the spiritual qualities and traditions of every people of every age.** It strengthens, perfects and restores them in Christ. Thus the Church, in the very fulfillment of her own function, stimulates and advances human and civic culture; by her action, also by her liturgy, she leads them toward interior liberty. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 58, December 7, 1965)

A contribution that elevates the human family to a more sublime understanding of truth, goodness, and beauty

Christians, on pilgrimage toward the heavenly city, should seek and think of these things which are above. This duty in no way decreases, rather it increases, the importance of their obligation to work with all men in the building of a more human world. **Indeed, the mystery of the Christian faith furnishes them with an excellent stimulant and aid to fulfill this duty more courageously and especially to uncover the full meaning of this activity, one which gives to human culture its eminent place in the integral vocation of man.** [...] Furthermore, when man gives himself to the various disciplines of philosophy, history and of mathematical and natural science, and when he cultivates the arts, **he can do very much to elevate the human family to a more sublime understanding of truth, goodness, and beauty, and to the formation of considered opinions which have universal value.** Thus

mankind may be more clearly enlightened by that marvelous Wisdom which was with God from all eternity, composing all things with him, rejoicing in the earth, delighting in the sons of men. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 57, December 7, 1965)

PIUS XI

It is the inalienable right of the Church to watch over the education of her children

Therefore with full right the Church promotes letters, science, art in so far as necessary or helpful to Christian education, in addition to her work for the salvation of souls: founding and maintaining schools and institutions adapted to every branch of learning and degree of culture (*Codex Iuris Canonici*, c. 1375). Nor may even physical culture, as it is called, be considered outside the range of her maternal supervision, for the reason that it also is a means which may help or harm Christian

education. [...] Again it is the inalienable right as well as the indispensable duty of the Church, to watch over the entire education of her children, in all institutions, public or private, not merely in regard to the religious instruction there given, but in regard to every other branch of learning and every regulation in so far as religion and morality are concerned (*Cod. I.C.*, cc. 1381, 1382). Nor should the exercise of this right be considered undue interference, but rather maternal care on the part of the Church in protecting her children from the grave danger of all kinds of doctrinal and moral evil. Moreover this watchfulness of the Church not merely can create no real inconvenience, but must on the contrary confer valuable assistance in the right ordering and well-being of families and of civil society; for it keeps far away from youth the moral poison which at that inexperienced and changeable age more easily penetrates the mind and more rapidly spreads its baneful effects. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius Magistri*, no. 21. 23-24, December 31, 1929)

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‘New Hymn for Peace’ – Encounter is the Bridge to Peace

‘We looked for peace, but no good came, for a time of healing, but behold, terror’ (Jer 8:15). Who does not long for peace? But... how to achieve it in a world agitated by numerous and complex problems? Centuries before the birth of Our Lord, Isaiah had already prophesied that he would be the ‘Prince of Peace’ (Is 9:6). Just as their Master did, the Apostles – above all Saint Paul – always offered peace to their listeners and to the recipients of their letters. And, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Holy Mother Church has always discerned how to guide the peoples under her mantle along the paths of peace, according to the definition of the great Saint Augustine: *pax tranquillitas ordinis* – peace is the tranquility of order (De Civitate Dei, XIX, 13).

Yes, ‘the tranquility of order’, because order is the proper disposition of things according to their purpose, and the purpose of all human beings is to return to God, from whence he came. Therefore, any effort made to achieve peace which forgets God... would be in vain. As the prophet expressed, no good comes of it, and the terror only increases.

While voices don’t cease to cry out – and what voices! – in favor of a peace that forgets what is the place due to God, it will greatly benefit us to delve into the enduring teachings of the Church regarding true peace.

FRANCIS

Text of the New Hymn for Peace, with the words of Pope Francis

(Until the English version is released, the official Spanish version will be used here with a literal translation alongside)

Este mensaje es de luz y esperanza (This message is of light and hope)

Luz que atraviesa la oscuridad (Light that pierces the darkness)

Nunca dejes que determine tu vida el pasado (Never let the past determine your life)

Mira siempre adelante (Always look ahead)

El futuro está en tu mente, (The future is in your mind)

En tus manos y en tu corazón (In your hands and in your heart)

Coro (Chorus):

Para que todos sean uno (**That all may be one**)

Ya no existen los muros (**There are no more walls**)

Solo el valor del encuentro (**Only the value of encounter**)

Que es el puente hacia la Paz (**Which is the bridge to Peace**)

Para que todos sean uno (**That all may be one**)

La unidad es el camino (**Unity is the way**)

Una alianza siempre abierta (**An alliance always open**)

Al amor y a la verdad (**To love and to truth**)

Cuando te encuentres ante el dolor (When you are before suffering)

Tienes que hacer lo que el corazón pide (Do what your heart asks)

Porque los gestos más auténticos (Since the most authentic gestures)

Son los que solos vienen (Are those that come alone)

El futuro está en tu mente (The future is in your mind)

En tus manos y en tu corazón (In your hands and in your heart)

Coro (Chorus):

Para que todos sean uno (**That all may be one**)

Ya no existen los muros (**There are no more walls**)

Solo el valor del encuentro (**Only the value of encounter**)

Que es el puente hacia la Paz (**Which is the bridge to Peace**)

No renuncies a la identidad (Do not renounce your identity)

Para vivir en armonía (To live in harmony)

Para que todos sean uno (**That all may be one**)

La unidad es el camino (**Unity is the way**)

Una alianza siempre abierta (**An alliance always open**)

Al amor y a la verdad (**To love and to truth**) (*Text: Odino Faccia. Source: Aleteia*)

‘Para Que Todos Sean Uno’ (So We Can All Be One) is the new ‘Hymn for Peace,’ and will be edited in four languages: Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and English. The song [in Spanish] is already available at all distributors. Odino has been working for years in different humanitarian causes, and was elected in 2009 as the ‘Voice for Peace in the World’ by 23 international organisms. (*Odino Faccia*)

‘So We Can All Be One,’ distributed by Sony music, is currently available only in Spanish, but Faccia said versions are currently being produced in English, Italian, Polish, Arabic, and Portuguese. According to Faccia, Pope Francis reported to him that he ‘really liked the song.’ (*Crux*)

Regarding ‘So We Can All Be One,’ Odino Faccia comments: ‘**We made a selection of various texts of Francis**; the hymn has a clear objective – its title says a lot’ (*Vatican Radio*, April 7, 2015).

A Vatican spokesman told CBS News on Tuesday that **the pope saw the lyrics in advance and gave them his stamp of approval. Faccia performed the song to a huge audience in Saint Peter’s Square following Palm Sunday Mass on March 30, 2014. He told Italian media that the pope said he liked the performance. Faccia told Italian media that it was the pope himself who asked him to write a song dedicated to peace, using the pontiff’s own words.** (*CBS News*)

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I – DOES PEACE COME FROM THE WORLD OR FROM THE HUMAN BEING?

SACRED SCRIPTURES

Virtue favors peace

When the Lord is pleased with a man's ways, he makes even his enemies be at peace with him. (Prov 16:7)

Wisdom: a way to live in peace

Happy the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding! Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. (Prov 3:13.17)

Love for the law of God is a font of peace

Great peace have those who love thy law; nothing can make them stumble. (Ps 119:165)

Conflicts originate in human passions

Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask. You ask but do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. Adulterers! Do you not know that to be a lover of the world means enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wants to be a lover of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you suppose that the scripture speaks without meaning when it says, 'The spirit that he has made to dwell in us tends toward jealousy'? But he bestows a greater grace; therefore, it says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' So submit yourselves to God. Resist

the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you of two minds. Begin to lament, to mourn, to weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. (Jas 4:1-10)

Christ is our peace: He has made us members of the family of God

For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh, abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it. He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near, for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone. (Eph 2:14-20)

God wished to reconcile all things by the Blood of His Cross

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things for him, making peace by the blood of his cross (through him), whether those on earth or those in heaven. (Col 1:17-20)

PIUS XII

Just and lasting peace may only be obtained through the Law of Christ, font of justice

Meanwhile, in accordance with your office, give notice to the faithful of this our paternal invitation; recall to them once more from what principles a just and lasting peace may issue and by what means it must be sought. Indeed, as you well know, it can only be obtained from the principles and norms dictated by Christ and put into practice with sincere piety. Such principles and norms, in fact, recall men to truth, justice and charity; they put a restraint on their unruly desires; they force the senses to be obedient to reason; they move the reason to obey God; they produce this effect, that all men, even those who are rulers of the peoples, may recognize the freedom that is due to religion, which, beyond its primary purpose of leading souls to eternal salvation, has also another, of safeguarding and protecting the very foundations of the State. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summu maeroris*, On Public Prayers for Peace, no. 9, July 19 1950)

The true path has been lost due to a distancing from Jesus Christ both in private and public life

Let all remember that the flood of evil and disaster that has over-taken the world in past years was due chiefly to the fact that the divine religion of Jesus Christ, that provider of mutual charity among citizens, peoples and nations, did not govern, as it should, private, domestic and public life. If things have gone wrong on account of the desertion from Christ, public and private life must return to Him as soon as possible: if error has clouded the minds of men, they must return to that truth which, revealed from on high, indicates the right way to heaven: if hatred has brought them fatal results, they must return to Christian love which alone can heal their many wounds, and carry them over the crisis so filled with danger. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Optatissima pax*, no. 7, December 18, 1947)

BENEDICT XVI

Without an acceptance of God there will be no peace for humanity

Consequently, it is essential that we should all be committed to living our lives in an attitude of responsibility before God, acknowledging him as the deepest source of our own existence and that of others. By going back to this supreme principle we are able to perceive the unconditional worth of each human being, and thus to lay the premises for building a humanity at peace. Without this transcendent foundation society is a mere aggregation of neighbours, not a community of brothers and sisters called to form one great family. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the Celebration of the 41st World Day of Peace*, no. 6, January 1, 2008)

Peace is a gift of God that demands a personal response consistent with God's plan

Likewise, peace is both gift and task. If it is true that peace between individuals and peoples-the ability to live together and to build relationships of justice and solidarity-calls for unflinching commitment on our part, it is also true, and indeed more so, that peace is a gift from God. Peace is an aspect of God's activity, made manifest both in the creation of an orderly and harmonious universe and also in the redemption of humanity that needs to be rescued from the disorder of sin. Creation and Redemption thus provide a key that helps us begin to understand the meaning of our life on earth. My venerable predecessor Pope John Paul II, addressing the General Assembly of the United Nations on October 5, 1995, stated that 'we do not live in an irrational or meaningless world... there is a moral logic which is built into human life and which makes possible dialogue between individuals and peoples.' The transcendent 'grammar', that is to say the body of rules for individual action and the reciprocal relationships of persons in accordance with justice and solidarity, is inscribed on human consciences, in which the wise plan of God is reflected. As I recently had occasion to reaffirm: 'we believe that at the beginning of everything is the Eternal Word, Reason and not Unreason.' Peace is thus also a task

demanding of everyone a personal response consistent with God's plan. The criterion inspiring this response can only be respect for the 'grammar' written on human hearts by the divine Creator. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the Celebration of the 40th World Day of Peace*, January 1, 2007)

PIUS XI

Jesus Christ brought the solution for peace in the world: the only worthwhile effort in favor of true peace is to restore the Kingdom of Christ

First and most important of all, for mankind is the need of spiritual peace. We do not need a peace that will consist merely in acts of external or formal courtesy, but a peace which will penetrate the souls of men and which will unite, heal, and reopen their hearts to that mutual affection which is born of brotherly love. **The peace of Christ is the only peace answering this description:** 'Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts.' (Col 3:15) Nor is there any other peace possible than that which Christ gave to His disciples (Jn 14:27) for since He is God, He 'beholdeth the heart' (1Kings 16:7) and in our hearts His kingdom is set up. **Again, Jesus Christ is perfectly justified when He calls this peace of soul His own** for He was the first Who said to men, 'all you are brethren.' (Mt 23: 8) He gave likewise to us, sealing it with His own life's blood, the law of brotherly love, of mutual forbearance - 'This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.' (John 15:12) 'Bear ye one another's burdens; and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ.' (Gal 6:2) [...]

Of this peace of Christ, which dwells in our hearts and is, in effect, the love of God, we can repeat what the Apostle has said of the kingdom of God which also rules by love - 'the kingdom of Christ is not meat and drink.' (Rom 14:17) In other words, the peace of Christ is not nourished on the things of earth, but on those of heaven. Nor could it well be otherwise, since it is Jesus Christ Who has revealed to the world the existence of spiritual values and has obtained for them their due appreciation. He has said, 'For what doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?' (Mt 16:26) He also taught us a divine

lesson of courage and constancy when He said, 'Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell.' (Mt 10:28, Lk 12:14) [...] **This peace of Christ**, however, surpasses all human understanding - 'the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding' (Phil 4:7), and for this very reason **dominates our sinful passions and renders such evils** as division, strife, and discord, which He was the first Who said to men, 'all earthly possessions, impossible. **If the desire for worldly possessions were kept within bounds and the place of honor in our affections given to the things of the spirit, which place undoubtedly they deserve, the peace of Christ would follow immediately**, to which would be joined in a natural and happy union, as it were, a higher regard for the value and dignity of human life. Human personality, too, would be raised to a higher level, for man has been ennobled by the Blood of Christ and made kin to God Himself. [...] We have already seen and come to the conclusion that the principal cause of the confusion, restlessness, and dangers which are so prominent a characteristic of false peace is the weakening of the binding force of law and lack of respect for authority, effects which logically follow upon denial of the truth that authority comes from God, the Creator and Universal Law-giver. The only remedy for such state of affairs is the peace of Christ since the peace of Christ is the peace of God, which could not exist if it did not enjoin respect for law, order, and the rights of authority. In the Holy Scriptures We read: 'My children, keep discipline in peace.' (Sir 41:17) [...] Jesus Christ very expressly states: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's.' (Mt 22: 21) He even recognized that Pilate possessed authority from on High (Jn 14:11) as he acknowledged that the scribes and Pharisees who though unworthy sat in the chair of Moses (Mt 23: 2) [...] **If we stop to reflect for a moment that these ideals and doctrines of Jesus Christ, for example, his teachings on the necessity and value of the spiritual life, on the dignity and sanctity of human life, on the duty of obedience, on the divine basis of human government, on the sacramental character of matrimony and by consequence the sanctity of family life - if we stop to reflect, let Us repeat, that these ideals and doctrines of Christ (which are in fact but a portion of the**

treasury of truth which He left to mankind) were confided by Him to His Church and to her alone for safekeeping, and that He has promised that His aid will never fail her at any time for she is the infallible teacher of His doctrines in every century and before all nations, there is no one who cannot clearly see what a singularly important role the Catholic Church is able to play, and is even called upon to assume, in providing a remedy for the ills which afflict the world today and in leading mankind toward a universal peace. [...] Since the Church is the safe and sure guide to conscience, for to her safe-keeping alone there has been confided the doctrines and the promise of the assistance of Christ, she is able not only to bring about at the present hour a peace that is truly the peace of Christ, but can, better than any other agency which We know of, contribute greatly to the securing of the same peace for the future. [...] **An attempt in this direction has already and is now being made; its results, however, are almost negligible and, especially so, as far as they can be said to affect those major questions which divide seriously and serve to arouse nations one against the other. No merely human institution of today can be as successful in devising a set of international laws which will be in harmony with world conditions. [...] There exists an institution able to safeguard the sanctity of the law of nations.** This institution is a part of every nation; at the same time it is above all nations. She enjoys, too, the highest authority, the fullness of the teaching power of the Apostles. Such an institution is the Church of Christ. **She alone is adapted to do this great work, for she is not only divinely commissioned to lead mankind, but moreover, because of her very make-up and the constitution which she possesses, by reason of her age-old traditions and her great prestige, which has not been lessened but has been greatly increased since the close of the War, cannot but succeed in such a venture where others assuredly will fail.** It is apparent from these considerations that true peace, the peace of Christ, is impossible unless we are willing and ready to accept the fundamental principles of Christianity, unless we are willing to observe the teachings and obey the law of Christ, both in public and private life. If this were done, then society being placed at last on a sound foundation, the Church would be able, in the exercise of its divinely given

ministry and by means of the teaching authority which results therefrom, to protect all the rights of God over men and nations. [...] **It is, therefore, a fact which cannot be questioned that the true peace of Christ can only exist in the Kingdom of Christ – ‘the peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ.’ It is no less unquestionable that, in doing all we can to bring about the re-establishment of Christ’s kingdom, we will be working most effectively toward a lasting world peace.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Ubi arcano Dei consilio*, On the Peace of Christ, no. 33.36.38.39.40.41.44.45.46-47.49, December 23, 1922)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Since peace is the fruit of charity, without grace true peace cannot exist

Peace implies a twofold union, as stated above. The first is the result of one’s own appetites being directed to one object; while the other results from one’s own appetite being united with the appetite of another: and each of these unions is effected by charity – the first, in so far as man loves God with his whole heart, by referring all things to Him, so that all his desires tend to one object – the second, in so far as we love our neighbor as ourselves, the result being that we wish to fulfil our neighbor’s will as though it were ours. Without sin no one falls from a state of sanctifying grace, for it turns man away from his due end by making him place his end in something undue: so that his appetite does not cleave chiefly to the true final good, but to some apparent good. Hence, **without sanctifying grace, peace is not real but merely apparent.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q.29, a.3)

II – IS A PEACE WITHOUT BARRIERS THE PEACE OF JESUS CHRIST?

SACRED SCRIPTURES

Jesus Christ brings division and foretold the hatred toward those who follow Him

Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set

a man 'against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's enemies will be those of his household. (Mt 10:34-36)

Jesus Christ brings division even within families

Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. (Lk 12:51-53)

The peace of Christ is unlike the peace of the world

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. (Jn 14: 27)

The world has hatred for those who are of Jesus Christ

If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. (Jn 15:18-19)

The danger of gathering together with sinners

But I now write to you not to associate with anyone named a brother, if he is immoral, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a robber, not even to eat with such a person. For why should I be judging outsiders? Is it not your business to judge those within? God will judge those outside. Purge the evil person from your midst. (1Cor 5:9-13)

A heretic is not united to God and one should flee from such persons in order not to become guilty of complicity with them

Anyone who is so 'progressive' as not to

remain in the teaching of the Christ does not have God; whoever remains in the teaching has the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him in your house or even greet him; for whoever greets him shares in his evil works. (2Jn 9-11)

JOHN PAUL II

Jesus does not simply give peace -rather, He gives His peace, which demands order and truth

Justice goes hand in hand with peace and is permanently and actively linked to peace. Justice and peace seek the good of one and all, and for this reason they demand order and truth. When one is threatened, both falter; when justice is offended, peace is also placed in jeopardy. [...] By virtue of their faith in the God who is love and of their sharing in Christ's universal redemption, Christians are called to act justly and to live in peace with all, for 'Jesus does not merely give us peace. He gives us his Peace accompanied by his Justice. He is Peace and Justice. He becomes our Peace and our Justice'. I said these words almost twenty years ago, but against the backdrop of the radical changes now taking place they assume an even more specific and vital meaning. [...] The heart of the Gospel message is Christ, who is everyone's peace and reconciliation. (John Paul II. *Message for the Celebration of the XXXI World Day of Peace*, no. 1.8.9, January 1, 1998)

PIUS XI

With respect to imprudent pan-Christians remember that Saint John prohibited contact with all those who do not hold the true doctrine

These pan-Christians who turn their minds to uniting the churches seem, indeed, to pursue the noblest of ideas in promoting charity among all Christians: nevertheless how does it happen that this charity tends to injure faith? Everyone knows that John himself, the Apostle of love, who seems to reveal in his Gospel the secrets of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and who never ceased to impress on the memories of his followers

the new commandment ‘Love one another,’ altogether forbade any intercourse with those who professed a mutilated and corrupt version of Christ’s teaching: ‘If any man come to you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into the house nor say to him: God speed you.’ For which reason, since charity is based on a complete and sincere faith, the disciples of Christ must be united principally by the bond of one faith. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 9, January 6, 1928)

PIUS IX

The word of perpetual conciliation loses all things under the pretext of saving all

In these times of confusion and disorder, it is not unusual to see Christians, Catholics – even within the secular clergy and cloisters – who constantly have a word of conformity, of conciliation and negotiation on their lips. Very well! I do not hesitate to declare: these men are in error, and do not consider them to be the lesser enemies of the Church. We live in a corrupt and pestilent atmosphere and we must know how to preserve ourselves from it. Let us not allow ourselves to be contaminated by false doctrines, which lose all things under the pretext of saving all. (Pius IX. *Speech in the Church of Aracoeli*, September 17, 1861)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Those who love the world delude themselves with false peace in order to enjoy their beloved world

But when the Lord proceeded to say, ‘Not as the world gives, give I unto you,’ what else does He mean but, Not as those give who love the world, give I unto you? For their aim in giving themselves peace is that, exempt from the annoyance of lawsuits and wars, they may find enjoyment, not in God, but in the friendship of the world; and although they give the righteous peace, in ceasing to persecute them, there can be no true peace where there is no real harmony, because their hearts are at variance. For as one is called a consort who unites his lot (sortem) with another, so may he be termed concordant whose heart has entered into a similar union.

Let us, therefore, beloved, with whom Christ leaves peace, and to whom He gives His own peace, not after the world’s way, but in a way worthy of Him by whom the world was made, that we should be of one heart with Himself, **having our hearts run into one**, that this one heart, set on that which is above, may escape the corruption of the earth. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Tractate 77 on the Gospel of Saint John*, no.5)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Relativistic theories consider the missionary proclamation of the Church to be dangerous to peace

However, the Church’s ‘missionary proclamation is endangered today by relativistic theories which seek to justify religious pluralism, not only de facto but also de iure (or in principle)’ (cf. *Dominus Jesus*, no. 4). For a long time, the reason for evangelization has not been clear to many among the Catholic faithful (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 80). It is even stated that the claim to have received the gift of the fullness of God’s revelation masks an attitude of intolerance and a danger to peace. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, no.10, December 3, 2007)

III – DOES ENCOUNTER PRODUCE ONLY GOOD RESULTS ALWAYS?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The danger of harming one’s own faith

Do you not know that a little yeast leavens all the dough? (1Cor 5:6)

PAUL VI

The apostolate is under constant fire – obligation of the apostle to remain unaffected by errors

But the danger remains. **Indeed, the worker in the apostolate is under constant fire. The desire to come together as brothers must not**

lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth. Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith. Our apostolate must not make vague compromises concerning the principles which regulate and govern the profession of the Christian faith both in theory and in practice. An immoderate desire to make peace and sink differences at all costs (irenism and syncretism) is ultimately nothing more than skepticism about the power and content of the Word of God which we desire to preach. The effective apostle is the man who is completely faithful to Christ's teaching. **He alone can remain unaffected by the errors of the world around him, the man who lives his Christian life to the full.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*. no. 88, August 6, 1964)

The imminent peril of becoming lost in the midst of the present transformations obliges one to deepen knowledge of the Church according to Scripture and Tradition

But we also know that the modern world is in the grip of change and upheaval. **It is undergoing developments** which are having a profound influence on its outward way of life and habits of thought. The great advances made in science, technology, and social life, and the various currents of philosophical and political thought pervading modern society, are greatly influencing men's opinions and their spiritual and cultural pursuits. **The Church itself is being engulfed and shaken by this tidal wave of change, for however much men may be committed to the Church, they are deeply affected by the climate of the world. They run the risk of becoming confused, bewildered and alarmed, and this is a state of affairs which strikes at the very roots of the Church. It drives many people to adopt the most outlandish views. They imagine that the Church should abdicate its proper role, and adopt an entirely new and unprecedented mode of existence. [...]** An effective remedy is needed if all these dangers, which are prevalent in many quarters, are to be obviated, and We believe that such a remedy is to be found in an increased self-awareness on the part of the Church. The Church must get a clearer idea of what it really is in the mind of Jesus Christ as recorded and preserved in Sacred Scripture and in Apostolic Tradition,

and interpreted and explained by the tradition of the Church under the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 26, August 6, 1964)

PIUS XII

Even under the pretext of promoting unity one may not hide the truth

Even on the plea of promoting unity it is not allowed to dissemble one single dogma; for, as the Patriarch of Alexandria warns us, 'although the desire of peace is a noble and excellent thing, yet we must not for its sake neglect the virtue of loyalty in Christ.' (Pius XII. *Encyclical Orientalis ecclesiae*, no. 16, April 9, 1944).

PIUS XI

In order to attract the multitudes, the enemies of the Church invite Catholics to collaborate with them in the realms of 'humanitarianism', charity and peace

In the beginning Communism showed itself for what it was in all its perversity; but very soon it realized that it was thus alienating the people. **It has therefore changed its tactics, and strives to entice the multitudes by trickery of various forms, hiding its real designs behind ideas that in themselves are good and attractive. Thus, aware of the universal desire for peace, the leaders of Communism pretend to be the most zealous promoters and propagandists in the movement for world amity.** Yet at the same time they stir up a class-warfare which causes rivers of blood to flow, and, realizing that their system offers no internal guarantee of peace, they have recourse to unlimited armaments. Under various names which do not suggest Communism, they establish organizations and periodicals with the sole purpose of carrying their ideas into quarters otherwise inaccessible. **They try perfidiously to worm their way even into professedly Catholic and religious organizations. Again, without receding an inch from their subversive principles, they invite Catholics to collaborate with them in the realm of so-called humanitarianism and charity; and at times even make proposals that are in perfect harmony with the Christian spirit and the doctrine of the**

Church. [...] See to it, Venerable Brethren, that the Faithful do not allow themselves to be deceived! Communism is intrinsically wrong, and no one who would save Christian civilization may collaborate with it in any undertaking whatsoever. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 57-58, March 19, 1937)

PIUS IX

Christian charity demands that those separated from the Catholic Church be rescued from darkness and errors

God forbid that **the children of the Catholic Church** should even in any way be unfriendly to those who are not at all united to us by the same bonds of faith and love. On the contrary, **let them be eager always to attend to their needs with all the kind services of Christian charity, whether they are poor or sick or suffering any other kind of visitation. First of all, let them rescue them from the darkness of the errors into which they have unhappily fallen and strive to guide them back to Catholic truth and to their most loving Mother** who is ever holding out her maternal arms to receive them lovingly back into her fold. Thus, firmly founded in faith, hope, and charity and fruitful in every good work, they will gain eternal salvation. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Quanto conficiamur moerore*, no. 9, August 10, 1863)

Those who attract the imprudent friends of conciliation are more dangerous than declared enemies

Even though **the sons of this world are wiser than the sons of light (Lk 16:8), their malevolence and aggression would have been less effective if it were not for the help offered by many friendly hands of the Catholic flock.** It wouldn't have been as easy, as they had wished, to join the same bandwagon, to struggle to unite light and darkness and to make iniquity partake with justice, if it wasn't for the so-called liberal-catholic doctrines, which, based on the most pernicious principles, have given advantages to the lay power at the same moment in which the latter intruded into the spiritual dominion, inclining the spirit to submission, or at least to tolerance, before the

most iniquitous laws, as though it had not been written that 'no servant can serve two masters' (Lk 16:13). **This type of people are, without any doubt, more dangerous and injurious than declared enemies, for, without calling attention and without, perhaps, putting themselves on guard, they go along with the manoeuvres of the latter.** On the other hand, maintaining themselves just within the limits of clearly condemned opinions, they give the impression of an irreproachable doctrine thus attracting the imprudent adherers of reconciliation and deceiving honest people who would reject declared error. In this way spirits are divided, unity is destroyed, and the strength of those who should be united against the adversary is weakened. (Pius IX. *Letter Per tristissima*, March 6, 1873)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The simple faithful should not communicate With unbelievers for fear of their own perversion

I answer that, **Communication with a particular person is forbidden to the faithful, in two ways: first, as a punishment of the person with whom they are forbidden to communicate; secondly, for the safety of those who are forbidden to communicate with others.** Both motives can be gathered from the Apostle's words. [...] With regard to the second way, **it seems that one ought to distinguish according to the various conditions of persons, circumstances and time.** For some are firm in the faith; and so it is to be hoped that their communicating with unbelievers will lead to the conversion of the latter rather than to the aversion of the faithful from the faith. These are not to be forbidden to communicate with unbelievers who have not received the faith, such as pagans or Jews, especially if there be some urgent necessity for so doing. **But in the case of simple people and those who are weak in the faith, whose perversion is to be feared as a probable result, they should be forbidden to communicate with unbelievers, and especially to be on very familiar terms with them, or to communicate with them without necessity.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q.10, a.9)

IV – THE SERIOUS DUTY OF PREACHING THE TRUE DOCTRINE REGARDING PEACE AND ITS RELATION TO GOD

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The serious duty of being entirely united to Our Lord Jesus Christ

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. (Mt 12:30, Lk 11:23)

Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!

If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship. (1Cor 9:16-17)

How may one believe if no one preaches?

But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? [...] Thus faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. (Rom 10:14.17)

If the Word of God is not proclaimed, people will cease to hear the truth and be diverted to myths

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: **proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. But you, be self-possessed in all circumstances; put up with hardship; perform the work of an evangelist; fulfill your ministry.** (2Tim 4:1-5)

VATICAN COUNCIL I (ECUMENICAL XX)

The Church has the duty to ban error so that no one go astray

Further, the Church which, together with the apostolic duty of teaching, has received the command to guard the deposit of faith, has also, from divine Providence, the right and duty of proscribing 'knowledge falsely so called' (1Tm 6:20), 'lest anyone be cheated by philosophy and vain deceit' (cf. Col 2:8). (Denzinger-Hünemann 3018. Vatican Council I, Session III, Dogmatic constitution Dei Filius, on the Catholic Faith, April 24, 1870)

PIUS X

Peace will only come about through the light of reason directed by the knowledge of divine

We are forced to agree with those who hold that the chief cause of the present indifference and, as it were, infirmity of soul, and the serious evils that result from it, is to be found above all in ignorance of things divine. This is fully in accord with what God Himself declared through the Prophet Hosea: 'And there is no knowledge of God in the land. Cursing and lying and killing and theft and adultery have overflowed: and blood hath touched blood. Thereafter shall the land mourn, and everyone that dwelleth in it shall languish.' (Hos 4:1-3) [...] We are forced to agree with those who hold that the chief cause of the present indifference and, as it were, infirmity of soul, and the serious evils morality and every uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as become saints; or obscenity or foolish talk.' (Eph 5:34) He also places the foundation of holiness and sound morals upon a knowledge of divine things – which holds in check evil desires: 'See to it therefore, brethren, that you walk with care: not as unwise but as wise. . . Therefore, do not become foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.' (Eph 5:15-16) [...] **And rightly so. For the will of man retains but little of that divinely implanted love of virtue and righteousness by which it was, as it were, attracted strongly toward the real and not merely apparent good. Disordered by the stain of the first sin, and almost forgetful of God,**

its Author, it improperly turns every affection to a love of vanity and deceit. This erring will, blinded by its own evil desires, has need therefore of a guide to lead it back to the paths of justice whence it has so unfortunately strayed. The intellect itself is this guide, which need not be sought elsewhere, but is provided by nature itself. It is a guide, though, that, if it lack its companion light, the knowledge of divine things, will be only an instance of the blind leading the blind so that both will fall into the pit [...] **The truly remarkable dignity of man as the son of the heavenly Father, in Whose image he is formed, and with Whom he is destined to live in eternal happiness, is also revealed only by the doctrine of Jesus Christ. From this very dignity, and from man's knowledge of it, Christ showed that men should love one another as brothers, and should live here as become children of light, 'not of revelry and drunkenness, not in debauchery and wantonness, not in strife and jealousy.'** (Rom 13:13) He also bids us to place all our anxiety and care in the hands of God, for He will provide for us; **He tells us to help the poor, to do good to those who hate us, and to prefer the eternal welfare of the soul to the temporal goods of this life. [...]** The will cannot be upright nor the conduct good when the mind is shrouded in the darkness of crass ignorance. A man who walks with open eyes may, indeed, turn aside from the right path, but a blind man is in much more imminent danger of wandering away. (Saint Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 1, 3-5, April 15, 1905)

The gravest duty of the pastor is to instruct the faithful

We must now consider upon whom rests the obligation to dissipate this most pernicious ignorance and to impart in its stead the knowledge that is wholly indispensable. There can be no doubt, Venerable Brethren, that **this most important duty rests upon all who are pastors of souls. On them, by command of Christ, rest the obligations of knowing and of feeding the flocks committed to their care; and to feed implies, first of all, to teach.** 'I will give you pastors according to my own heart,' God promised through Jeremiah, 'and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine.' (Jer 3:15) Hence the Apostle Paul said: 'Christ

did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel,' (1Cor 1:17) thereby indicating that **the first duty of all those who are entrusted in any way with the government of the Church is to instruct the faithful in the things of God. [...]** If, assuredly, the alms with which we relieve the needs of the poor are highly praised by the Lord, how much more precious in His eyes, then, will be the zeal and labor expended in teaching and admonishing, by which we provide not for the passing needs of the body but for the eternal profit of the soul! [...] **Here then it is well to emphasize and insist that for a priest there is no duty more grave or obligation more binding than this.** Who, indeed, will deny that knowledge should be joined to holiness of life in the priest? 'For the lips of the priest shall keep knowledge.' (Mal 2:7) **For this reason the Council of Trent, treating of the duties of pastors of souls, decreed that their first and most important work is the instruction of the faithful.** (Sess. V, cap. 2, De Reform.; Sess. XXII, cap. 8; Sess. XXIV, cap. 4 & 7, De Reform.) Thus wrote the Apostle: 'Faith then depends on hearing, and hearing on the word of Christ'; (Rom 10:17) and to show the necessity of instruction, he added, 'How are they to hear, if no one preaches?' (Rom 10:14). (Saint Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 7-9, April 15, 1905)

GREGORY I, THE GREAT

He who refuses to feed the flock of God does not love the Supreme Shepherd

For hence it was that the Truth said to His disciples: 'A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid: neither do they light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house'. (Mt 5:15) Hence He says to Peter: 'Simon, Son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?' (Jn 15:16-17); and he, when he had at once answered that he loved, was told: 'If thou lovest Me, feed My sheep.' **If, then, the care of feeding is the proof of loving, whosoever abounds in virtues, and yet refuses to feed the flock of God, is convicted of not loving the chief Shepherd.** (Gregory I, the Great. *Pastoral Rule*, Book I, ch.V)

JOHN PAUL II

Blurring the boundaries between the Church and the world constitutes a grave error

The underlying question concerns the relationship between the Church and the world. [...] The advanced secularization of society brings with it a tendency to blur the boundaries between the Church and the world. Certain aspects of the prevailing culture are allowed to condition the Christian community in ways which the Gospel does not permit. [...] This often goes hand in hand with an uncritical approach to the problem of moral evil, and a reluctance to recognize the reality of sin and the need for forgiveness. This attitude embodies a too optimistic view of modernity, together with an uneasiness about the Cross and its implications for Christian living. The past is too easily dismissed, and the horizontal is so stressed that the sense of the supernatural grows weak. (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of Australia on their ad limina visit*, no. 3, December 14, 1998)

The constant temptation to seek an illusionary liberty outside of the truth

As a result of that mysterious original sin, committed at the prompting of Satan, the one who is 'a liar and the father of lies' (Jn 8:44), man is constantly tempted to turn his gaze away from the living and true God in order to direct it towards idols (cf. 1 Thes 1:9), exchanging 'the truth about God for a lie' (Rom 1:25). Man's capacity to know the truth is also darkened, and his will to submit to it is weakened. Thus, giving himself over to relativism and scepticism (cf. Jn 18:38), he goes off in search of an illusory freedom apart from truth itself. But no darkness of error or of sin can totally take away from man the light of God the Creator. In the depths of his heart there always remains a yearning for absolute truth and a thirst to attain full knowledge of it. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Veritatis splendor*, no.1, August 6, 1993)

LEO XIII

Keeping silence is proper to the coward and those who doubt the truth -and it is injurious to God

But, when necessity compels, not those only who are invested with power of rule are bound to safeguard the integrity of faith, but, as Saint Thomas maintains: 'Each one is under obligation to show forth his faith, either to instruct and encourage others of the faithful, or to repel the attacks of unbelievers.' To recoil before an enemy, or to keep silence when from all sides such clamors are raised against truth, is the part of a man either devoid of character or who entertains doubt as to the truth of what he professes to believe. In both cases such mode of behaving is base and is insulting to God, and both are incompatible with the salvation of mankind. This kind of conduct is profitable only to the enemies of the faith, for nothing emboldens the wicked so greatly as the lack of courage on the part of the good. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Sapientiae cristianae*, no.14, January 10, 1890)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

He who has the authority to teach, and does not, transgress the Law

But see whence He begins, and whence He aggravates His blame of them. 'For they say,' He saith, and do not. For every one is worthy of blame in transgressing the law, but especially he that bears the authority of teaching, for doubly and triply doth he deserve to be condemned. For one cause, because he transgresses; for another, that as he ought to amend others, and then halteth, he is worthy of a double punishment, because of his dignity; and in the third place, that he even corrupts the more, as committing such transgression in a teacher's place. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 72 on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*)

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The only way for individuals and societies to grow is via the culture of encounter without needless preconceptions

Europe is, without doubt, the only continent whose borders are not defined by geographic criteria, for if these were to be considered, it would be nothing more than a peninsula of Asia! Europe is defined by a civilization held in common. Its origins were modeled by the Holy Catholic Church, and as long as truly Catholic values regulated the life of the European people, its influence on the international level was supreme and its progress in all aspect – not only materially speaking – was unstoppable. On the other hand, the more it strays from such values, the obvious consequence is the darkening of its horizon. Leo XIII compared the agitated times of his pontificate to ‘those happiest of times when the Church was revered as a mother,’ emphasizing how peace, tranquility and richness of society is a fruit of the influence of the Church, and that the best institutions and even true culture flourished only when people were submissive to its laws. We need to ask ourselves now: to improve the tragic situation of the days in which we live, should we seek an exchange of values with religions or ideologies that will never produce the fruits that are born of the Church? By any chance, has the mandate of Jesus changed from ‘Go into the whole world and proclaim the Gospel’ (Mk 16:15) to, ‘Go to the whole world and learn from the unbelievers?’

FRANCIS

The only way for individuals, families and societies to grow, the only way for the life of peoples to progress, is via the culture of encounter, a culture in which all have something good to give and all can receive something good in return. Others always have something to give me, if we know how to approach them in a spirit of openness and without prejudice. **This open spirit, without prejudice, I would describe as ‘social humility’, which is what favours dialogue. Only in this way can understanding grow between cultures and religions, mutual esteem without needless preconceptions,** in a climate that is respectful of the rights of everyone. **Today, either we take the risk of dialogue, we risk the culture of encounter, or we all fall;** this is the path that will bear fruit. (*Address to Brazil’s leaders of Society, July 27, 2013*)

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I – SOCIETY PROSPERS WHEN UNITED TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

JOHN PAUL II

There is no difficult situation that cannot be confronted when one cultivates a Christian life

There is no difficult situation that cannot be adequately confronted when one cultivates a genuine atmosphere of Christian life. Love itself, wounded by sin, is still a redeemed love (cf. CCC, 1608). It is clear that, if sacramental life is weak, the family yields more easily to snares because it is deprived of any defenses. (John Paul II. *Address to the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family*, no. 3, October 18, 2002)

Authentic development only occurs in light of the Gospel

Only in the light of the Gospel can solutions be found to achieve ‘whatever affects the dignity of individuals and peoples, such as authentic development’ (*Sollicitudo rei socialis*, 41). A society without fundamental values and ethical principles gradually deteriorates. (John Paul II. *Address to the Ambassador of Guatemala to the Holy See*, no. 4, November 5, 1998)

PAUL VI

Teaching is a function proper to the Church

What is the purpose of the Church? What does it do in the midst of the contemporary world which is so occupied in the feverish work of utilitarian production? Well then, it seemed to us that that beautiful and modern building [*Scuola professionale San Paolo*] gave us a modern and yet perennial response, that is: **the Church teaches! Teaching: this is a function proper to the Church**; history bears witness to this. [...] **The Church has something to teach, something of its own competence, and this is religious truth.** This has not been surpassed, nor is it superfluous, but rather necessary for the superior, transcendent and irreplaceable object fitting to religion; **that is, true life, the spiritual life** now and the life that continues after in eternity; **but also necessary for a current temporal end, if it is to be sought according to true, authentic and firm principles**, capable of being expressed in a great variety of forms and laws, yes, but not in an equivocal and discordant pluralism that does not consent to a humanly agreeable interpretation within a logical juridical system. (Paul VI. *General audience*, May 31, 1978)

PIUS XI

The Holy Catholic Church forms good citizens – it is impossible to produce true temporal peace by things opposed to the peace of eternity

The more closely the temporal power of a nation aligns itself with the spiritual, and the more it fosters and promotes the latter, by so much the more it contributes to the conservation of the commonwealth. For it is the aim of the ecclesiastical authority by the use of spiritual means, to form good Christians in accordance with its own particular end and object; and in doing this it helps at the same time to form good citizens, and prepares them to meet their obligations as members of a civil society. This follows of necessity because **in the City of God, the Holy Roman Catholic Church, a good citizen and an upright man are absolutely one and the same thing.** How grave therefore is the error of those who separate things so closely united, and who think that they can produce good citizens by ways and methods other than those which make for the formation of good Christians. For, let human prudence say what it likes and reason as it pleases, it is impossible to produce true temporal peace and tranquility by things repugnant or opposed to the peace and happiness of eternity (*Dell' educax. crist.*, lib. I, c. 43.) (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Illius Magistri*, no. 54, December 31, 1929)

BENEDICT XV

By its nature, the Church unites men and society

The Church will certainly not refuse her zealous aid to States united under the Christian law in any of their undertakings inspired by justice and charity, inasmuch as she is herself the most perfect type of universal society. She possesses in her organization and institutions a wonderful instrument for bringing this brotherhood among men, not only for their eternal salvation but also for their material well-being to the sure acquisition of eternal blessings. (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Pacem Dei munus*, no. 18, May 23, 1920)

PIUS X

There is no true civilization without the Church

There is no true civilization without a moral civilization, and no true moral civilization without the true religion: it is a proven truth, a historical fact. (Pius X. *Apostolic Letter Notre Charge Apostolique*, August 23, 1910)

LEO XIII

Human society abundantly benefits from the mission of the Church

In order that these unparalleled benefits might last as long as men should be found on earth, He [Christ] entrusted to His Church the continuance of His work; and, looking to future times, He commanded her to set in order whatever might have become deranged in human society, and to restore whatever might have fallen into ruin. Although the divine renewal we have spoken of chiefly and directly affected men as constituted in the supernatural order of grace, nevertheless some of its precious and salutary fruits were also bestowed abundantly in the order of nature. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Arcanum divinae sapientiae*, no. 1-2, February 10, 1880)

The divine power of religion has given birth to order for the State

These perils to commonwealth, which are before Our eyes, fill Us with grave anxiety, when We behold the security of rulers and the tranquility of empires, together with the safety of nations, put in peril almost from hour to hour. Nevertheless, the divine power of the Christian religion has given birth to excellent principles of stability and order for the State, while at the same time it has penetrated into the customs and institutions of States. And of this power not the least nor last fruit is a just and wise proportion of mutual rights and duties in both princes and peoples. For in the precepts and example of Christ our Lord there is a wonderful force for restraining in their duty as much those who obey as those who rule. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Diuturnum illud*, no. 3, June 29, 1881)

No better mode has been devised for the building up and ruling the State than that of the Gospel

And, indeed, wherever the Church has set her foot she has straightway changed the face of things, and has attempered the moral tone of the people with a new civilization and with virtues before unknown. **All nations which have yielded to her sway have become eminent by their gentleness, their sense of justice, and the glory of their high deeds. And yet a hackneyed reproach of old date is leveled against her, that the Church is opposed to the rightful aims of the civil government,** and is wholly unable to afford help in spreading that welfare and progress which justly and naturally are sought after by every well-regulated State. From the very beginning Christians were harassed by slanderous accusations of this nature, and on that account were held up to hatred and execration, for being (so they were called) enemies of the Empire. [...] This odious calumny, with most valid reason, nerved the genius and sharpened the pen of Saint Augustine, who, notably in his treatise, *The City of God*, set forth in so bright a light the worth of Christian wisdom in its relation to the public wealth that he seems not merely to have pleaded the cause of the Christians of his day, but to have refuted for all future times impeachments so grossly contrary to truth. The wicked proneness, however, to levy like charges and accusations has not been lulled to rest. **Many, indeed, are they who have tried to work out a plan of civil society based on doctrines other than those approved by the Catholic Church.** Nay, in these latter days a novel conception of law has begun here and there to gain increase and influence, the outcome, as it is maintained, of an age arrived at full stature, and the result of progressive liberty. But, though endeavors of various kinds have been ventured on, it is clear that **no better mode has been devised for the building up and ruling the State than that which is the necessary growth of the teachings of the Gospel.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Immortale Dei*, no. 1-2, November 1, 1885)

Observation of the Church's laws brings peaceful life, wealth, and prosperity

Now, who would make bold to deny that the

Church, by spreading the Gospel throughout the nations, has brought the light of truth amongst people utterly savage and steeped in foul superstition, and has quickened them alike to recognize the Divine Author of nature and duly to respect themselves? Further, who will deny that the Church has **done away with the curse of slavery and restored men to the original dignity of their noble nature;** and – by uplifting the standard of redemption in all quarters of the globe, by introducing, or shielding under her protection, the sciences and arts, by **founding** and taking into her keeping excellent **charitable institutions which provide relief for ills of every kind** – has throughout the world, in private or in public life, civilized the human race, freed it from degradation, and with all care trained it to a way of Living such as befits the dignity and the hopes of man? And **if any one of sound mind compare the age in which We live, so hostile to religion and to the Church of Christ, with those happy times when the Church was revered as a mother by the nations, beyond all question he will see that our epoch is rushing wildly along the straight road to destruction; while in those times which most abounded in excellent institutions, peaceful life, wealth, and prosperity the people showed themselves most obedient to the Church's rule and laws.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilii*, no. 3, April 21, 1878)

PIUS IX

Society cannot enjoy true peace if it is not of one fold and one shepherd.

We send this Letter of Ours to **all the Christians from whom We are separated**, with which we exhort them warmly and **beseech them with insistence to hasten to return to the one fold of Christ;** we desire in fact from the depths of the heart their salvation in Christ Jesus, and we fear having to render an account one day to Him, Our Judge, if, through some possibility, we have not pointed out and prepared the way for them to attain eternal salvation. [...] And since, if also, we fulfill in the earth the office of Vicar, with all our heart we await with open arms the return of the wayward sons to the Catholic Church, in order to receive them with infinite fondness into the house of the Heavenly Father and to enrich them with its inexhaustible

treasures. **By our greatest wish for the return to the truth and the communion with the Catholic Church, upon which depends not only the salvation of all of them, but above all also of the whole Christian society: the entire world in fact cannot enjoy true peace if it is not of one fold and one shepherd.** (Pius IX. *Encyclical Iam vos omnes*, September 13, 1868)

The shocking theory of religious indifference removes the difference between virtue and vice, truth and error, honorable and vile action, Christ and Belial

Also perverse is the **shocking theory that it makes no difference to which religion one belongs**, a theory which is greatly at variance even with reason. By means of this theory, those crafty men **remove all distinction between virtue and vice, truth and error, honorable and vile action.** They pretend that men can gain eternal salvation by the practice of any religion, as if there could ever be any sharing between justice and iniquity, any collaboration between light and darkness, or **any agreement between Christ and Belial.** (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 15, November 9, 1846)

There is no more effective remedy for current disasters than to make the Catholic Church flourish in society again

Furthermore, they realize that the evils that afflict us so grievously originate in the losses, which for a long time now, but especially since the rise of Protestantism, have been inflicted on religion and the Catholic Church. They see clearly that when the authority of bishops is oppressed and when increasing numbers of men infringe divine and ecclesiastical commandments without penalty, then the respect of the people for civil authority is likewise diminished. Similarly, the present enemies of public calm instigate revolts against the government more easily. [...] They furthermore observe that the **long-standing impediments** preventing the pastors of the Church from exercising their sacred authority freely are now gradually affecting civil authority. Finally, they observe that **there is no readier or more effective remedy for the disasters which harry us than to make religion and the Catholic Church flourish again** throughout

Italy; in the Church, there is no doubt that men will get immediate and appropriate aid in accordance with their condition and need. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Nostis et Nobiscum*, no. 32, December 8, 1849)

GREGORY XVI

There is nothing more damaging for the state than 'religious liberty'

Experience shows that there is **no more direct way of alienating the populace from fidelity and obedience to their leaders than through that indifference to religion propagated by the sect members under the name of religious liberty.** (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Inter praecipuas*, no. 14, May 8, 1844)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

The Church secures and maintains earthly peace for all nations and languages

This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, **calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages**, not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions whereby **earthly peace is secured and maintained**, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to one and the same end of earthly peace. **It therefore is so far from rescinding and abolishing these diversities, that it even preserves and adopts them, so long only as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *City of God*, Book XIX, ch.17)

A family or society structured by the Church is in perfect order

Thou [the Church] givest to men authority over their wives, not to mock the weaker sex, **but in the laws of unfeigned love.** Thou dost subordinate children to their parents in a kind of free bondage, and dost set parents over their children in a godly rule. Thou bindest brothers to brothers in a religious tie stronger and closer than that of blood. Without violation of the connections of nature and of choice, thou bringest within the bond of mutual

love every relationship of kindred, and every alliance of affinity. **Thou teachest servants to cleave to their masters** from delight in their task rather than from the necessity of their position. **Thou renderest masters forbearing to their servants, from a regard to God their common Master**, and more disposed to advise than to compel. **Thou unitest citizen to citizen, nation to nation, yea, man to man**, from the recollection of their first parents, not only in society but in fraternity. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *De moribus Ecclesiae catholicae*, Book I, ch. 30, no. 63)

II – RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLES ALREADY DEFINED ARE NOT TO BE CONSIDERED PREJUDICES OR ‘NEEDLESS PRECONCEPTIONS’

JOHN PAUL II

To dialogue it is necessary to remain clear and consistent in the faith

Christians today must be formed to live in a world which largely ignores God or which, in religious matters, in place of an exacting and fraternal dialogue, stimulating for all, too often flounders in a debasing indifferentism, if it does not remain in a scornful attitude of ‘suspicion’ in the name of the progress it has made in the field of scientific ‘explanations.’ To ‘hold on’ in this world, to offer to all a ‘dialogue of salvation’ (cf. Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, part 3) in which each person feels respected in his or her most basic dignity, the dignity of one who is seeking God, **we need a catechesis which trains the young people and adults of our communities to remain clear and consistent in their faith, to affirm serenely their Christian and Catholic identity, to ‘see him who is invisible’ (cf. Heb 11:27) and to adhere so firmly to the absoluteness of God that they can be witnesses to Him in a materialistic civilization that denies Him.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Catechesi tradendae*, no. 57, October 16, 1979)

Interreligious dialogue can never be a substitute for the proclamation and propagation of the faith – truth must be affirmed with frankness

When Christians live side-by-side with persons of other religions, they have a particular

obligation to testify to the oneness and universality of the saving mystery of Jesus Christ and to the consequent **necessity of the Church as the means of salvation** for all humanity. ‘This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that ‘one religion is as good as another’ (CDF *Christus Dominus* (6/8/2000), 22). It is clear, then, **that interreligious dialogue can never be a substitute for the proclamation and propagation of the faith**, which constitute the primary goal of the Church’s preaching, catechesis and mission. **A frank and unambiguous affirmation that human salvation depends on the redemption accomplished by Christ is not an obstacle to dialogue with other religions.** In the context of our profession of Christian hope, **it cannot be forgotten that it is precisely this hope which is the basis of interreligious dialogue.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores gregis*, no. 68, October 16, 2003)

Interreligious dialogue is not an exchange of opinions on one’s own ‘creed’ without any preoccupation of arriving at conclusions

They aren’t lacking who wish to interpret the missionary action [of the Church] as an attempt to impose on others one’s own convictions and options, in contrast with a certain modern spirit, which boasts, as though it was a definitive conquest, of an absolute liberty of thought and personal conscience. According to this perspective, evangelizing activity should be substituted with an interreligious dialogue, which would consist in an exchange of opinions and information, whereby each party would expose his own ‘creed’ and be enriched by the thoughts of others, without any preoccupation of arriving at conclusions. [...] Consequently the path that each one wishes to follow according to one’s own education and religious tradition would be respected. **But this conception is irreconcilable with the commandment of Christ to the Apostles (cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15), transmitted by the Church [...] [The Council] confirmed at the same time the role of the Church, in which it is necessary**

that man enter and persevere, if he wishes to be saved (*Ad gentes*, no. 7) [...] This traditional doctrine of the Church exposes the inconsistency and superficiality of a relativistic and irenic attitude, regarding the way of salvation in a religion other than that founded in the faith in Christ. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1-2, May 10, 1995)

One may not invent the faith according to circumstances or individual tastes

There are two points that I would like to particularly emphasize with respect to the transmission of the faith. First of all that *catechesis responds to objective and well determined subject matter. One may not invent the faith according to the circumstances or individual tastes.* We must receive it in and from the universal community of faith, **the Church**, to which Christ himself confided the ministry to teach under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth. (John Paul II. *Address to the Hispanic Catholic community of United States and Canada*, no. 4, September 13, 1987)

PAUL VI

We cannot agree with various forms of religion nor adopt an uncritical attitude – as if all were on an equal footing with what God has Himself revealed definitively and infallibly

Obviously we cannot agree with these various forms of religion, [Judaism, Moslem, Afro-Asiatic religions] nor can we adopt an indifferent or uncritical attitude toward them on the assumption that they are all to be regarded as on an equal footing, and that there is no need for those who profess them to enquire whether or not God has Himself revealed definitively and infallibly how He wishes to be known, loved, and served. Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that the Christian religion is the one and only true religion, and it is our hope that it will be acknowledged as such by all who look for God and worship Him. (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 107, August 6, 1964)

JOHN XXIII

Catechesis consists in transmitting the patrimony of the Church to others

The glorification of today [of Maria Berila Boscardin] has also a premise for the study of catechism, which engraves in the innocent soul the love of true wisdom, and guards it for the conquests of maturity. As we reminded recent pilgrimage of Bergamo, **‘the teaching of catechism is a daily sowing in each parish, family and school, that permits the innocent to be strengthened in the spirit of the grace of Christ, and holds in honor the patrimony,** which is the true and pure essence of perfect Christianity.’ (John XXIII. *Homily for the canonization of Maria Bertila Boscardin*, no. 2, May 11, 1961)

PIUS XI

That all religions are good and praiseworthy: error and distortion of the idea of true religion, that can nowise be approved by Catholics

For since they hold it for certain that men destitute of all religious sense are very rarely to be found, they seem to have founded on that belief a hope that the nations, although they differ among themselves in certain religious matters, will without much difficulty come to agree as brethren in professing certain doctrines, which form as it were a common basis of the spiritual life. [...] **Certainly such attempts can nowise be approved by Catholics, founded as they are on that false opinion which considers all religions to be more or less good and praiseworthy,** since they all in different ways manifest and signify that sense which is inborn in us all, and by which we are led to God and to the obedient acknowledgment of His rule. **Not only are those who hold this opinion in error and deceived, but also in distorting the idea of true religion, they reject it and little by little, turn aside to naturalism and atheism, as it is called; from which it clearly follows that one who supports those who hold these theories and attempt to realize them, is altogether abandoning the divinely revealed religion.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mortalium animos*, no. 2, January 6, 1928)

PIUS IX

Without previous instruction, people might fall into error: sufficiently instruct the laity to recognize the snares laid for them

So that all their efforts may not be fruitless, **sufficiently instruct the laity in Christian doctrine and the law of the Lord. Hopefully, they are not too weakened by long license in manifold and increasing vices to be able to recognize the snares laid for them and also the vileness of the errors proposed to them.** So We earnestly require you, in your pastoral care, to ceaselessly ensure that the faithful entrusted to you are carefully taught the holy doctrines and precepts of our religion in accordance with their individual capacity; exhort and inspire them in every way to conform their lives and morals to these norms. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Nostis et Nobiscum*, no. 9, December 8, 1849)

LEO XIII

Every familiarity should be avoided with those who hide under the mask of universal tolerance – they seek to reconcile Christ and Belial

Everyone should avoid familiarity or friendship with anyone suspected of belonging to masonry or to affiliated groups. Know them by their fruits and avoid them. **Every familiarity should be avoided, not only with those impious libertines who openly promote the character of the sect, but also with those who hide under the mask of universal tolerance, respect for all religions, and the craving to reconcile the maxims of the Gospel with those of the revolution. These men seek to reconcile Christ and Belial, the Church of God and the state without God.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Custodi di quella fede*, no.15 , December 8, 1892)

GREGORY XVI

The Protestants left no means untried to deceive the faithful

But later even more care was required when the Lutherans and Calvinists dared to

oppose the changeless doctrine of the faith with an almost incredible variety of errors. They left no means untried to deceive the faithful with perverse explanations of the sacred Books. (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Inter praecipuas*, no. 4, May 8, 1844)

THE PSEUDO-ATHANASIAN CREED QUICUMQUE

The Catholic faith is necessary for salvation

Whoever wishes to be saved, needs above all to hold the Catholic faith; unless each one preserves this whole and inviolate, he will without a doubt perish in eternity. (Denzinger-Hünemann 75. *Quicumque or The 'Athanasian' Creed*)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

It is not possible to believe without preaching

For 'everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.' **But how can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?** (Rom 10:13-14)

Those who know the truth do not need to hear novelties

Let what you heard from the beginning remain in you. **If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain in the Son and in the Father.** And this is the promise that he made us: eternal life. I write you these things about those who would deceive you. As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains in you, so that you do not need anyone to teach you. But his anointing teaches you about everything and is true and not false; just as it taught you, remain in him. (1Jn 2:24-27)

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The Church defended the Faith with walls; but now we need to build bridges. Gone are the days of excluding atheists, unmarried, socialists...

Moved by the divine command to evangelize all nations and baptize all in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Holy Mother Church has never spared efforts to surpass all boundaries in order to proclaim the Good News to all peoples without exception. Yet, ever since Apostolic times, every missionary has also been obliged to combine daring with prudence, so as not to let himself be contaminated – through his own weakness – by those who reject the Redeemer’s universal call to conversion.

However, in our days, the growing loss of identity among Catholics sometimes leads people to think that the evangelizer should simply recognize miscellaneous creeds – amongst which ours would be just one more – without any special care to preserve one’s own faith or good customs. Throughout the centuries, the successors of Saint Peter have not omitted to leave clear directives of how apostolic courage should be allied to vigilance. Bringing these teachings to mind now, with the intention of clarifying concepts, is particularly opportune – for they give due value the true Faith, the only one that leads to eternal life.

FRANCIS

The Christian who wishes to spread the Gospel, has to follow this path: listen to all! But **now is a favorable time in the life of the Church**: these last 50 or 60 years have been a favorable time, because **I remember when I was a boy, and you would hear in Catholic families, in my family: ‘No, we can’t go to their house because they are not married in the Church, they are socialists, atheists, eh!’ It was like an exclusion.** Now – thank God – no, no one says this anymore, right? It’s not said! **This existed as a defense of the faith, but with walls. The Lord, on his part, made bridges. First: Paul has this attitude, because it was the attitude of Jesus. Second: Paul is aware that he must evangelize, not do proselitism.** (*Homily in Domus Sanctae Marthae*, May 8, 2013. English summary.)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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SACRED SCRIPTURE

If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. **And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.** (Mt 5:30)

Jesus Christ orders that all nations be made disciples and taught to observe all His commandments

Then Jesus approached and said to them, 'All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.**' (Mt 28: 18-20)

Saint Paul: purge the evil person from your midst

I wrote you in my letter not to associate with

immoral people, not at all referring to the immoral of this world or the greedy and robbers or idolaters; for you would then have to leave the world. **But I now write to you not to associate with anyone named a brother, if he is immoral, greedy, an idolater, a slanderer, a drunkard, or a robber, not even to eat with such a person.** For why should I be **judging outsiders?** Is it not your business to judge those within? **God will judge those outside. 'Purge the evil person from your midst.'** (1Cor 5:9-13)

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine do not receive him

Anyone who is so 'progressive' as not to **remain in the teaching of the Christ does not have God**; whoever remains in the teaching has the Father and the Son. **If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him in your house or even greet him; for whoever greets him shares in his evil works.** (2Jn 9-11)

CARDINAL JOSEPH RATZINGER

A dictatorship of relativism

Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of

the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas **relativism, that is, letting oneself be ‘tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine’**, seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires. **We, however, have a different goal: the Son of God, the true man.** He is the measure of true humanism. An ‘adult’ faith is not a faith that follows the trends of fashion and the latest novelty... (Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. *Homily at the pro eligendo Pontifice Mass*, April 18, 2005)

PAUL VI

The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down of truth

To what extent should the Church adapt itself to the historical and local circumstances in which it has to exercise its mission? **How is it to guard against the danger of relativism which would make it untrue to its own dogmas and moral principles?** And yet how can it fit itself to approach all men and bring salvation to all, becoming on the example of the Apostle Paul ‘all things to all men,’ that all may be saved? (1Cor 9:22). [...] **But the danger remains.** Indeed, the worker in the apostolate is under constant fire. **The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or whittling away of truth.** Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith. Our apostolate must not make vague compromises concerning the principles which regulate and govern the profession of the Christian faith both in theory and in practice. An immoderate desire to make peace and sink differences at all costs (irenism and syncretism) is ultimately nothing more than skepticism about the power and content of the Word of God which we desire to preach. The effective apostle is the man who is completely faithful to Christ’s teaching. **He alone can remain unaffected by the errors of the world around him, the man who lives his Christian life to the full.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 87-88, August 6, 1964)

The Christian religion is the one and

only true Religion – we cannot adopt an uncritical attitude toward other forms of religion

Obviously we cannot agree with these various forms of religion, nor can we adopt an indifferent or uncritical attitude toward them on the assumption that they are all to be regarded as on an equal footing, and that there is no need for those who profess them to enquire whether or not God has Himself revealed definitively and infallibly how He wishes to be known, loved, and served. **Indeed, honesty compels us to declare openly our conviction that the Christian religion is the one and only true religion,** and it is our hope that it will be acknowledged as such by all who look for God and worship Him. (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 107, August 6, 1964)

The basic propositions of atheism are utterly false and irreconcilable: we shall resist!

We are firmly convinced that the basic propositions of atheism are utterly false and irreconcilable [...] We shall therefore resist this growing evil with all our strength, spurred on by our great zeal for safeguarding the truth, inspired by our social duty of loyally professing Christ and His gospel, and driven on by a burning, unquenchable love, which makes man’s good our constant concern. **We shall resist in the invincible hope that modern man may recognize the religious ideals which the Catholic faith sets before him and feel himself drawn to seek a form of civilization which will never fail him but will lead on to the natural and supernatural perfection of the human spirit.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 100, August 6, 1964)

The Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: ‘Now I am making the whole of creation new’ (Rev 21:5). But there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new

persons renewed by Baptism and by lives lived according to the Gospel. The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 18, December 18, 1975)

Upsetting criteria which are in contrast with the Word of God, through the power of the Gospel

Strata of humanity which are transformed: for the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 19, December 18, 1975)

LEO XIII

To reject the supreme authority of God is the greatest perversion of liberty

For, to reject the supreme authority to God, and to cast off all obedience to Him in public matters, or even in private and domestic affairs, is the greatest perversion of liberty and the worst kind of liberalism; and what We have said must be understood to apply to this alone in its fullest sense. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Libertas praestantissimum*, no. 37, June 20, 1888)

GREGORY XVI

Indifferentism: the base opinion that eternal salvation can be acquired by any profession of faith

Now we examine another prolific cause of

evils by which, we lament, the Church is at present afflicted, namely indifferentism, or that base opinion which has become prevalent everywhere through the deceit of wicked men, that eternal salvation of the soul can be acquired by any profession of faith whatsoever, if morals are conformed to the standard of the just and the honest. And so from this most rotten source of indifferentism flows that absurd and erroneous opinion, or rather insanity, that liberty of conscience must be claimed and defended for anyone. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2730. Gregory XVI, *Encyclical Mirari vos*, August 15, 1832)

PIUS IX

We live in a corrupt atmosphere and must know how to preserve ourselves from it

In these times of confusion and disorder, it is not unusual to see Christians, Catholics – even within the secular clergy and cloisters – who constantly have a word of conformity, of conciliation and negotiation on their lips. Very well! I do not hesitate to declare: these men are in error, and do not consider them to be the lesser enemies of the Church. We live in a corrupt and pestilent atmosphere and we must know how to preserve ourselves from it. Let us not allow ourselves to be contaminated by false doctrines, which lose all things under the pretext of saving all. (Pius IX. *Speech in the Church of Aracoeli*, September 17, 1861)

JOHN PAUL II

The mission ad gentes is the normal outcome of Christian living

Reading the Acts of the Apostles helps us to realize that at the beginning of the Church the mission ad gentes, while it had missionaries dedicated 'for life' by a special vocation, was in fact considered the normal outcome of Christian living, to which every believer was committed through the witness of personal conduct and through explicit proclamation whenever possible. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 27, December 7, 1990)

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A Re-reading of the Gospel in Light of Contemporary Culture

One of the fundamental documents of Vatican Council II teaches that ‘the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.’ Francis, in turn, insinuates that the Gospel should be re-read in light of modern culture. Should the Church submit herself to the principles of modern civilization, or rather enlighten it with Her teachings?

FRANCIS

Vatican II was a re-reading of the Gospel in light of contemporary culture. Vatican II produced a renewal movement that simply comes from the same Gospel. Its fruits are enormous. Just recall the liturgy. The work of liturgical reform has been a service to the people as a **re-reading of the Gospel from a concrete historical situation.** Yes, there are hermeneutics of continuity and discontinuity, but one thing is clear: **the dynamic of reading the Gospel, actualizing its message for today – which was typical of Vatican II – is absolutely irreversible.** Then there are particular issues, like the liturgy according to the *Vetus Ordo*. I think the decision of Pope Benedict [his decision of July 7, 2007, to allow a wider use of the Tridentine Mass] was prudent and motivated by the desire to help people who have this sensitivity. What is worrying, though, is the risk of the ideologization of the *Vetus Ordo*, its exploitation. (*Interview with Antonio Spadaro*, August 19, 2013)

The celebration of 100 years of the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University is an important moment for the Church in Argentina. The anniversary coincides with that of fifty years from the closing of the Second Vatican Council, which **was an update, a re-reading of the Gospel in the perspective of contemporary culture.** (*Letter to Cardinal Mario Aurelio Poli. Archbishop of Buenos Aires and Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina – UCA on the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Faculty of Theology*, March 9, 2015)

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VATICAN COUNCIL II – (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The light of the Gospel should illuminate the Church's action today

To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 4, December 7, 1965)

The mission of the Church is to teach the truth, of which it is the depository

In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church. (Pius XII, Radio message, March 23, 1952: AAS 44 (1952) pp. 270-278) **For the Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that truth which is Christ Himself**, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origins in human nature itself. (Vatican Council II. *Declaration Dignitatis humanae*, no. 14, December 7, 1965)

COUNCIL OF TRENT – (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Only the Church may validly interpret Scripture

Furthermore, in order to curb impudent clever persons, the synod decrees that no one who relies on his own judgment in matters of faith and morals, which pertain to the building up of Christian doctrine, and that no one who distorts the Sacred Scripture according to his own opinions, shall dare to interpret the said Sacred Scripture contrary to that sense which is held by holy mother Church, whose duty it is to judge regarding the true sense and interpretation of holy Scriptures. (Denzinger-Hünemann 1507. *Council of Trent*, Session IV, Decree on the Sacred Books and the Traditions of the Apostles, April 8, 1546)

CELAM – PUEBLA DOCUMENT

It is the Gospel that enlightens the temporal sphere, not the other way around

The tendency of other groups, on the contrary, is to consider certain political aspects as imperative, as a preceding condition for the Church to fulfill her mission. This is to identify the Christian message with an ideology and to submit it to the latter, appealing to a 're-reading' of the Gospel starting out from a political option (cf. John Paul II, Inaugural speech I, 4. AAS 71, p. 190). In reality, it is necessary to reflect on

politics starting from the Gospel and not the other way around. (CELAM – Third General Episcopal Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean. *Puebla Document*, no. 559, January 28, 1979)

BENEDICT XVI

The great risk involved in reading the Gospel without the light of faith

Another major theme that emerged during the Synod, to which I would now like to draw attention, is the interpretation of sacred Scripture in the Church. **The intrinsic link between the word and faith makes clear that authentic biblical hermeneutics can only be had within the faith of the Church**, which has its paradigm in Mary's *fiat*. Saint Bonaventure states that without faith there is no key to throw open the sacred text: 'This is the knowledge of Jesus Christ, from whom, as from a fountain, flow forth the certainty and the understanding of all sacred Scripture. Therefore it is impossible for anyone to attain to knowledge of that truth unless he first have infused faith in Christ, which is the lamp, the gate and the foundation of all Scripture' (*Breviloquium*, *Prol.*). **And Saint Thomas Aquinas, citing Saint Augustine, insists that 'the letter, even that of the Gospel, would kill, were there not the inward grace of healing faith'** (*STh*, I-II, q.106, a.2). (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 29, September 30, 2010)

Scripture sheds light on human existence

The word of God sheds light on human existence and stirs our conscience to take a deeper look at our lives, inasmuch as all human history stands under God's judgment. (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 99, September 30, 2010)

The Word of God should be an inspiration for temporal authorities

In the light of the Lord's words, let us discern the 'signs of the times' present in history, and not flee from a commitment to those who suffer and the victims of forms of selfishness. The Synod recalled that a commitment to justice and to changing our world is an essential element of evangelization. [...] For this reason,

the Synod Fathers wished to say a special word to all those who take part in political and social life. Evangelization and the spread of God's word ought to inspire their activity in the world, as they work for the true common good in respecting and promoting the dignity of every person. (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 100, September 30, 2010)

GREGORY XVI

The Church is not an institution that may be renewed according to human criteria

To use the words of the fathers of Trent, it is certain that the Church 'was instructed by Jesus Christ and His Apostles and that all truth was daily taught it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit' (Council of Trent, sess. 13, *prooemium*). Therefore, it is obviously absurd and injurious to propose a certain 'restoration and regeneration' for her as though necessary for her safety and growth, as if she could be considered subject to defect or obscurity or other misfortune. Indeed these authors of novelties consider that a 'foundation may be laid of a new human institution,' and what Cyprian detested may come to pass, that what was a divine thing 'may become a human church' (cf. Saint Cyprian, epis. 52) [...] It is the proud, or rather foolish, men who examine the mysteries of faith which surpass all understanding with the faculties of the human mind, and rely on human reason which by the condition of man's nature, is weak and infirm. (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 10, 22, August 15, 1832)

PIUS IX

The great danger of seeking accord between the Church and the world

In these times of confusion and disorder, it is not unusual to see Christians, Catholics – even within the secular clergy and cloisters – **who constantly have a word of conformity, of conciliation and negotiation on their lips**. Very well! I do not hesitate to declare: **these men are in error, and do not consider them to be the lesser enemies of the Church**. We live in a corrupt and pestilent atmosphere and we must know how to preserve ourselves from it. **Let us not allow ourselves to be contaminated**

by false doctrines, which lose all things under the pretext of saving all. (Pius IX. *Speech in the Church of Aracoeli*, September 17, 1861)

Condemnation of the doctrines that advocate an alliance with modernity

[Proposition condemned:] The Roman Pontiff can and should reconcile and adapt himself to progress, liberalism, and the modern civilization. (Denzinger-Hünemann 2980. Pius IX, *Syllabus of Condemned errors related to modern liberalism*, December 8, 1864)

Pius X

Condemnation of the doctrines that advocate adapting Revelation to modernity

[Proposition condemned:] The progress of the sciences demands that the concepts of Christian doctrine about God, creation, revelation, the Person of the Incarnate Word, the Redemption, be recast. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3464. Pius X, *Encyclical Lamentabili – Syllabus of Errors of the Modernists*, no. 64, July 3, 1907)

PAUL VI

The influence of the Gospel should enlighten all spheres of human activity

For the Church it is a question not only of preaching the Gospel in ever wider geographic areas or to ever greater numbers of people, but also of affecting and as it were upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 19, December 8, 1975)

The Gospel is capable of enlightening, regenerating and enriching any culture

The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, are certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. **Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them.** The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. **They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel.** But this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed. (Paul VI. *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, December 8, no. 20, 1975)

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When the Church becomes closed, she becomes an ailing Church, she falls ill!

The Church must step outside herself.

To the outskirts of existence, whatever they may be

‘Charity begins at home’. This popular expression clearly transmits the attitude that an apostle of the Gospel should have. In fact, no one can give to others what he himself does not possess. So, in the first place, a missionary should fill his own soul with grace in order to transmit the light of Christ and the perfume of the Christian virtues in an effective manner. Yes, to evangelize, we can’t mix the crystalline waters of sanctity with the filth of sin. In other words, we should avidly seek the salvation of others, but in no way adjust our souls to the evil influences of the world under the pretext of the apostolate, putting our eternal salvation in grave risk. What use are works and more works if the one who performs them ends up being condemned for having adopted an imprudent apostolic strategy? The Church puts the eternal salvation of her children above all else; that is why it has always shown vigilance in indicating authentic paths for evangelization.

FRANCIS

Please do not withdraw into yourselves! **This is a danger: we shut ourselves up in the parish, with our friends, within the movement, with the like-minded...** but do you know what happens? **When the Church becomes closed, she becomes an ailing Church, she falls ill!** That is a danger. Nevertheless we lock ourselves up in our parish, among our friends, in our movement, with people who think as we do... but do you know what happens? **When the Church is closed, she falls sick, she falls sick.** Think of a room that has been closed for a year. When you go into it there is a smell of damp, many things are wrong with it. A Church closed in on herself is the same, a sick Church. **The Church must step outside herself. To go where? To the outskirts of existence, whatever they may be,** but she must step out. Jesus tells us: ‘Go into all the world! Go! Preach! Bear witness to the Gospel!’ (cf. Mk 16:15). But what happens if we step outside ourselves? The same as can happen to anyone who comes out of the house and onto the street: an accident. **But I tell you, I far prefer a Church that has had a few accidents to a Church that has fallen sick from being closed.** (*Address, Vigil of Pentecost with Ecclesial Movements, May 18, 2013*)

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**I – A CHURCH CLOSED IN ON ITSELF...OR
WELL SAFEGUARDED FROM CORRUPTION?**

SACRED SCRIPTURE

What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?

What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? What could one give in exchange for his life? Whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this faithless and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels. (Mk 8: 36-38)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

While taking care about the things of others, do not neglect yourself

What? hast thou another soul to give for this soul? [...] put also the whole world, yet what profit hath he thereby, if the soul perish? [...] yea, though thou hadst the world, though thou wast king of the whole earth, thou wouldest not be able, by paying down all earthly goods, with the earth itself, to redeem but one soul. [...] Now thus **I bid thee reason with regard to thy soul also; or rather even much more with regard to the soul; and do thou, forsaking all besides, spend all thy care upon it.** Do not then while taking thought about the things of others, neglect thyself and thine own things; which now all men do, resembling them that work in the mines. For neither do these receive any profit from this labor, nor from the wealth; but rather great harm, both because they incur fruitless peril, and incur it for other men, reaping no benefit from such their toils and deaths. These even now are objects of imitation to many, who are digging up wealth for others; or rather we are more wretched even than this, inasmuch as hell itself awaits us after these our labors. For they indeed are staid from those toils by death, but to us death proves a beginning of innumerable evils. [...] **For of all things in us the soul is chief.** [...] but Christ will say unto thee again, 'What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' **on every hand commanding thee to be busied about that, and to take account of it only.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 55*

on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, no. 4-5)

BENEDICT XVI

You cannot be a good servant to others if you neglect your soul

'Take heed to yourselves' (Acts 20:28). This too is a word to the priests of all times. **A well-intentioned activism exists but in which a person forgets his own soul, his own spiritual life, his own being with Christ.** In the Breviary Reading for his liturgical Memorial, Saint Charles Borromeo tells us every year anew: **you cannot be a good servant to others if you neglect your soul.** 'Watch over yourselves.' **Let us also be attentive to our spiritual life, to our being with Christ.** As I have often said, **prayer and meditation on the Word of God is not time wasted for the care of souls, but is the condition for us to be able to be really in touch with the Lord, and thus to speak of the Lord to others** from experience. 'Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the Church of the Lord' (Acts 20:28). (Benedict XVI. *Lectio Divina*, meeting with the Parish Priests of the Rome Diocese, March 10, 2011)

JOHN PAUL II

How can they preach the Gospel if they do not have a true understanding of the faith?

In order constantly to discover and maintain the joy of mission, it is most important that the Lord's ministers strengthen their spiritual life, particularly through daily prayer, which is 'the remedy of salvation' (Saint Paulinus of Nola, Letters 34, 10), and through the intimate meeting with the Lord in the Eucharist, which is the focal point of the priest's day. In the same way, regular reception of the sacrament of Reconciliation, which re-establishes the sinner in grace and restores friendship with God, helps the priest in turn to bring forgiveness to his brothers and sisters. **These are a source of indispensable nourishment** for Christ's disciples, and even more **for those who are responsible for leading and sanctifying the Christian people.** I would also like to insist on

the need to celebrate worthily the Liturgy of the Hours, which helps to enrich the People of God with a mysterious apostolic fruitfulness, and on time for daily prayer: in this way the priest revives the gift of God within him, **prepares for his mission, strengthens his priestly identity and builds up the Church.** Indeed, it is before God that the priest becomes aware of the call he has received and renews his availability for the particular mission entrusted to him by the Bishop in the Lord's name, thereby showing that he is available for the work of the Holy Spirit, who gives growth to every action. **Priests are called to be joyful witnesses to Christ through their teaching and the witness of an upright life** corresponding to the commitment they made on the day of their ordination. They are your 'sons and friends' (*Christus Dominus*, no. 16). **You must remain attentive to their spiritual and intellectual needs**, reminding them that, although they live among men and take modern life into account, like all the faithful **they must not model themselves on today's world, but must conform their lives to the Word they proclaim and the sacraments they celebrate** (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 3); thus they will express 'the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church' (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 2). Encourage them to pray personally and to support one another in this regard. Also, invite them constantly to deepen their knowledge of theology, which is necessary to spiritual and pastoral life. In fact, **how can they preach the Gospel and be 'dispensers of a life other than that of this earth'** (*Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 3), if they do not remain close to the heart of Christ like the Apostle he loved, and if they do not apply themselves through continuing formation to a true understanding of the faith? (John Paul II. *Address to the Bishops of the Netherlands on the occasion of their ad limina visit*, no. 2, June 18, 1998)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The necessity to avoid the society of sinners as regards fellowship in sin

Wherefore, in respect of their guilt whereby they are opposed to God, all sinners are to be hated, even one's father or mother or kindred, according to Luke 12:26. [...] As the Philosopher observes (*Ethic.* ix, 3), when our

friends fall into sin, we ought not to deny them the amenities of friendship, so long as there is hope of their mending their ways, and we ought to help them more readily to regain virtue than to recover money, had they lost it, for as much as virtue is more akin than money to friendship. **When, however, they fall into very great wickedness, and become incurable, we ought no longer to show them friendliness.** It is for this reason that both Divine and human laws command **such like sinners to be put to death, because there is greater likelihood of their harming others than of their mending their ways.** Nevertheless the judge puts this into effect, not out of hatred for the sinners, but out of the love of charity, by reason of which he prefers the public good to the life of the individual. Moreover the death inflicted by the judge profits the sinner, if he be converted, unto the expiation of his crime; and, if he be not converted, it profits so as to put an end to the sin, because the sinner is thus deprived of the power to sin any more. [...] **We love sinners out of charity, not so as to will what they will, or to rejoice in what gives them joy, but so as to make them will what we will, and rejoice in what rejoices us.** Hence it is written (Jer 15:19): 'They shall be turned to thee, and thou shalt not be turned to them.' **The weak should avoid associating with sinners, on account of the danger in which they stand of being perverted by them.** But it is commendable for the perfect, of whose perversion there is no fear, to associate with sinners that they may convert them. For thus did Our Lord eat and drink with sinners as related by Matthew 9:11-13. **Yet all should avoid the society of sinners, as regards fellowship in sin;** in this sense it is written (2Cor 6:17): 'Go out from among them and touch not the unclean thing,' i.e. by consenting to sin. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q.25, a. 6)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Do not open the doors to corrupt men

And by 'dogs' here He figuratively described them that are living in incurable ungodliness, and affording no hope of change for the better; and by 'swine,' them that abide continually in an unchaste life, **all of whom He hath pronounced unworthy of hearing such things.** Paul also, it may be observed, declared

this when He said, **'But a natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit**, for they are foolishness unto him.' And in many other places too He saith that **corruption of life is the cause of men's not receiving the more perfect doctrines**. Wherefore **He commands not to open the doors to them**; for indeed they become more insolent after learning. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 23 on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, no. 3)

PSEUDO-CHRYSOSTOM

God does not give spiritual graces equally to the worthy and the unworthy

The Lord had commanded us to love our enemies, and to do good to those that sin against us. That from this Priests might not think themselves obliged to communicate also the things of God to such, He checked any such thought saying, 'Give not that which is holy to the dogs;' as much as to say, I have bid you love your enemies, and do them good out of your temporal goods, but not out of My spiritual goods, without distinction. For **they are your brethren by nature but not by faith, and God gives the good things of this life equally to the worthy and the unworthy, but not so spiritual graces**. (Pseudo-Chrysostom cited by Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Catena Aurea*, Mt 7:6)

PIUS IX

Beware of those who, in clothing of sheep, deprave the minds of the imprudent and distance men from religion

To this end also tend the most dark designs of men in the clothing of sheep, while inwardly ravaging wolves. They humbly recommend themselves by means of a feigned and deceitful appearance of a purer piety, a stricter virtue and discipline; after taking their captives gently, they mildly bind them, **and then kill them in secret. They make men fly in terror from all practice of religion, and they cut down and dismember the sheep of the Lord.** [...] They spread pestilential doctrines everywhere and deprave the minds especially of the imprudent, occasioning great losses for religion. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 17, November 9, 1846)

SAINT CYPRIAN OF CARTHAGE

By heresy, the unrighteous are distinguished from the righteous as the chaff from the wheat

'It is needful also that there should be heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you' (1Cor 11:19). Thus the faithful are approved, thus the perfidious are detected; thus even here, before the day of judgment, the souls of the righteous and of the unrighteous are already divided, and the chaff is separated from the wheat. These are they who of their own accord, without any divine arrangement, set themselves to preside among the daring strangers assembled, who appoint themselves prelates without any law of ordination [...] **whom the Holy Spirit points out in the Psalms as sitting in the seat of pestilence**, plagues, and spots of the faith, deceiving with serpent's tongue, and artful in corrupting the truth, vomiting forth deadly poisons from pestilential tongues; whose speech doth creep like a cancer, **whose discourse forms a deadly poison in the heart and breast of every one**. (Saint Cyprian of Carthage. *De unitate Ecclesiae*, no. 10)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The devil need not take any trouble when he has planted wicked men among us

It is no small danger, which He hereby suspends over our rulers, to whom especially is entrusted the keeping of the field; [...] And He signifies also that the error comes after the truth, which the actual event testifies. For so after the prophets, were the false prophets; and after the apostles, the false apostles; and after Christ, Antichrist For unless **the devil** see what to imitate, or against whom to plot, he neither attempts, nor knows how. Now then also, having seen that 'one brought forth a hundred, another sixty, another thirty,' he proceeds after that another way. That is, **not having been able to carry away what had taken root, nor to choke, nor to scorch it up, he conspires against it by another craft, privily casting in his own inventions.** [...] Many of the prelates, **I mean, bringing into the churches wicked men, disguised heresiarchs, gave great facility to the laying that kind of snare.** For the devil

needs not even to take any trouble, when he hath once planted them among us. [...] As the heretics also do, [...] for at the beginning they disguise themselves; but when they have gained much confidence, and someone imparts to them the teaching of the word, then they pour out their poison. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 46 on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, no. 1-3)

PIUS IX

Enemies of all truth strive both openly and deceitfully with plots to shake the Catholic religion

You know as We do, venerable brothers, the recent wrongdoing which has strengthened some wretched enemies of all truth, justice and honor, who strive both openly and deceitfully with plots of every sort to spread their disorders everywhere among the faithful people of Italy. These disorders include the unbridled license of thinking, speaking and hearing every impious matter. They spread these like the foaming waves of a savage sea, and they exert themselves not only to shake the Catholic religion in Italy itself, but if possible to utterly destroy it. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Nostis et nobiscum*, no. 1, December 8, 1849)

II – THE EFFICACY OF THE ACTION OF ECCLESIAL MOVEMENTS STEMS FROM THE EXEMPLARY LIFE THEY MANIFEST

JOHN PAUL II

An urgent need for powerful proclamation of the Gospel and solid Christian formation

In our world, often dominated by a secularized culture which encourages and promotes models of life without God, the faith of many is sorely tested, and is frequently stifled and dies. Thus we see an urgent need for powerful proclamation and solid, in-depth Christian formation. There is so much need today for mature Christian personalities, conscious of their baptismal identity, of their vocation and mission in the Church and in the world! There is great need for living Christian communities! And here are the movements

and the new ecclesial communities: they are the response, given by the Holy Spirit, to this critical challenge at the end of the millennium. You are this providential response. [...] You have learned in the movements and new communities that faith is not abstract talk, nor vague religious sentiment, but new life in Christ instilled by the Holy Spirit. (John Paul II. *Address during the meeting with Ecclesial Movements and New Communities*, no. 7, May 30, 1998)

BENEDICT XVI

Missionary zeal is proof of a radical experience of ever renewed fidelity

I therefore say to you, dear friends of the Movements: act so as to ensure that they are always schools of communion, groups journeying on in which one learns to live in the truth and love that Christ revealed and communicated to us through the witness of the Apostles, in the heart of the great family of his disciples. May Jesus' exhortation ceaselessly re-echo in your hearts: 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven' (Mt 5: 16). Bring Christ's light to all the social and cultural milieus in which you live. Missionary zeal is proof of a radical experience of ever renewed fidelity to one's charism that surpasses any kind of weary or selfish withdrawal. Dispel the darkness of a world overwhelmed by the contradictory messages of ideologies! There is no valid beauty if there is not a truth to recognize and follow, if love gives way to transitory sentiment, if happiness becomes an elusive mirage or if freedom degenerates into instinct. (Benedict XVI. *Message to the participants of the Second World Congress on Ecclesial Movements and New Communities*, May 22, 2006)

JOHN PAUL II

Any life planning that is not in accordance with the design of God for man is destined to failure

Never forget that any life planning that is not in accordance with the design of God for man, is destined – sooner or later – to failure.

In effect, it is only in God and with God that man can entirely fulfill himself and reach the plenitude of that which he aspires to in his inmost heart. [...] **It is decisive to choose true, not transitory values; the authentic truth, and not half truths or pseudo-truths.** (John Paul II. *Address during the Encounter with catechists and Ecclesial Movements*, October 4, no. 6, 1998)

BENEDICT XV

Apostolic success ensues from the measure that one binds himself more closely to God

But for the man who enters upon the apostolic life there is one attribute that is indispensable. It is of the most critical importance, as We have mentioned before, that he have **sanctity of life**. For the man who preaches God must himself be a man of God. **The man who urges others to despise sin must despise it himself.** Preaching by example is a far more effective procedure than vocal preaching, especially among unbelievers, who tend to be more impressed by what they see for themselves than by any arguments that can be presented to them. Give the missionary, if you will, every imaginable talent of mind and intellect, endow him with the most extensive learning and the most brilliant culture. Unless these qualities are accompanied by moral integrity they will be of little or no value in the apostolate, On the contrary, they can be the cause of disaster, both to himself and to others. **Let us have him, then, an example to those he deals with. Let him be humble and obedient and chaste. And especially let him be a devout man, dedicated to prayer and constant union with God,** a man who goes before the Divine Majesty and fervently pleads the cause of souls. **For as he binds himself more and more closely to God, he will receive the grace and assistance of God to a greater and greater degree.** [...] With these virtues the missionary will open for the Faith he preaches a smooth and unobstructed entrance into the hearts of men. All obstacles will melt from his path, for no man's will is obdurate enough to oppose their attraction with equanimity. (Benedict XV. *Apostolic Letter Maximum illud*, no. 26-27, November 30, 1919)

You have been called to carry light to men who lie in the shadow of death

Now We turn to you, **beloved sons**, the working-men of the Lord's vineyard. In your hands lies the immediate responsibility for disseminating the wisdom of Christ, and with this **responsibility the salvation of innumerable souls.** Our first admonition is this: **never for a moment forget the lofty and splendid character of the task to which you have devoted yourselves.** Your task is a divine one, a task far beyond the feeble reach of human reasoning. **You have been called to carry light to men who lie in the shadow of death** and to open the way to heaven for souls that are hurtling to destruction. (Benedict XV. *Apostolic Letter Maximum illud*, no. 18, November 30, 1919)

III – PASTORS OF THE CHURCH SHOULD INDICATE SECURE PATHS FOR THEIR FLOCK

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers to tend the church of God

Keep watch over yourselves and over the whole flock of which the holy Spirit has appointed you **overseers, in which you tend the church of God** that he acquired with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

JOHN PAUL II

The mission of teaching proper to Bishops: courageously proclaiming the faith

The Second Vatican Council, advancing along the path indicated by the Church's tradition, explains that the mission of teaching proper to Bishops consists in **reverently safeguarding and courageously proclaiming the faith.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores gregis*, no. 28, October 16, 2003)

PIUS XII

The Church cannot disregard precautions with what is contrary to sound morals

and can result in serious danger to souls

But since the Church is the teacher of the doctrine which leads to salvation, and has all that is necessary for the attainment of holiness, She is exercising an inviolable right when She teaches what has been committed to Her by divine command. [...] In like manner, approval cannot be given to the false principles of those who assert and claim freedom to depict and propagate anything at all, even though there has been established beyond dispute in these past years both the kind and the extent of the damage to both bodies and souls which has had its source in these principles. There is no question here of the true liberty of which We have spoken above, but rather of an uncontrolled freedom, which disregards all precautions, of communicating with others anything at all, even though it be contrary to sound morals and can result in serious danger to souls. The Church encourages and supports everything which truly concerns a fuller enrichment of the mind – for She is the patron and foster mother of human knowledge and the noble arts; therefore She cannot permit the violation of those principles and laws which direct and govern man in his path to God, his final end. Let no one, then, be surprised if, in this matter, where many reservations are necessary, the Church acts with due thought and discretion, according to that saying of the Apostle: ‘But prove all things: hold fast that which is good. From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves’ (1Thess 5: 21-22). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Miranda prorsus*, September 8, 1957)

LEO XIII

The Church should not shape her teachings in accord with the spirit of the age

The underlying principle of these new opinions is that, in order to more easily attract those who differ from her, the Church should shape her teachings more in accord with the spirit of the age and relax some of her ancient severity and make some concessions to new opinions. Many think that these concessions should be made not only in regard to ways of living, but even in regard to doctrines which belong to the deposit of the faith. They contend that it would

be opportune, in order to gain those who differ from us, to omit certain points of her teaching which are of lesser importance, and to tone down the meaning which the Church has always attached to them. [...] Such a policy would tend rather to separate Catholics from the Church than to bring in those who differ. There is nothing closer to our heart than to have those who are separated from the fold of Christ return to it, but in no other way than the way pointed out by Christ. [...] History proves clearly that the Apostolic See, to which has been entrusted the mission not only of teaching but of governing the whole Church, has continued ‘in one and the same doctrine, one and the same sense, and one and the same judgment,’ (Const. *de fide Catholica*, Ch. 4) In this matter the Church must be the judge, not private men who are often deceived by the appearance of right. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Testem Benevolentiae*, January 22, 1899)

CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS

The Bishop should model his style of governance on divine wisdom

So the Bishop should model his style of governance both on divine wisdom, which teaches him to consider the eternal dimension of things, and also on evangelical prudence, which enables him to keep ever in mind, with the skill of a master builder (1Cor 3:10), the changing needs of the Body of Christ. [...] Prudence will prompt him to preserve the legitimate traditions of his particular Church, but it will also make him keen to encourage due progress, zealous in his search for new initiatives, while always safeguarding the unity that is needed. (Congregation for Bishops. *Apostolorum successores: Directory for the pastoral ministry of Bishops*, Ch. II, no. 41, February 22, 2004)

JOHN PAUL II

The ‘nets’ we are called upon to cast among men are the Sacraments

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate! Christ repeats to us today: ‘*Duc in altum* -Put out into the deep!’ (Lk 5:4). Following His invitation, we may reread the triple munus entrusted to us

in the Church: *munus docendi, sanctificandi et regendi* (the ministry of teaching, sanctifying and governing. *Duc in docendo!* (Lead in teaching). With the Apostle we will say: 'Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort – be unfailing in patience and in teaching' (2Tim 4:2). *Duc in sanctificando!* (Lead in sanctifying). **The 'nets' we are called upon to cast among men are, first of all, the Sacraments, of which we are the principal dispensers, governors, guardians and promoters.** (John Paul II. *Homily at the inauguration of the 10th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops*, no. 6, September 30, 2001)

Teaching and example of an authentic life of faith are inseparable

No full treatment of the ministry of the Bishop, as the preacher of the Gospel and guardian of the faith among the People of God, can fail to mention the duty of personal integrity: **the Bishop's teaching is prolonged in his witness and his example of an authentic life of faith.** He teaches with an authority exercised in the name of Jesus Christ, the word which is heard in the community; **were he not to live what he teaches, he would be giving the community a contradictory message.** [...] The witness of his life becomes for a Bishop a new basis for authority alongside the objective basis received in episcopal consecration. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores gregis*, no. 31, October 16, 2003)

The primacy of grace is the essential principle for any pastoral ministry

The Bishop must be the first to show by the example of his own life the need to re-establish the primacy of 'being' over 'doing' and, more importantly, **the primacy of grace**, which, in the Christian vision of life, remains the essential principle for any 'planning' of pastoral ministry. A Bishop can be considered a genuine minister of communion and hope for God's holy people only when he walks in the presence of the Lord. **It is not possible to be a servant of others unless one is first a 'servant of God'.** And one can only be a servant of God if one is a 'man of God'. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores gregis*, no. 12-13, October 16, 2003)

BENEDICT XVI

A Pastor supervises not as a bureaucrat but as one who sees from God's viewpoint

Perhaps these are the two central concepts for this office of 'shepherd': **to nourish by making the Word of God known**, not only with words but by testifying to it for God's will and to **protect it with prayer, with the full commitment of one's life.** Pastors, the other meaning which the Fathers saw in the Christian word '*episkopoi*' is: **someone who supervises not as a bureaucrat but as one who sees from God's viewpoint**, who walks towards the heights of God and in the light of God sees this small community of the Church. **This is also important** for a pastor of the Church, for a priest, an '*episkopos*' **who sees from the viewpoint of God, who tries to see from on high with God's criterion, not according to his own preferences**, but rather as God judges; to see from God's heights and thus loving with God and through God. (Benedict XVI. *Lectio Divina*, meeting with the parish priests of the Rome Diocese, March 10, 2011)

Pastors must make themselves examples to the flock, knowing how to resist enemies

It is the shepherd's task to feed and tend his flock and take it to the right pastures. **Grazing the flock means taking care that the sheep find the right nourishment**, that their hunger is satisfied and their thirst quenched. The metaphor apart, this means: **the word of God is the nourishment that the human being needs.** Making God's word ever present and new and thereby giving nourishment to people is the task of the righteous Pastor. And he must also **know how to resist the enemies, the wolves. He must go first, point out the way, preserve the unity of the flock.** Peter, in his discourse to priests, highlights another very important thing. **It is not enough to speak. Pastors must make themselves 'examples to the flock'** (1Pet 5:3). When it is lived, the word of God is brought from the past into the present. It is marvellous to see how in saints the word of God becomes a word addressed to our time. [...] This is what **being a Pastor** means a model for the flock: living the word now, in the great community of holy Church. (Benedict XVI. *Homily*, June 29, 2009)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Bishops should sanctify the churches entrusted to them by an example of holiness

They [Bishops] should also be mindful of their obligation to give an example of holiness in charity, humility, and simplicity of life. Let them so hallow the churches entrusted to them that the feeling of the universal Church of Christ may shine forth fully in them. [...] Those associations should also be **promoted and supported** which either directly or indirectly **pursue a supernatural objective**, that is, either the attaining of a more perfect life, the spreading of the Gospel of Christ to all men, and the promoting of Christian doctrine. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Christus Dominus*, no. 15.17, October 28, 1965)

IV – CAN THE HOLY CHURCH BE MISGUIDED?

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

The Church is unmovable, unshaken, steadfast and perpetual

It is the same as Saint Paul teaches when he calls the Church the pillar and ground of truth (1Tim 3:15). Is not this to say that truth is solidly upheld in the Church? **Elsewhere truth is only maintained at intervals, it falls often, but in the Church it is without vicissitude, unmovable, unshaken, in a word steadfast and perpetual.** (Saint Francis de Sales. *The Catholic Controversy*, Part I, Mission, Ch. 12, p. 71)

To say that the Church errs is to say that God errs

Ah! Who will give me to know the good among so many bad? Who will tell me the real verity through so many specious and masked vanities. **Everybody would embark on the ship of the Holy Spirit; there is but one, and only that one shall reach the port, all the rest are on their way to shipwreck.** Ah! What danger am I in of erring! [...] But he who shall consider how perfectly authentic is the testimony which God has given of the Church, will see that to

say the Church errs is to say no less than that God errs, or else that he is willing and desirous for us to err; which would be a great blasphemy. (Saint Francis de Sales. *The Catholic Controversy*, Part I, Mission, Ch. 12, p. 69-70)

GREGORY XVI

It is injurious to propose the Church as subject to defect or obscurtion

To use the words of the fathers of Trent, it is certain that the Church 'was instructed by Jesus Christ and His Apostles and that all truth was daily taught it by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit' (Council of Trent, session 13) Therefore, **it is obviously absurd and injurious to propose a certain 'restoration and regeneration' for her as though necessary for her safety and growth, as if she could be considered subject to defect or obscurtion or other misfortune.** Indeed these authors of novelties consider that a 'foundation may be laid of a new human institution,' and what Cyprian detested may come to pass, that what was a divine thing 'may become a human church' (Saint Cyprian, Epistle 52). (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 10, August 15, 1832)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men, but truly the word of God

The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One (Jn 2:20, 27), cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith when 'from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful' they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God (1Thess 5:12, 19-21). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 12, November 21, 1964)

Pius IX

Fearlessly defend the cause of God and His holy Church never tolerating anything which could defile the purity of this faith

Indeed, We especially call forth in the Lord your own illustrious piety, virtue and prudence, venerable brothers. With these and relying on heavenly aid, **you may fearlessly defend the cause of God and His holy Church as befits your station** and the office for which you are marked. You must fight energetically, since you know very well what great wounds the undefiled Spouse of Christ Jesus has suffered, and how vigorous is the destructive attack of Her enemies. You must also **care for and defend the Catholic faith with episcopal strength and see that the flock entrusted to you stands to the end firm and unmoved in the faith. For unless one preserves the faith entire and uninjured, he will without doubt perish forever** (*Ex Symbolo Quicumque*). So, in accordance with your pastoral care, work assiduously to protect and preserve this faith. Never cease to instruct all men in it [...] to convince dissenters, [...] by never tolerating and letting pass anything which could in the slightest degree defile the purity of this faith. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 19.20, November 9, 1846)

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Proselytism is downright nonsense; it doesn't make any sense

According to the Oxford Dictionary 'proselytize' means 'convert or attempt to convert someone from one religion [...] to another,' while 'proselyte' means 'a person who has converted from one opinion, religion [...] to another.' Ever since the time of Jesus, the Church – as guardian of the truth – has given special importance to attracting all people to its midst, thus leading them toward salvation. In other words, it employs a proselytism for the good, in the full sense of the word. However... perhaps other methods are more pleasing to God.

FRANCIS

Proselytism is downright nonsense; it doesn't make any sense. We need to learn to understand each other, listen to one another, and increase our knowledge about the world around us. It often happens that after one meeting I want to have another one because new ideas emerge and new needs are discovered. This is what is important: to know one another, to listen to one another, broaden the range of thought. **The world is full of streets that converge and diverge; the important thing is that they lead to the Good.** (*Interview with Eugenio Scalfari*, October 1, 2013 – La Repubblica text)¹

Should you go and convince someone else that he should become Catholic? No, no, no! Go and encounter him, he is your brother! And this is enough. And go and help him, Jesus or the Holy Spirit will do the rest. (*Video-Message on the feast of Saint Cajetan*, August 7, 2013)

But Paul, too, was 'aware that he must evangelize, not proselytize'. Paul teaches what the path of evangelization should be, to follow with courage. And **'when the Church loses this apostolic courage, she becomes a lifeless Church. Orderly, perhaps – nice, very nice – but barren, because she has lost the courage to go to the outskirts, where there are so many people who are victims of idolatry, worldliness, and weak thought.'** In order to curb the fear of making a mistake, you have to realize that you can rise and continue to move forward. **'Those who do not walk for fear of making a mistake' – concluded Pope Francis – 'make the most serious mistake.'** (*Homily in the Chapel of Domus Sanctae Marthae*, May 8, 2013)

I am also delighted to know that in recent years, it has been possible to restore several Christian shrines in Algeria. **By welcoming everyone as they are, with be-**

¹ **Note:** The authors of this study are aware that the Press Office of the Vatican has denied the interpretations that some media sources have attributed to certain affirmations contained in the interviews of Pope Francis with Eugenio Scalfari. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that some of these sources are still published on the Vatican website (found by clicking on the links of the articles), lending an official air to their content, seemingly with the approval of Pope Francis himself. In the midst of all the turmoil and confusion caused, we always feel that a presentation of the true doctrine should be made with clarity, together with such affirmations. We must not forget that the majority of the public read only the titles that the media publishes, and, as we know, the latter frequently manipulate the truth. Consequently, it appears that a mere declaration that the content of these interviews does not correspond with the textual words of Pope Francis, is simply not sufficient. As such, we publish this article with the intention of clarifying and orienting the faithful, who have always been the principle objective of this page, as we had expressed in our letter of presentation. In this way, each one can make a correct judgment, having beforehand attained knowledge of the truth.

nevolence and without proselytism, your communities manifest the desire to be a **Church with open doors**, one which ever 'goes forth' (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium* no. 46-47). (*Address to the Bishops of North Africa, C.E.R.N.A.*, on their ad limina visit, March 2, 2015)

[Eugenio Scalfari] One day, at one of our meetings, he spoke to me of that mission which concerned also unbelievers. 'The missionary Church' – he said to me – 'does not proselytize, rather attempts to engender in people the search for good in their own souls' (*Conversation with Eugenio Scalfari*, *La Repubblica*, March 15, 2015)

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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JOHN PAUL II

Today conversion is seen as ‘proselytizing’ – overlooking each person’s right has to hear the Good News

The proclamation of the Word of God has **Christian conversion as its aim**: a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his Gospel through faith. Conversion is a gift of God, a work of the Blessed Trinity. It is the Spirit who opens people’s hearts so that they can believe in Christ and ‘confess him’(cf. 1 Cor 12:3); of those who draw near to him through faith Jesus says: ‘No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him’ (Jn 6:44). **From the outset, conversion is expressed in faith which is total and radical**, and which neither limits nor hinders God’s gift. At the same time, it gives rise to a dynamic and lifelong process which demands a continual turning away from ‘life according to the flesh’ to ‘life according to the Spirit’ (cf. Rom 8:3-13). **Conversion means accepting, by a personal decision, the saving sovereignty of Christ and becoming his disciple.** [...] Nowadays the call to conversion which missionaries address to non-Christians is put into question or passed over in silence. **It is seen as an act of ‘proselytizing’; it is claimed that it is enough to help people to become more human or more faithful to their own religion**, that it is enough to build communities capable of working for justice, freedom, peace and solidarity. **What is overlooked is that every person has the right to hear the ‘Good News’ of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ**, so that each one can live out in its fullness his or her proper calling. This lofty reality is expressed in the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: ‘If you knew the gift of God,’ and in the unconscious but ardent desire of the woman: ‘Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst’ (Jn 4:10-15). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 46, December 7, 1990)

The Pope has the power to teach, govern and sanctify with the authority of Jesus Christ himself

The Roman Pontiff in fact has the ‘*sacra potestas*’ to teach the truth of the Gospel, administer the sacraments and pastorally govern the

Church in the name and with the authority of Christ. (John Paul II. *Address to the Tribunal of the Roman Rota*, no. 8, January 21, 2000)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

One should evangelize regardless of the obstacles

I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: **proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching.** (2 Tim 4:1-2)

Paul fears for himself if he does not preach the Gospel

If I preach the Gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! (1Cor 9:16)

GREGORY XVI

Uprightness alone, when separated from the Church, does not gain salvation

Now we consider another abundant source of the evils with which the Church is afflicted at present: **indifferentism.** This perverse opinion is spread on all sides by the fraud of the wicked who claim that it is possible to obtain the eternal salvation of the soul by the profession of any kind of religion, as long as **morality is maintained.** Surely, in so clear a matter, you will drive this deadly error far from the people committed to your care. With the admonition of the apostle that ‘there is one God, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph 4:5) may those fear who contrive the notion that the safe harbor of salvation is open to persons of any religion whatever. **They should consider the testimony of Christ Himself that ‘those who are not with Christ are against Him’ (Lk 11:23), and that they disperse unhappily who do not gather with Him.** Therefore ‘without a doubt, they will perish forever, unless they hold the Catholic faith whole and inviolate’ (Symbol of Saint Athanasius). Let them hear Jerome who, while the Church was torn into

three parts by schism, tells us that whenever someone tried to persuade him to join his group he always exclaimed: 'He who is for the See of Peter is for me' (Saint Jerome, Epistle 57). A schismatic flatters himself falsely if he asserts that he, too, has been washed in the waters of regeneration. Indeed Augustine would reply to such a man: 'The branch has the same form when it has been cut off from the vine; but of what profit for it is the form, if it does not live from the root?' (Saint Augustine, Epistle 166). (Gregory XVI. *Encyclical Mirari vos*, no. 13, August 15, 1832)

PIUS IX

Conciliators are enemies of the Church

In these times of confusion and disorder, **it is not unusual to see Christians, Catholics** – even within the secular clergy and cloisters – **who constantly have a word of conformity, of conciliation and negotiation on their lips.** Very well! I do not hesitate to declare: **these men are in error, and do not consider them to be the lesser enemies of the Church.** We live in a corrupt and pestilent atmosphere and we must know how to preserve ourselves from it. **Let us not allow ourselves to be contaminated by false doctrines, which lose all things under the pretext of saving all.** (Pius IX. *Speech in the Church of Aracoeli*, September 17, 1861)

LEO XIII

One who seeks to satisfy a heretic, grows closer to him

Therefore if a man does not want to be, or to be called, a heretic let him not strive to please this or that man...but let him hasten before all things to be in communion with the Roman See. If he be in communion with it, he should be acknowledged by all and everywhere as faithful and orthodox. He speaks in vain who tries to persuade me of the orthodoxy of those who, like himself, refuse obedience to his Holiness the Pope of the most holy Church of Rome: that is to the Apostolic See. (Leo XIII, *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 13, June 29, 1896)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The duty of the Church and the faithful is to teach and fulfill all that Christ commands

Therefore the Church announces the good tidings of salvation to those who do not believe, so that all men may know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, and may be converted from their ways, doing penance (Jn 17:3, Lk 24:27, Acts 2:38). **To believers also the Church must ever preach faith and penance, she must prepare them for the sacraments, teach them to observe all that Christ has commanded.** (Mt 28:20), and invite them to all the works of charity, piety, and the apostolate. For all these works make it clear that Christ's faithful, though not of this world, are to be the light of the world and to glorify the Father before men. (Vatican Council II. *Constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 9, December 4, 1963)

PAUL VI

In dialogue with others, we should guard ourselves from the contamination of their errors

The apostle's art is a risky one. The desire to come together as brothers must not lead to a watering down or subtracting from the truth. **Our dialogue must not weaken our attachment to our faith.** In our apostolate we cannot make **vague compromises** about the principles of faith and action on which our profession of Christianity is based. An immoderate desire to make peace and sink differences at all costs is, fundamentally, a kind of skepticism about the power and content of the Word of God which we desire to preach. **Only the man who is completely faithful to the teaching of Christ can be an apostle. And only he who lives his Christian life to the full can remain uncontaminated by the errors with which he comes into contact.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam Suam*, no. 88, August 6, 1964)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The relativism of our days is not a motive to cease the Church's evangelizing activity

The Church's commitment to evangelization can never be lacking, since according to his own promise, the presence of the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit will never be absent from her: 'I am with you always, even until the end of the world' (Mt 28:20). **The relativism and irenicism prevalent today in the area of religion are not valid reasons for failing to respond to the difficult, but awe-inspiring commitment which belongs to the nature of the Church herself and is indeed the Church's 'primary task'** (cf. Benedict XVI, Homily during the visit to the Basilica of Saint Paul outside the Walls (25 April, 2005)) '*Caritas Christi urget nos* – the love of Christ impels us' (2Cor 5:14): the lives of innumerable Catholics bear witness to this truth. Throughout the entire history of the Church, people motivated by the love of Jesus have undertaken **initiatives and works of every kind in order to proclaim the Gospel to the entire world and in all sectors of society**, as a perennial reminder and invitation to every Christian generation to fulfill with generosity the mandate of Christ. **Therefore, as Pope Benedict XVI recalls, 'the proclamation of and witness to the Gospel are the first service that Christians can render to every person and to the entire human race, called as they are to communicate to all God's love, which was fully manifested in Jesus Christ, the one Redeemer of the world'** (cf. Benedict XVI, Address to the participants in the International Conference on the 40th anniversary of the conciliar Decree 'Ad gentes' – 11 March 2006). The love which comes from God unites us to him and 'makes us a 'we' which transcends our divisions and makes us one, until in the end God is 'all in all' (1Cor 15:28). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of the Evangelization*, no. 13, December 3, 2007)

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Many grave sins were committed against the native peoples of America in the name of God. I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offenses of the Church herself, but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America

‘What has been, that will be; what has been done, that will be done. Nothing is new under the sun’ (*Eccles 1:9*). Those who lived the years previous to the commemoration of the 5th Centenary of the Discovery of America (1992) were perhaps not surprised with the words that Francis pronounced a few days ago in Ecuador and Bolivia. At that time, a so-called ‘indigenous movement’, one that opposed the evangelization and civilizing efforts of Spain and Portugal in the American continent ever since the year 1492, took shape with deceitful accusations against the Church of massacres and ambitious conquests. For several months, the centenary commemorations were disturbed by an uproar promoted by some mysterious indigenous protestors... mysterious above all due to the pale color of their skin that revealed to any observer that their origins among the much touted ‘native peoples’ were more than dubious...

This way of deforming the truth about the evangelization of America, at that time, seemed to be a preparation for something that increasingly appears to be taking on voluminous proportions in the ‘Continent of Hope’: a curious adaptation of the same old communist jargon to the socio-cultural conditions of Latin-America.

We wouldn’t wish to judge the intention of Francis’ statements – for perhaps he lacks a clear understanding of the History of America during the past 500 years, and has also perhaps not taken sufficient care to be well informed about the angelic customs (sic!) of the indigenous peoples prior to the discovery, and thus is also oblivious of their history in the preceding centuries. Perhaps he is also unaware of the extensive labor that was undertaken by countless missionaries, especially Franciscans and Jesuits, his brethren in habit, often at the price of their own blood, in the vast American territory.

We merely wish to explain to our Catholic brothers and sisters the benefits of this immense evangelizing effort just as it was praised throughout the centuries by the most authoritative voices of the Church.

Moreover, we would like to call to mind that, although the Church is formed – in its visible dimension – by members who can err, the Church Herself is holy and the Spotless Bride of Christ. So, just as one cannot attribute the errors of an individual to the institution to which he belongs, even less so can this be done regarding an Institution that is divine, as is the Holy Catholic Church.

FRANCIS

I think of those hushed words of Jesus during the Last Supper as more of a shout, a cry rising up from this Mass which we are celebrating in Bicentennial Park. Let us imagine this together. **The bicentennial which this Park commemorates was that of Latin America’s cry for independence. It was a cry which arose from being conscious of a lack of freedom, of exploitation and despoliation, of being ‘subject to the passing whims of the powers that be’ (Evangelii Gaudium, 213). [...] There was no shortage of conviction or strength in that cry for freedom which arose a little more than two hundred years ago.** But history tells us that it only made headway once personal differences were set aside, together with the desire for power and the inability to appreciate other

movements of liberation which were different yet not thereby opposed. (*Homily, Holy Mass for the Evangelization of Peoples, Bicentennial Park, Quito Ecuador, July 7, 2015*)

Here I wish to bring up an important issue. Some may rightly say, 'When the Pope speaks of colonialism, he overlooks certain actions of the Church'. I say this to you with regret: **many grave sins were committed against the native peoples of America in the name of God.** My predecessors acknowledged this, CELAM, the Council of Latin American Bishops, has said it, and I too wish to say it. Like Saint John Paul II, **I ask that the Church** – I repeat what he said – **'kneel before God and implore forgiveness for the past and present sins of her sons and daughters'** (John Paul II. Bull *Incarnationis Mysterium*, November 30, 1998). I would also say, and here I wish to be quite clear, as was Saint John Paul II: **I humbly ask forgiveness, not only for the offenses of the Church herself, but also for crimes committed against the native peoples during the so-called conquest of America.** Together with this request for forgiveness and in order to be just, I also would like us to remember the thousands of priests and bishops who strongly opposed the logic of the sword with the power of the Cross. **There was sin, a great deal of it, for which we did not ask pardon. So for this, we ask forgiveness, I ask forgiveness.** But here also, where there was sin, great sin, grace abounded through the men and women who defended the rights of indigenous peoples. (Address, Participation at the Second Meeting of Popular Movements, Expo Feria, Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia, July 9, 2015)

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I – RECOGNITION BY THE CHAIR OF SAINT PETER OF THE EPIC TASK OF THE EVANGELIZATION OF THE AMERICAS

ALEXANDER VI

May the name of the Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ, be introduced into those countries and islands

Among other works well pleasing to the Divine Majesty and cherished of our heart, this certainly is the most elevated, that in our times especially the Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the same faith. [...] Hence, heartily commending in the Lord this your holy and praiseworthy purpose, and desirous that it be duly accomplished, and that the name of our Savior be carried into those regions, we exhort you very earnestly in the Lord and by your reception of holy baptism, whereby you are bound to our apostolic commands, and by the bowels of the

mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, enjoy strictly, that inasmuch as with eager zeal for the true faith you design to equip and despatch this expedition, you purpose also, as is your duty, to lead the peoples dwelling in those islands and countries to embrace the Christian religion; nor at any time let dangers or hardships deter you therefrom, with the stout hope and trust in your hearts that Almighty God will further your undertakings. And, in order that you may enter upon so great an undertaking with greater readiness and heartiness endowed with benefit of our apostolic favor, we, of our own accord, not at your instance nor the request of anyone else in your regard, but out of our own sole largess and certain knowledge and out of the fullness of our apostolic power, by the authority of Almighty God conferred upon us in blessed Peter and of the vicarship of Jesus Christ, which we hold on earth, do by tenor of these presents, should any of said islands have been found by your envoys and captains, give, grant, and assign to you and your heirs and successors, kings of Castile and Leon, forever, together with all their dominions, cities, camps, places, and villages. (Alexander VI. *Bull Inter caetera*, May 4, 1493)

ADRIAN VI

We order them to undertake such journeys and works

You made manifest to us your ardent desire to enhance the Christian Religion and to promote the conversion of the unbelievers, principally those who, having Christ as a guide, are subject to your power in the regions of the Indies. And so that in such a holy work the merit of obedience may not be absent, we ordain all of those who have been nominated, to undertake, following the example of the disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ, such journeys and works, in this we firmly hope that in the same way they imitated them in their works, in a similar way they associate with them in rewards. And to the above-mentioned friars, we grant our Apostolic blessing with all our heart. (Adrian VI. *Exponi nobis fecisti*, May 10, 1522)

LEO XIII

Hundreds of thousands were reborn to eternal life, since Columbus willed intensely to propagate the Gospel to new lands

From the unsearched bosom of the ocean: hundreds of thousands of mortals have, from a state of blindness, been raised to the common level of the human race, reclaimed from savagery to gentleness and humanity; and, greatest of all, by the acquisition of those blessings of which Jesus Christ is the author, they have been recalled from destruction to eternal life. [...] This view and aim is known to have possessed his mind above all; namely, to open a way for the Gospel over new lands and seas. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Quarto abeunte saeculo*, no. 1.3, June 16, 1892)

The principles of the Catholic religion were carried by the ships of Columbus

Keeping this thought constantly in view, his first solicitude, wherever he disembarked, was to plant upon the shore the sacred emblem of the cross. Wherefore, like as the Ark of Noah, surmounting the overflowing waters, bore the seed of Israel together with the remnants of the human race, even thus did the barks launched by Columbus upon the ocean carry into

regions beyond the seas as well the germs of mighty States as the principles of the Catholic religion. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Longinqua oceani*, On Catholicism in the United States, no. 2, January 6, 1895)

PIUS XII

Transformed from idolatrous peoples into devout children of the Spouse of Christ

The pride of this faith exalts your name and makes sacred many pages of your history; this faith elevated over the vestiges of the pre-Colombian civilization, and over the savage solitudes, and even beyond the steep peaks of your mountains, the missionary spirit which, regenerating them in union with Rome, transformed those idolatrous peoples into devout children of the Spouse of Christ. (Pius XII. *Radio Message for the 2nd National Eucharist Congress of Peru*, October 27, 1940)

JOHN PAUL II

Overall positive evaluation of the labor of the first evangelizers – and a sentiment of vivid gratitude to the Lord

I wish, nevertheless, to reiterate the overall positive evaluation of the labor of the first evangelizers, who were in great part members of religious orders. [...] In this way, amid light and shadows – more light than shadows, if we think of the enduring fruits of faith and Christian life in the Continent – the first sowing of the word of life, born of so many fatigues and sacrifices, evokes the sentiments of the Apostle, that were a motto for so many missionaries: ‘We were determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our very selves as well’ (1Thess 2:8). [...] The fruits of the first evangelization began to consolidate throughout the centuries and are characteristics of the Catholicism of the Latin American people, which also stands out for a profound communitarian sense, a desire for social justice, fidelity to the Church, profound Marian piety and love for the Successor of Peter. [...] This rapid historic look over the ecclesial life of Latin America enflames me with a sentiment of vivid gratitude to the Lord for the labor of so many religious men and women who have sown the seed of the

Gospel of Christ. (John Paul II. *Apostolic Letter for the Fifth Centenary of the Evangelization of the New World*, no. 4.8.12, June 29, 1990)

Extending his arms of mercy and love, Christ embraces the New World in its entirety ever since the 12th of October 1492

I am filled with joy to be once again in this generous land, which in the plans of God was predestined to receive, five centuries ago, the Cross of Christ, which, by extending his arms of mercy and love, Christ embraces the New World in its entirety, that on the 12 of October 1492, appeared, radiant, before the astonished gaze of Christopher Columbus and his companions. (John Paul II. *Address, Welcoming ceremony at Las Americas International Airport in Santo Domingo*, October 10, 1992)

Five centuries ago, all of the inhabitants of these lands were called to be part of the Church

This is the meaning of the exhortation of Saint Peter contained in the first reading: 'Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ' (1Pet 2:5). **These words, directed to the Christians of the early Church, ended up being a reality for the inhabitants of these lands, when, five centuries ago, the message of salvation was announced for the first time.** They were all called to be part of the spiritual edifice which is the Church, whose cornerstone is Jesus Christ. (John Paul II. *Homily, Mass for Priests and Religious, Santo Domingo*, no. 2-3, October 10, 1992)

The faith became a constitutive factor of the being and identity of the Americas – fruit of the blood of the martyrs

To this Continent arrived the Gospel of the beatitudes, the proclamation of Christ crucified and resurrected, of his compassionate and liberating sorrow, a way to a new heaven and a new earth where there will be no more tears, nor death (cf. Rev 21:1-4). 'The kindness and generous love of God our Savior' (Tit 3:4) have been proclaimed in these lands. In the open

furrows of your history, the seed of the Gospel, watered by the blood of the martyrs, gave fruit as a believing people who welcomed the Lord of Life, and 'the faith became a constitutive factor of their being and their identity' (Puebla, 412), as five centuries of Christian life have demonstrated. (John Paul II. *Homily at Mass for Priests and Religious, Santo Domingo*, no. 3, October 10, 1992)

America, open the doors wide to Christ! Let the seed planted five centuries ago give fruit in all the areas of your life

With the strength of the Holy Spirit the redeeming work of Christ is made present through that multitude of missionaries who, urged on by the mandate of the Lord to 'proclaim the gospel to every creature' (Mk 16:15), **crossed the ocean to announce to their brothers the message of salvation. [...] Today, together with the entire Church, we raise our thanks for the five centuries of evangelization.** Truly the words of the prophet Isaiah are fulfilled, which said: 'Your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you' (Is 60:5). **These are the riches of faith, of hope, of love.** They are 'the wealth of nations' (Ibid): their values, knowledge, and culture. The Church, who throughout its history has known difficulties and divisions, feels enriched by He who is the Lord of history. **America, open wide the doors to Christ! Let the seed that was planted five centuries ago give fruit in all the areas of your life:** individuals and families, culture and work, economy and politics, the present and the future. (John Paul II. *Homily of the Mass on the Fifth Centenary of Evangelization in the Americas*, no. 3, 5-6, Santo Domingo, October 11, 1992)

In the baptismal waters you were born to a new life in the Mystical Body of Christ, common home to all who invoke God as Father

Latin America! As Successor of Peter and Bishop of Rome I salute you on this the 5th Centenary of your evangelization, recalling the year 1492 when the ships from Spain, guided by Columbus, brought to these fertile lands the seed of the Gospel, also making a reality the encounter between two worlds. [...] I give thanks, over all, for your 500 years of

Christian faith. In the baptismal waters you were born to a new life, integrated into the Mystical Body of Christ, which is the Church; one, holy, Catholic and apostolic, ark of salvation and common home to all those who invoke God as Father. Your openness to grace and your welcome to the Word of life have made you go from darkness into that admirable light which, in your saints, is a shining lamp that from the Church, lights up the world. **America of the third Christian millennium: always be faithful to Jesus Christ! Be worthy of those abnegated missionaries who planted in your midst the seed of the faith.** Open yourself more and more, with humility and love, to the Good News that liberates and saves. **Firmly resist the attacks of evil and the temptation to violence.** (John Paul II. *Message to Latin America from the 'Faro a Colon'*, Lighthouse dedicated to Christopher Columbus, Santo Domingo, October 12, 1992)

How can we fail to give thanks for the seed planted by so many and such courageous missionaries!

This Conference meets to celebrate Jesus Christ, to give thanks to God for His presence in these lands of America, where, 500 years ago today, the message of salvation started spreading; it meets in order to celebrate the implantation of the **Church**, which, in the New World, during these five centuries has given such abundant fruits of sanctity and love. [...] Evangelization itself, however, began with the second journey of the explorers, who were accompanied by the first missionaries. In this way the sowing of the precious gift of the faith began. And, how can we fail to give thanks to God for it, together with you, dear Brother Bishops, who today make present in Santo Domingo all of the particular Churches of Latin America? **How can we fail to give thanks for the abundant fruits of the seed planted throughout these five centuries by so many and such courageous missionaries!** (John Paul II. *Inaugural Address on the occasion of the 4th General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate*, October 12, 1992)

Through faith in Christ, God renewed his alliance with Latin America

With the arrival of the Gospel in America the history of salvation expands, the family of God grows, and is multiplied so that 'more and more

people may cause the thanksgiving to overflow for the glory of God' (2Cor 4:15). The people of the New World were 'new people...totally unknown to the Old World since the year 1492', but known by God from all eternity and by Him embraced with the paternity that was revealed by the Son in the fullness of time **In the peoples of America, God has chosen a new people, has incorporated them to his redeeming plan, has made them participate in his Spirit. Through the evangelization and the faith in Christ, God has renewed his alliance with Latin America.** (John Paul II. *Inaugural Address on the occasion of the 4th General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate*, no. 3, October 12, 1992)

BENEDICT XVI

The priceless treasure of Latin America is faith in God -not a political ideology

This is the priceless treasure that is so abundant in Latin America, this is her most precious inheritance: faith in the God who is Love, who has shown us his face in Jesus Christ. You believe in the God who is Love: this is your strength, which overcomes the world, the joy that nothing and no one can ever take from you, the peace that Christ won for you by his Cross! This is the faith that has made America the 'Continent of Hope.' Not a political ideology, not a social movement, not an economic system: faith in the God who is Love – who took flesh, died and rose in Jesus Christ – is the authentic basis for this hope which has brought forth such a magnificent harvest from the time of the first evangelization until today... (Benedict XVI. *Holy Mass for the inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida -Homily*, May 13, 2007)

CELAM – RIO DE JANEIRO DOCUMENT

The Glory of the Church consists in having undertaken the work of civilization so that the indigenous people were incorporated into the bosom of true civilization

It is a glory for the Church to have undertaken the work of civilization [of America] and its evangelization; a glory to have defended it

against those who wished to abuse it in other times; **glory to have instilled this profound religious sentiment that solely awaits a persevering labor so that the 'Indian' may be incorporated with honor into the bosom of true civilization.** The work of the missions among the unbelievers fills the most beautiful pages of the history of the Church in America. May this work continue gloriously, thanks to the apostolic spirit that, today as long ago, so powerfully fills our missionaries. (CELAM, First General Conference. *Declaration of the Cardinals, Bishops and other prelates representing the Latin American Hierarchy*, no. IV, Rio de Janeiro, August 4, 1955)

CELAM – APARECIDA DOCUMENT

Faith in God and the Catholic tradition are the greatest wealth of America

Therefore, we especially give thanks to God and praise him for everything that has been bestowed on us. **We accept the entire reality of our continent as gift:** the beauty and fertility of its lands, the richness of humanity expressed in the individuals, families, peoples, and cultures of the continent. **Above all, we have been given Jesus Christ, the fullness of God's Revelation,** a priceless treasure, the 'precious pearl' (cf. Mt 13: 45-46), the Word of God made flesh, Way, Truth and Life of men and women, to whom he opens a destiny of utter justice and happiness. [...] **Faith in God who is Love and the Catholic tradition in the life and culture of our peoples are their greatest wealth.** It is manifested in the mature faith of many of the baptized and in popular piety... (CELAM, Fifth General Episcopal Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean, Concluding Document, Aparecida, no. 5-7, July 29, 2007)

PIUS XII

Universities inspired by the Church flourished in America -fruit of missionary work aided by the Catholic spirit of the legislation of the monarchs

And this in a world as is your Ibero-American world, in which the Church, **fully conscious of the cultural mission that accompanies its religious message,** with Friar Juan de

Zumárraga, Friar Alonso de la Vera Cruz and the great bishop Vasco de Quiroga in Mexico; with Friar Jerónimo de Loáisía, José de Acosta and the eminent metropolitan Bishop of Lima, Saint Toribio de Mogrovejo in Peru; and with the Jesuits Torres Bollo, Manuel de Nóbrega and Saint Peter Claver in old Paraguay, in Brazil and in New Granada, flourished **an educative and schooling effort which, given the insufficient means of that century and the difficulties which were opposed to it, We are pleased to call it grandiose and profoundly enduring.** It is enough to recall **the intent, in great part achieved, of those great missionaries, supported by the universal and Catholic spirit of the legislation of their monarchs,** of melding into one people, through catechesis, school, and the colleges of Humane Letters, the indigenous element with the cultured classes coming from Europe or already born in the American lands. Nor was this effort limited to the elemental and humanistic teaching. **For it is a perpetual glory for Hispanic America, that in the 18th century, there flourished in nineteen of her cities as many or more university centers, inspired and directed by the Church.** (Pius XII. *Radio message on the occasion of the Fifth Inter American Congress of Catholic Education*, January 12, 1954)

II – PRAISES LAVISHED BY THE POPES ON THE KINGDOMS OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF AMERICA

PIUS IX

Spain was great because it founded its grandeur in propagating the Christian religion

Spain has always showed a special predilection for this Apostolic See and has sought to take Christian civilization to all nations of the globe. **The Spanish flag has flown in the seas of America, India and other regions, to manifest that it was a symbol of the faith of Jesus Christ,** differently than the tricolored flag [of the French Revolution] that represented and produced all of that which we all know. That is why **Spain was great in former times, because it founded its grandeur in propagating the Christian religion, serving and defending it, and making all kinds of sacrifices to this**

end. (Pius IX. *Address in response to the homage of Spanish pilgrims on the occasion of the XXV Anniversary of his Pontificate*, June 20, 1870)

PIUS X

Your nations have remained faithful to their faith and traditions

I congratulate you and all of the Bishops of Spanish America, because your nations [...] have remained faithful to their faith and traditions. With this act of fidelity, which today you manifest toward Spain, you show your recognition of the debt of gratitude that you owe it, and that you praise; because unlike other peoples who, being favored by God, have nonetheless turned their backs to the Vicar of Christ, showing themselves to be extremely ungrateful, Spain, despite all difficulties, has always remained faithful to the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion, and, will surely remain so in the future. (Pius X. *Allocution*, November 22, 1908)

PIUS XII

Portugal: God used you as a precious instrument for admirable accomplishments

And now, when more than a few European nations have been lost to the Church because of the changes in these calamitous times, We see your people and their Spanish brothers opening paths and laboring for the Church in the spacious lands of Africa, Asia, and America. [...] But how does it happen that you, although not numerous, achieve such good deeds? (cf. Camoes, *Lusiadas*, VII. 3). Where did the people of Portugal get that vigorous strength with which they were able to dominate the shores of Africa and Asia and even the distant land of America? Without a doubt this came about because that nation, as the greatest poet of Portugal sang, persevered in an ardent and strong faith; also, your leaders were preeminent in Christian wisdom and prudence. Therefore, God used your nation as a precious instrument for admirable accomplishments. (Pius XII. *Encyclical Saeculo exeunte octavo*, no. 8-10, June 13, 1940)

JOHN PAUL II

Thank you Spain for your fidelity to the Gospel and to the Spouse of Christ! – due to your incomparable evangelizing activity the most numerous portion of the Church of Christ today prays to God in Spanish

I come attracted by an admirable history of fidelity and service to the Church, written in apostolic undertakings and in so many great figures that renewed this Church, that strengthened its faith, defending it in difficult moments and giving it new children in entire continents. In effect, thanks above all for this incomparable evangelizing activity; the most numerous portion of the Church of Christ today, speaks and prays to God in Spanish. After my apostolic journeys, overall in Hispanic-American lands and the Philippines, I would like to say at this special moment: Thank you, Spain; thank you, Church of Spain, for your fidelity to the Gospel and to the Spouse of Christ! (John Paul II. *Welcome address at the Madrid-Barajas Airport*, no. 4, October 31, 1982)

Loving your past and purifying it, you will be faithful to yourselves

With my journey I had wished to awaken in you a remembrance of your Christian past and of the great moments of your religious history. A history for which despite inevitable human failings – the Church owes you a testimony of gratitude. Without this signifying an invitation to live with nostalgia, gazing only to the past, I wished to invigorate your Christian potential, so that you may know how to illuminate your future from the light of faith and construct upon a Christian humanism the foundations of your current harmony. For in loving your past and purifying it, you will be faithful to yourselves and capable of opening yourselves with originality to the future. (John Paul II. *Farewell ceremony at the Labacolla Airport of Santiago de Compostela*, no. 3, November 9, 1982)

III – THE PURPOSE OF THE EVANGELIZATION IN AMERICA: TO BRING DIVINE LIFE TO THE PAGANS AND TREAT THEM AS CHILDREN OF GOD

PIUS V

Be attentive to redirect this people to
pacific customs and civilized ways of life

We also desire that you be attentive, as much as you are able, to redirect this people, and above all those who with the help of the Lord were received into the Christian faith, from the habits of a savage life to more pacific customs and civilized ways of life, as well as persuading them that by abandoning that inept nudity of the body, which they claim to be accustomed to, they assume clothes appropriate to Christian modesty and civilized customs. (Pius V. *Letter Etsi fraternitas tuam to the Bishop of Salvador de Bahia*)

By the propagation of religion, your
kingdom shall also be consolidated and
augmented -and will be rewarded in this
life and the next

Because the motive through which that part of the world was granted since the beginning to your ancestors, was so that those who had not yet received the faith in Christ, in virtue of the laudable government of those who should direct them as also due to the good examples of those who should bring them to the Christian doctrine, feeling that the yolk of Christ is easy and light and not being oppressed by those who should care for them and nourish them, as though they were tender plants in the vineyard of the Lord, and even inflame and augment in them love for the Christian religion. Your Majesty may be certain that, by the propagation of religion, your kingdom shall, in these regions, through divine goodness and favor, also be consolidated and augmented, and will prepare for itself, through the merits obtained together with those peoples and before religion, a reward not only in this life as also in the other. (Pius V. *Letter Cum oporteat nos to King Phillip II*, August 17, 1568)

JOHN PAUL II

Men in whom pulsates concern for the
weak, for the defenseless native

From the first moments of the discovery, there appears the concern of the Church to make the kingdom of God present in the heart of the new peoples, races, and cultures; in the first place, among your ancestors. If we wish to express our well-deserved thanks to those who transplanted the seeds of faith, this tribute must be paid in the first place to the religious orders which distinguished themselves, [...] Nor is it a question, moreover, of a spreading of the faith detached from the life of those for whom it was intended; although it must always keep its essential reference to God. Therefore the Church in this island was the first to demand justice and to promote the defence of human rights in the lands that were opening to evangelization. Lessons of humanism, spirituality and effort to raise man's dignity, are taught to us by Antonio Montesinos, Córdoba, Bartolomé de las Casas, echoed also in other parts by Juan de Zumárraga, Motolinia, Vasco de Quiroga, José de Anchieta, Toribio de Mogrovejo, Nóbrega and so many others. They are men in whom pulsates concern for the weak, for the defenseless, for the natives; subjects worthy of all respect as persons and as bearers of the image of God, destined for a transcendent vocation. The first International Law has its origin here with Francisco de Vitoria. The fact is that the proclamation of the Gospel and human advancement cannot be dissociated – this is the great lesson, valid also today. But for the Church, the former cannot be confused or exhausted, as some people claim, in the latter. That would be to close to man infinite spaces that God has opened to him. And it would be to distort the deep and complete meaning of evangelization, which is above all the proclamation of the Good News of Christ the Saviour. (John Paul II. *Homily*, Independence Square, Santo Domingo, January 25, 1979)

Apostles that put themselves side by side
with the indigenous populations -he who
evangelizes also civilizes

You wished that the mass of the Pope in his passage through this city be a remembrance of another Mass: that which was the first

to be celebrated in the recently discovered land. What shall I say to you, then? **The first observation to be made is that, while the majority of peoples came to know Christ and the Gospel after centuries of its history, the nations of the Latin American continent and, among them, in a special way Brazil, were born Christian.** The caravels, which on April 3, 1500, docked at the bay of Porto Seguro, also brought the first missionaries and evangelizers, the sons of Saint Francis. When Pedro Álvares Cabral and the first colonizers disembarked, a cross was raised and the First Mass prayed, in which were present, some indigenous people, filled with admiration. To the new lands the name Land of the Holy Cross was given. **These happenings, at the dawning of Brazil, would profoundly mark the five centuries of history of the new nation that was born to the West. [...] It is certain that apostles, such as Father Jose Anchieta [...] put themselves decidedly on the side of the indigenous populations, learning their language, assimilating their preferences, adapting themselves to their mentality, defending their lives and, simultaneously, announcing to them the saving truth of Jesus Christ, converting them to the Gospel, baptizing them and integrating them into the Church. Brazilian Catholicism rose in this way, evolving, as Brazil itself, into one of the most important fusions of human history. During three centuries, there were mixed here the native, European and the African, and, since last century, to the blood of the culture of the Arabs, such as the Christian Maronites, and the Asiatic Japanese immigrants, today constituting a great community, which is predominantly Catholic.** In this way Brazil offers a highly positive testimony. Here a multi-racial community of Christian inspiration is being built. A real tapestry of races, as the sociologists affirm, all amalgamated through the bond of the same tongue and the same Faith. [...] These are so many other proofs of the great religiosity of the Brazilians, Catholic in the absolute majority of its sons and daughters. **The Christian Faith respects the cultural expressions of any people, as long as they are true and authentic values. But failing to transmit to all men the integral deposit of the Faith would be an infidelity to the very mission of the Church. [...] It would be to not grant to men a fundamental right of theirs: the right to the truth. The true apostle of the**

Gospel is one who humanizes and evangelizes at the same time, in the certainty that, one who evangelizes, also civilizes. (John Paul II. *Mass in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil, July 7, 1980*)

IV – THE POPES WERE NOT SILENT ABOUT INJUSTICES. CONDEMNATION UNDER PAIN OF EXCOMMUNICATION TO THOSE WHO ENSLAVED THE PEOPLES OF THE AMERICAS

PAUL III

Prohibition to rob or enslave the indigenous peoples

Now We who, despite our unworthiness, are the Lord's representative on earth and wish, with all our strength, to bring into his fold those who have been entrusted to us and who are still outside the sheepfold, consider that the Indians, as true human beings, are not only capable of accepting the Christian faith but even more, from what We have learned, run with haste to embrace this faith. And desiring to bring them all the help necessary, We decide and declare, by these letters, in virtue of Our Apostolic Authority, that the said Indians and all other peoples whom Christians might come to know, even if they live outside the faith, can freely and licitly use, possess and enjoy freedom and the possession of their goods, and must not be enslaved. Every measure which contradicts these principles is abrogated and invalid. Moreover, We decide and declare that the Indians and the other peoples must be invited to the said faith of Christ by the proclamation of the word of God and by the example of a virtuous life. All things past or future which are contrary to these regulations are to be considered null and void. (Paul III Bull. *Veritas ipsa*, May 27, 1537)

URBAN VIII

Efficacious defense of the Indians – we vigorously prohibit that they be deprived of liberty in any way

We recommend and command each one of you assisting the same with the protection of an efficacious defense to the above-mentioned Indians in the provinces of

Paraguay, Brazil and of the so-called River Plata as in any other part of the Western and Meridian Indies, we vigorously prohibit each and every one [...] that they henceforth enslave these Indians, sell them, buy them, exchange them or give them, separate them from their wives and children, or in any other way deprive them of liberty or retain them in servitude. (Urban VIII. *Letter to the Collector Jurium of the Apostolic Chamber of Portugal*, April 22, 1639)

BENEDICT XIV

Profound sorrow caused by those who still hinder the indigenous from embracing the faith by inhuman treatment – even after grave punishments and ecclesiastical censures

Therefore we have come to know, with profound sorrow to our paternal spirit that, after so many counsels of apostolic providence dictated by our very predecessors, after so many constitutions providing that in the best way possible that help and protection would be provided to the unbelievers and prohibiting, under the most grave punishments and ecclesiastical censures, that they be injured, whipped, imprisoned or their death be caused, that even still, and above all in the regions of Brazil, there are men belonging to the true faith who, as though completely forgetting the meaning of charity infused in our souls by the Holy Spirit, either submit them to slavery, or sell them to others as though they were merchandise, or deprive the impoverished Indians of their goods, not only those lacking the light of the faith, but inclusively those regenerated by baptism, who live in the mountains and rugged regions within the eastern as well as the southern area of Brazil and other desert regions, they dare to behave toward these with such an inhumanity, that they hinder them from embracing the faith of Christ, making it profoundly odious to them. (Benedict XIV. *Letter Immensa pastorum*, no. 2, December 20, 1741)

Chastisement and grave punishments for those who behave toward the Indians in a manner contrary to Christian meekness and charity

In the effort to remedy these evils with all the power that God has given us, we have sought to interest firstly the eminent piety and the incredible zeal in the propagation of the Catholic religion of our dear son in Christ, John of Portugal, the illustrious king of the Algarve, who, given his filial devotion to Us and to this Holy See, has promised that he will immediately give orders to each and every one of the officials and ministers of his dominions so that they be chastised with the gravest punishments, according to the royal edicts, whosoever of his subjects is caught behaving toward these Indians in a manner contrary to that which the meekness of Christian charity requires. We pray you all, brothers, and We exhort you in the Lord with the object that not only do you not consent that lack – for the shame of your name and dignity – the vigilance, solicitude and the effort owing in this and your ministry, but also that, uniting your zeal to the offices of the ministers of the king, you demonstrate to all with how much greater ardor of priestly charity than the lay ministers, do the priest make efforts, pastors of souls, in the support of these Indians and in bringing them to the Catholic Faith. (Benedict XIV. *Letter Immensa pastorum*, no. 3-4, December 20, 1741)

Excommunication *latae sententiae* for those who mistreat the Indians

We, furthermore, with apostolic authority, and due to the nature of the matter at hand, renew and confirm the apostolic letters in the form of a short address by Pope Paul III, our predecessor, then cardinal of the Roman Church by the name of Juan Tavera, archbishop of Toledo, with the date of May 28, 1537, and the writings by Pope Urban VIII, equally our predecessor, to the then general collector of rights and fees due to the Apostolic Chamber in the kingdoms of Portugal and of the Algarve with the date of April 22, 1639; as also, following in the footsteps of these very predecessors, Paul and Urban, and desiring to repress the insolence of these wicked men that terrorize with inhuman acts the referred Indians, who in order to attract to receive the faith of Christ it is necessary to expend all resources of Christian charity, we recommend and command each one of you and your successors that each one by himself

or by another or others, may be dictated edicts and proposals to be affixed in public places, **aiding in the same with the protection of an efficacious defense to the same Indians within the provinces of Paraguay, Brazil and the region of the so-called Silver River as well as in any other place of the Western and Meirdian Indies, prohibit energetically for all and any one of the people, laypersons, as well as clergy, persons of any state, sex, level, condition and position, even those of special importance and with a title of dignity, as well as any order, congregation, society – including the Company of Jesus – religious group and institutes of mendicants and non-mendicants, monks, regulars, without excluding any of the military orders nor even the Hospitallers of Saint John of Jerusalem, under the pain of excommunication *latae sententiae*, which is incurred by the mere fact of transgressing that which has been ordered, and of which they may not be absolved, except in articulo mortis and with previous satisfaction, except by Us or by the Roman Pontiff reigning at the time, that continually enslave such Indians, sell them, buy them, exchange or given them, separate them from their wives and children, strip them of their belongings and goods, bring them from one place to another or transport them, or in any other way deprive them of the liberty or retain them in servitude; equally those who dare or presume to counsel, aid, help or collaborate with those who do such things, under no pretext and by no means, or transmit and teach that doing so is licit or cooperate with them in any way; declaring that, whosoever be the violators and the rebels may be, as well as those who do not obey what was formerly stated to any one of you, you have incurred the punishment of the indicated excommunication, and are reprehended equally with other censures and ecclesiastical punishments and other opportune remedies *de iure* and *de facto*, having deferred all appellation and observed the legal proceedings that exist in practice, **augmenting the censures and the same punishments in the cases of repeated offences and inclusively invoking for this, if necessary, the aid of the secular powers, We, with superior authority, grant and concede to each one of you and of your successors full, entire and free capacity.** (Benedict XIV. *Letter Immensa pastorum*, no. 5, December 20, 1741)**

JOHN PAUL II

The Catholic Church: moved by the fidelity to the Spirit of Christ, an untiring defender of the Indians and protector of the values of their cultures

We give, then, thanks to God for the profusion of **evangelizers who left their country and gave their lives to sow in the New World the new life of faith, hope and love.** They were not moved by the legend of ‘El dorado’, or personal interests, but rather by the urgent call to evangelize some brothers that did not yet know Jesus Christ. **They announced ‘the kindness and generous love of God our Savior, and His love for men’ to peoples who even offered human sacrifices to their gods.** They testified, with their witnessing and with their word, the humane [conduct] that blossoms from the encounter with Christ. Through their testimony and their preaching, the number of men and women who opened themselves to the grace of Christ was multiplied ‘as the stars in the sky, and as countless as the sands on the sea shore’. Ever since the first steps of the evangelization, **the Catholic Church, moved by fidelity to the Spirit of Christ, was an untiring defender of the Indians, protecting the values that existed in their cultures, being the defensor of humane treatment in face of the abuses of often unscrupulous colonizers.** The denouncing of the injustice and abuses through the work of Montesinos, Las Casas, Cordoba, Friar Juan del Valle and so many others, were as a clamor that proposed legislation inspired on the recognition of the sacred value of the person. The Christian conscience blossomed with prophetic bravery in this teaching of dignity and of liberty that was, in the University of Salamanca, the School of Victory, and in so many exemplary defenders of the natives, in Spain and in Latin America. Names which are well-known have, on the occasion of the 5th Centenary, been remembered with admiration and gratitude. On my part, and for the precision in defining the profiles of the historic truth, highlighting the Christian roots and the Catholic identity of the continent, I suggested that an International Symposium be held regarding the History of the Evangelization of America, organized by the Pontifical Commission for Latin America. **The historic facts show that a valid, fruitful and admirable evangelizing work was undertaken,**

and that, through it, the truth about God and about man arrived to in such a point in America that, in fact, the **evangelization itself constitutes a kind of tribunal of accusations for those responsible for such abuses.** (John Paul II. *Inaugural address on the occasion of the Fourth General Episcopal Conference of Latin American and the Caribbean*, Santo Domingo, CELAM IV, October 12, 1992)

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Being a minority is actually a strength. We have to be a leavening infinitely smaller than the mass. Our goal is not to proselytize but to listen to needs

Spiritual realities surpass natural realities, often evading the capacity of our limited intelligence. That's why the Divine Master frequently used analogies when he explained the marvels of his kingdom to his followers. Among them is the parable of the yeast: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch was leavened' (Mt 13:33). The Fathers and Doctors of the Church, as well as the Magisterium, have always considered, in different ways, this image as a symbol of the dynamism of apostolic teaching. In obedience to the mandate of the Redeemer: 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations' (Mt 28:19), the Church should reach the entire world and transform the face of the earth. Were the Apostles mistaken about the extensiveness and objective of their mission? Let's see what the Magisterium has to say...

FRANCIS

Personally I think that being a minority is actually a strength. We must be a leaven of life and love, and leaven is of an infinitely smaller quantity than the mass of fruit, flowers and trees that are born from that leaven. I think I said before that our objective is not to proselytise but to listen to needs, aspirations, disappointments, desperation and hopes. We must restore hope to the young, help the elderly, open up to the future and spread love. (Interview with Eugenio Scalfari, October 1, 2013 – La Repubblica)

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I – THE LEAVEN OF THE GOSPEL PENETRATES AND TRANSFORMS THE WORLD

PAUL VI

Deception: to think that the Church should be reduced to the modest proportions of its earliest days

In this context, therefore, when we speak about reform we are not concerned to change things, but to preserve all the more resolutely the characteristic features which Christ has impressed on His Church. Or rather, we are concerned to restore to the Church that ideal of perfection and beauty that corresponds to its original image, and that is at the same time consistent with its necessary, normal and legitimate growth from its original, embryonic form into its present structure. **No one should deceive himself into thinking that the Church which has now become a vast, magnificent, and majestic temple built to the glory of God, should be reduced to the modest proportions which it had in its earliest days, as though this minimal form were the only one that is genuine and lawful.** (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 47, August 6, 1964)

SAINT CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA

Leaven quickly communicates its own properties to the whole mass

For the leaven is small in quantity, yet forthwith it seizes upon the whole mass, and quickly communicates to it its own properties. And the word of God operates in us in a similar manner. [...] We receive

therefore the rational and divine leaven in our mind and understanding, that by this precious and holy and pure leaven we may be found spiritually unleavened, as having in us none of the wickedness of the world. (Saint Cyril of Alexandria. *Commentaries on the Gospel of Luke*, Ch. XIII, v. 21: Sermon XCVI)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

If the leaven did not change the whole, would it be leaven?

Say, **if the leaven** being mixed up with the flour **did not change the whole into its own nature, would such a thing be leaven?** [...] Say not, **'It is impossible for me to induce others (to become Christians)' – for if thou art a Christian, it is impossible but that it should be so.** (Saint John Chrysostom. *On the Acts of the Apostles*, Homily 20, no. 4)

Twelve men 'leavened' the whole world

'The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened.' **For as this converts the large quantity of meal into its own quality, even so shall ye convert the whole world.** [...] Yea, for it is He that put the power into the leaven. With this intent He mingled also with the multitude those who believe on Him, **that we might impart unto the rest of our wisdom. Let no one therefore reprove us for being few.** For great is the power of the gospel, and that which hath been once leavened, becomes leaven again for what remains. And as a spark, when it hath caught in timber, makes what hath been burnt up already increase the flame, and so proceeds to the rest;

even so the gospel likewise. But He said not fire, but 'leaven.' Why might this be? Because in that case the whole effect is not of the fire, but partly of the timber too that is kindled, but in this the leaven doth the whole work by itself. Now if twelve men leavened the whole world, imagine how great our baseness, in that when we being so many are not able to amend them that remain; we, who ought to be enough for ten thousand worlds, and to become leaven to them. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 46 on Saint Matthew*, no. 2-3)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Church should keep increasing until the Lord returns, renewing human society in Christ

Coming forth from the eternal Father's love (cf. Titus 3:4 – 'love of mankind'), founded in time by Christ the Redeemer and made one in the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 1:3, 5:6, 13-14, 23), **the Church** has a saving and an eschatological purpose which can be fully attained only in the future world. But she is already present in this world, and is composed of men, that is, of members of the earthly city who have a call to form the family of God's children during the present history of the human race, **and to keep increasing it until the Lord returns.** [...] She serves as a leaven and as a kind of soul for human society as it is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into God's family. (Vatican Council II, Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*, no. 40, December 7, 1965)

PIUS XII

The Church possesses an abiding strength from on high to build a new society of peoples

All earthly institutions begun and built solely on human wisdom and human power, in the course of time succeed one another, flourish and then quite naturally fail, weaken and crumble away; but the organization which Our Redeemer established has received from its divine Founder unfailing life and abiding strength from on high. Thus sustained and fortified the Church comes out victorious through the hostile fortunes of time and

circumstances; amid their ruins and failures it is capable of molding a new and happier age and with Christian doctrine and spirit **she can build and erect a new society of citizens, peoples and nations.** (Pius XII. *Encyclical *Fulgens radiatur**, no. 3, March 21, 1947)

II – BY DIVINE MANDATE: THE CHURCH SHOULD EVANGELIZE

PAUL VI

The Church is linked to evangelization in her most intimate being

Anyone who rereads in the New Testament the origins of the Church, follows her history step by step and watches her live and act, sees that she is linked to evangelization in her most intimate being: The Church is born of the evangelizing activity of Jesus and the Twelve. She is the normal, desired, most immediate and most visible fruit of this activity: **'Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations'** (Mt 28:19). Now, 'they accepted what he said and were baptized. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.... Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved' (Acts 2:41, 47). Having been born consequently out of being sent, the Church in her turn is sent by Jesus. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi**, no. 15, December 8, 1975)

The very nature of the gifts which Christ has given the Church demands that they be extended and shared with others

If, as We said, the Church realizes what is God's will in its regard, it will gain for itself a great store of energy, and in addition will conceive the need for pouring out this energy in the service of all men. It will have a clear awareness of a mission received from God, of a message to be spread far and wide. Here lies the source of our evangelical duty, our mandate to teach all nations, and our apostolic endeavor to strive for the eternal salvation of all men. [...] The very nature of the gifts which Christ has given the Church demands that they be extended to others and shared with others. This must be obvious from the words: **'Going, therefore, teach ye all nations,'** (Mt 28:19).

Christ's final command to His apostles. The word apostle implies a mission from which there is no escaping. (Paul VI. *Encyclical Ecclesiam suam*, no. 64, August 6, 1964)

BENEDICT XVI

The principal task of the Church is evangelization

The Church is missionary by nature and her principal task is evangelization, which aims to proclaim and to witness to Christ and to promote his Gospel of peace and love in every environment and culture. [...] **The Church is also called in the military world to be 'salt', 'light' and 'leaven'**, to use the images to which Jesus himself refers, so that mindsets and structures may be ever more fully oriented to building peace, in other words, to that 'order planned and willed by the love of God' (Message for World Day of Peace, January 1, 2006), in which people and peoples can develop to the full and see their own fundamental rights recognized (ibid., no. 4). (Benedict XVI. *Address to the participants in the Fifth National congress of Military Ordinariates*, October 26, 2006)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The Church has a sacred duty to preach the Gospel

Therefore though God in ways known to Himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the Gospel to find that faith without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6), yet a **necessity lies upon the Church** (1Cor 9:16), and at the same time a sacred duty, to **preach the Gospel. And hence missionary activity today as always retains its power and necessity.** By means of this activity, the Mystical Body of Christ unceasingly gathers and directs its forces toward its own growth (cf. Eph 4:11-16). (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no. 7, December 7, 1965)

The Church is compelled by the Holy Spirit: Christ is the source of salvation for the whole world

As the Son was sent by the Father (cf. Jn 20:21), so **He too sent the Apostles**, saying:

'Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world' (Mt 2:18-20). [...] **For the Church is compelled by the Holy Spirit to do her part that God's plan may be fully realized, whereby He has constituted Christ as the source of salvation for the whole world.** (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 17, November 21, 1964)

JOHN PAUL II

The universal dimension of the missionary mandate

The different versions of the 'missionary mandate' contain common elements as well as characteristics proper to each. Two elements, however, are found in all the versions. **First, there is the universal dimension of the task entrusted to the apostles, who are sent to 'all nations'** (Mt 28:19); 'into all the world and...to the whole creation' (Mk 16:15); to 'all nations' (Lk 24:47); 'to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 23, December 7, 1990)

LEO XIII

The mission of Christ is to save all without distinction of time or place

For what did Christ, the Lord, ask? What did He wish in regard to the Church founded, or about to be founded? This: to transmit to it the same mission and the same mandate which He had received from the Father, that they should be perpetuated. This He clearly resolved to do: this He actually did. 'As the Father hath sent me, I also send you' (Jn 20:21). 'And thou hast sent Me into the world I also have sent them into the world' (Jn 17:18). **But the mission of Christ is to save that which had perished: that is to say, not some nations or peoples, but the whole human race, without distinction of time or place.** 'The Son of Man came that the world might be saved by Him' (Jn 3:17). 'For there is no other name under Heaven given to men whereby

we must be saved' (Acts 4:12). **The Church, therefore, is bound to communicate without stint to all men, and to transmit through all ages, the salvation effected by Jesus Christ, and the blessings flowing there from.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 4, June 29, 1896)

The most Holy Name of Jesus should rapidly pervade and fill every land

Pressed on to Our intent by Charity, that hastens fastest there where the need is greatest, We direct Our first thoughts to those most unfortunate of all nations who have never received the light of the Gospel, or who, after having possessed it, have lost it through neglect or the vicissitudes of time: Hence do they ignore God, and live in the depths of error. Now, as all salvation comes from Jesus Christ – for there is no other Name under Heaven given to men whereby we must be saved – Our ardent desire is that the most Holy Name of Jesus should rapidly pervade and fill every land. And here, indeed, is a duty which the Church, faithful to the Divine Mission entrusted to her, has never neglected. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Praeclara gratulationis*, June 20, 1894)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The member who fails to contribute to the development of the Church is useless

The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all men to share in His saving redemption, (cf. Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*) and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ. All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members. **For the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate.** No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body: so, too, **in the body of Christ, which is the Church, 'the whole body . . . in keeping with the proper activity of each part, derives its increase from its own internal development'** (Eph 4:16). Indeed, the organic union in this body and the structure of the members are so compact that

the member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to himself. [...] On all Christians therefore is laid the preeminent responsibility of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all men throughout the world. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 2.3, November 18, 1965)

All the faithful are duty-bound to cooperate in the expansion of the Church

As members of the living Christ, incorporated into Him and made like unto Him through baptism and through confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful are duty – bound to cooperate in the expansion and spreading out of His Body, to bring it to fullness as soon as may be (Eph 4:13). (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no. 36, December 7, 1965)

PIUS X

The first duty of the Hierarchy is to instruct the faithful in the things of God

We must now consider upon whom rests the obligation to **dissipate this most pernicious ignorance** and to impart in its stead the knowledge that is wholly indispensable. There can be no doubt, Venerable Brethren, that this most important duty **rests upon all who are pastors of souls.** On them, by command of Christ, **rest the obligations of knowing and of feeding the flocks committed to their care; and to feed implies, first of all, to teach.** 'I will give you pastors according to my own heart', God promised through Jeremiah, 'and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine' (Jer 3:15). [...] **The first duty of all those who are entrusted in any way with the government of the Church is to instruct the faithful in the things of God.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 7, April 15, 1905)

JOHN PAUL II

The proclamation of the Gospel is one of the principal responsibilities of Bishops

The risen Jesus entrusted to his Apostles the

mission of ‘making disciples’ of all nations, teaching them to observe all that he himself had commanded. The task of proclaiming the Gospel to the whole world has thus been solemnly entrusted to the Church, the community of the disciples of the crucified and risen Lord. **It is a task which will continue until the end of time.** From the beginning, this mission of evangelization has been an integral part of the Church’s identity. [...] **If the duty of proclaiming the Gospel is incumbent upon the whole Church and each of her children, it is particularly so upon Bishops, who on the day of their sacred ordination, which places them in apostolic succession, assume as one of their principal responsibilities the proclamation of the Gospel.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores gregis*, no. 26, October 16, 2003)

BENEDICT XV

The duty of the Apostles continues in their successors

Before He returned to His Father, Our Lord Jesus Christ addressed to His disciples the words: ‘Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to all creation’ (Mk 16:15). With these words He committed to them a duty, a momentous and a holy charge, that was not to lapse with the death of the Apostles but would bind their successors, one after another, until the end of the world – as long, that is, as there remained on this earth men whom the truth might set free. (Benedict XV. *Apostolic Letter Maximum illud*, no. 1, November 30, 1919)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The successors of the Apostles have the duty to establish the kingdom of God throughout the world

Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them ‘a universal sacrament of salvation’ (*Lumen Gentium* 48), **the Church**, driven by the inner necessity of her own catholicity, and **obeying the mandate of her Founder** (cf. Mk 16:16), **strives ever to proclaim the Gospel to all men. The Apostles themselves, on whom the Church was founded, following in the footsteps of Christ, ‘preached the word of**

truth and begot churches’ (Saint Augustine, Exposition on Psalm 44:23). **It is the duty of their successors to make this task endure’** so that the word of God may run and be glorified (2Thess 3:1) and **the kingdom of God be proclaimed and established throughout the world.** (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no. 1, December 7, 1965)

All bishops are consecrated for the salvation of the entire world

All bishops, as members of the body of bishops succeeding to the College of Apostles, are consecrated not just for some one diocese, but for the salvation of the entire world. **The mandate of Christ to preach the Gospel to every creature** (Mk 16:15). (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no. 38, December 7, 1965)

PIUS XII

By reason of his apostolic office the Pope is appointed ‘preacher and apostle’

‘If I preach the Gospel, I have there in no ground for boasting, since I am under constraint. For woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel’ (1Cor 9:16)! Why should We not apply these earnest admonitions to Ourselves, that is, to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, who by reason of his apostolic office **has been appointed ‘a preacher and apostle...a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth’** (1Tim 2:7). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Fidei donum*, no. 82, April 21, 1957)

PIUS XI

The Pope who does not strive to win over to Christ all who are still without the Fold fails in his obligation

The Church has no other reason for existence than, by developing the Kingdom of Christ on earth, to make mankind participate in the effects of His saving Redemption. Whoever, by Divine Commission, takes the place on earth of Jesus Christ, becomes thereby the Chief Shepherd who, far from being able to rest content with simply guiding and protecting the Lord’s Flock which has been confided to him to

rule, fails in his special duty and obligations if he does not strive by might and main to win over and to join to Christ all who are still without the Fold. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Rerum Ecclesiae*, no. 1, February 28, 1926)

Pius XII

Zeal for missionary activity and the Catholic spirit are one and the same – he is not a true member of the Church who does not will Her expansion

Zeal for missionary activity and the Catholic spirit are one and the same. A principal note of the Church is catholicity; consequently, a man is no true member of the Church unless he is likewise a true member of the entire body of Christian believers and is filled with an ardent desire to see her take root and flourish in every land (*Discorsi e radiomessaggi*, 8, 328). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Fidei donum*, no. 44, April 21, 1957)

Leo XIII

To keep silence when clamors are raised against truth is base and insulting to God

But in this same matter, touching Christian faith, there are other duties whose exact and religious observance, necessary at all times in the interests of eternal salvation, become more especially so in these our days. **Amid such reckless and widespread folly of opinion, it is, as We've said, the office of the Church to undertake the defense of truth** and uproot errors from the mind, and this charge has to be at all times sacredly observed by her, **seeing that the honor of God and the salvation of men are confided to her keeping.** But, when necessity compels, not those only who are invested with power of rule are bound to safeguard the integrity of faith, but, as Saint Thomas maintains: **'Each one is under obligation to show forth his faith, either to instruct and encourage others of the faithful, or to repel the attacks of unbelievers.'** **To recoil before an enemy, or to keep silence when from all sides such clamors are raised against truth, is the part of a man either devoid of character or who entertains doubt** as to the truth of what he professes to believe. In both cases such mode

of behaving is base and is insulting to God, and both are incompatible with the salvation of mankind. This kind of conduct is profitable only to the enemies of the faith, for nothing emboldens the wicked so greatly as the lack of courage on the part of the good. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Sapientiae christianae*, no. 14, January 10, 1890)

III – ALL HUMANS SHOULD BELONG TO THE CHURCH THROUGH A SINCERE CONVERSION

John Paul II

It is not enough to help people exteriorly – every person has the right to hear the 'Good News' of the God

The proclamation of the Word of God has **Christian conversion** as its aim: a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his Gospel through faith. [...] **Nowadays the call to conversion** which missionaries address to non-Christians is **put into question or passed over in silence.** It is seen as an act of 'proselytizing'; it is claimed that it is enough to help people to become more human or more faithful to their own religion, that it is enough to build communities capable of working for justice, freedom, peace and solidarity. **What is overlooked is that every person has the right to hear the 'Good News' of the God** who reveals and gives himself in Christ, so that each one can live out in its fullness his or her proper calling (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris Missio*, no. 46, December 7, 1990)

The good news disposes a person for a new life according to the Spirit

The 'good news' is directed to stirring a person to a conversion of heart and life and a clinging to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour; to **disposing a person to receive Baptism and the Eucharist and to strengthen a person in the prospect and realization of new life according to the Spirit.** Certainly the command of Jesus: **'Go and preach the Gospel'** always maintains its vital value and its ever-pressing obligation. Nevertheless, the present situation, not only of the world but also of many parts of the Church, absolutely demands that the word of Christ receive a more ready and generous obedience.

Every disciple is personally called by name; no disciple can withhold making a response: 'Woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel' (1Cor 9:16). (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Christifideles laici*, no. 33, December 30, 1988)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The necessity of conversion and adherence to the Church through Baptism

Indeed, **the Church**, guided by charity and respect for freedom, **must be primarily committed to proclaiming to all people the truth** definitively revealed by the Lord, and **to announcing the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the Church through Baptism** and the other sacraments, in order to participate fully in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration Dominus Iesus*, no. 22, August 6, 2000)

PAUL VI

There is no new humanity without renewal by Baptism

For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new: 'Now I am making the whole of creation new' (Rev 21:5, cf. 2Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15). But **there is no new humanity if there are not first of all new persons renewed by Baptism** (cf. Rom 6:4) and by lives lived according to the Gospel (cf. Eph 4:24-25, Col 3:9-10). **The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change**, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that **the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert, solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people**, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 18, 1975)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The growth of the Church was foretold by Christ: 'And I will draw all things to myself'

The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ **now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world**. This inauguration and this growth are both symbolized by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus (cf. Jn 19:34), and **are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself'** (Jn 12:32). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 3, November 21, 1964)

All must be converted to Christ and be incorporated by baptism

This missionary activity derives its reason from the will of God, 'who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, Himself a man, **Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for all'** (1Tim 2:45), 'neither is there salvation in any other' (Acts 4:12). **Therefore, all must be converted to Him, made known by the Church's preaching, and all must be incorporated into Him by baptism and into the Church which is His body**. [...] Wherever God opens a door of speech for proclaiming the mystery of Christ (cf. Col 4:3), there is announced to all men (cf. Mk 16:15, 1Cor 9:15, Rom 10:14) with confidence and constancy (cf. Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31; 1Thess 2:2; 2Cor 3:12; 7:4; Phil 1:20; Eph 3:12; 6:19, 20) **the living God, and He Whom He has sent for the salvation of all, Jesus Christ** (cf. 1Thess 1:9-10; 1Cor 1:18-21; Gal 1:31; Acts 14:15-17, 17:22-31), **in order that non - Christians**, when the Holy Spirit opens their heart (cf. Acts 16:14), **may believe and be freely converted to the Lord**, that they may cleave sincerely to Him Who, being the 'way, the truth, and the life' (Jn 14:6), fulfills all their spiritual expectations, and even infinitely surpasses them. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no. 7,13, December 7, 1965)

All men are called to belong to the Church

All men are called to belong to the new People of God. Wherefore this people, while remaining one and only one, is to be spread throughout the whole world and must exist in all ages, so that the decree of God's will may be fulfilled. In the beginning God made human nature one and decreed that all His children, scattered as they were, would finally be gathered together as one (cf. Jn 11:52). It was for this purpose that God sent His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things (cf. Heb 1:2), that he might be teacher, king and priest of all, the head of the new and universal people of the sons of God. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 13, November 21, 1964)

The Church both prays and labors so that the entire world may become the People of God

By the proclamation of the Gospel she prepares her hearers to receive and profess the faith. She gives them the dispositions necessary for baptism, snatches them from the slavery of error and of idols and incorporates them in Christ so that through charity they may grow up into full maturity in Christ. [...] In this way the Church both prays and labors in order that the entire world may become the People of God, the Body of the Lord and the Temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in Christ, the Head of all, all honor and glory may be rendered to the Creator and Father of the Universe. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen Gentium*, no. 17, November 21, 1964)

PAUL VI

The Lord wanted His Church to be universal

The first Christians readily expressed their deep faith in the Church by describing her as being spread throughout the universe. They were fully conscious of belonging to a large community which neither space nor time can limit: From the just Abel right to the last of the elect (Saint Gregory the Great, *Homil. in Evang.* 19/1), 'indeed to the ends of the earth (Acta 1:8; cf. *Didac.* 9, 1) to the end of time'

(Mt 28:20). This is how the Lord wanted His Church to be: universal, a great tree whose branches shelter the birds of the air (cf. Mt 13:32), a net which catches fish of every kind (cf. Mt 13:47) or which Peter drew in filled with one hundred and fifty-three big fish, (cf. Jn 21:11) a flock which a single shepherd pastures (cf. Jn 10:1-16). A universal Church without boundaries or frontiers except, alas, those of the heart and mind of sinful man. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 61, December 8, 1975)

LEO XIII

Jesus Christ bade all men to follow Him

Wherefore Jesus Christ bade all men, present and future, follow Him as their leader and Saviour; and this, not merely as individuals, but as forming a society, organized and united in mind. In this way a duly constituted society should exist, formed out of the divided multitude of peoples, one in faith, one in end, one in the participation of the means adapted to the attainment of the end, and one as subject to one and the same authority. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Satis cognitum*, no. 10, June 29, 1896)

JOHN PAUL II

Jesus Christ embraces humanity yesterday, today and for ever

The Church has endured for 2000 years. Like the mustard seed in the Gospel, she has grown and become a great tree, able to cover the whole of humanity with her branches (cf. Mt 13:31-32). The Second Vatican Council, in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, thus addresses the question of membership in the Church and the call of all people to belong to the People of God: 'All are called to be part of this Catholic unity of the new People of God' [...] Continuing this approach, we can also appreciate more clearly the Gospel parable of the leaven (cf. Mt 13:33): Christ, like a divine leaven, always and ever more fully penetrates the life of humanity, spreading the work of salvation accomplished in the Paschal Mystery. What is more, he embraces within his redemptive power the whole past history of the human race, beginning with the first Adam.

The future also belongs to him: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever' (Heb 13:8). (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Tertio millennio adveniente*, no. 56, November 10, 1994)

IV – EVANGELIZATION IS THE BEST ASSISTANCE THAT THE CHURCH CAN OFFER HUMANITY

JOHN PAUL II

The temptation today is to reduce Christianity to a pseudo-science of well-being

But what moves me even more strongly to proclaim the urgency of **missionary evangelization** is the fact that it is **the primary service which the Church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the modern world**, a world which has experienced marvelous achievements but which seems to have lost its sense of ultimate realities and of existence itself. [...] **The temptation today is to reduce Christianity to merely human wisdom, a pseudo-science of well-being.** In our heavily secularized world a **'gradual secularization of salvation'** has taken place, so that people strive for the good of man, but man who is truncated, reduced to his merely horizontal dimension. We know, however, that Jesus came to bring integral salvation, one which embraces the whole person and all mankind, and opens up the wondrous prospect of divine filiation. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 2.11, December 7, 1990)

Erroneous conceptions of the Church's mission: silence about Christ

Nowadays the kingdom is much spoken of, but not always in a way consonant with the thinking of the Church. [...] **The Church's task is described** as though it had to proceed in two directions: on the one hand promoting such 'values of the kingdom' as **peace, justice, freedom, brotherhood**, etc., while on the other hand **fostering dialogue between peoples, cultures and religions**, so that through a mutual enrichment they might help the world to be renewed and to journey ever closer toward the kingdom. Together with positive aspects, **these conceptions** often reveal negative aspects as

well. First, **they are silent about Christ.** (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris missio*, no. 17, December 7, 1990)

PIUS XII

No duty more urgent than to preach Christ to the men of our time

Can there be, Venerable Brethren, a **greater or more urgent duty than to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph 3:8) to the men of our time?** Can there be anything nobler than to unfurl the **'Ensign of the King'** before those who have followed and still follow a false standard, and to win back to the victorious banner of the Cross those who have abandoned it? What heart is not inflamed, is not swept forward to help at the sight of so many brothers and sisters who, misled by error, passion, temptation and prejudice, have strayed away from faith in the true God and have lost contact with the joyful and life-giving message of Christ? (Pius XII. *Encyclical Summi Pontificatus*, no. 6, October 20, 1939)

PIUS X

Nothing is more desirable to Jesus Christ than labor in teaching the eternal profit of the soul

We do not think it necessary to set forth here the praises of such instruction or to point out how meritorious it is in God's sight. If, assuredly, the alms with which we relieve the needs of the poor are highly praised by the Lord, **how much more precious in His eyes, then, will be the zeal and labor expended in teaching and admonishing, by which we provide not for the passing needs of the body but for the eternal profit of the soul!** **Nothing, surely, is more desirable, nothing more acceptable to Jesus Christ, the Savior of souls, Who testifies of Himself through Isaiah: 'To bring good news to the poor he has sent me' (Lk 4:18).** Here then it is well to emphasize and insist that for a priest there is no duty more grave or obligation more binding than this. [...] **Because the Christian people expect from them knowledge of the divine law, and it was for that end that they were sent by God.** (Pius X. *Encyclical Acerbo nimis*, no. 8-9, April 15, 1905)

Seriously mistaken: those who seek the material well-being of the body but are silent about spiritual welfare

And so too are all they seriously mistaken who, occupying themselves with the welfare of the people, and especially upholding the cause of the lower classes, seek to promote above all else the material well-being of the body and of life, but are utterly silent about their spiritual welfare and the very serious duties which their profession as Christians enjoins upon them. (Pius X. *Encyclical Iucunda sane*, no. 26, March 12, 1904)

PIUS XII

Charity is well employed in propagating the Kingdom of Christ and in bringing salvation to many

Your charity can certainly be employed in no better cause since it is thus destined to propagate the Kingdom of Christ and to bring salvation to so many still outside the Fold. It is the Lord Himself Who 'gave... to everyone of them commandment concerning his neighbor' (Eccl 17:12). (Pius XII. *Encyclical Evangelii praecones*, no. 67, June 2, 1951)

BENEDICT XV

Evangelizing is a fraternal help to unbelievers

For 'He (God) gave to every one of them commandment concerning his neighbor' (Eccl 17:12); and the strictness of this command varies in proportion to the seriousness of the neighbor's need. Now what class of men is more in need of fraternal help than unbelievers, who live in ignorance of God, and consequently, bound by the chains of their blind and violent desires, are enslaved in the most hideous of all the forms of slavery, the service of Satan? Anyone then who contributes whatever services he can to the work of bringing the light of faith to them – and helping the work of the missions is the best means – would accomplish two purposes at the same time. He would be fulfilling his obligation in this important matter, and he would also be thanking God in a particularly appropriate way for the faith that has been

given to him. (Benedict XV. *Apostolic letter Maximum illud*, no. 31, November 30, 1919)

PIUS XI

Evangelization: charity that surpasses all other kinds of good works

Surely the obligation of charity, which binds us to God, demands not only that we strive to increase by every means within our power the number of those who adore Him 'in spirit and in truth' (Jn 4:24) but also that we try to bring under the rule of the gentle Christ as many other men as possible. [...] Since Jesus Christ has proclaimed that the special sign of discipleship with Him is that we 'have love one for another' (Jn 13:35, 15:12) can we give a mark of greater love for our neighbors than to assist them in putting behind themselves the darkness of error by instructing them in the true faith of Christ? As a matter of fact, this type of charity surpasses all other kinds of good works inspired by love just as the mind surpasses the body, heaven surpasses earth, eternity surpasses time. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Rerum Ecclesiae*, no. 5-6, February 28, 1926)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The love which impels the Church to communicate to all a sharing in divine life also causes her to pursue true temporal good

The Church's essential mission, following that of Christ, is a mission of evangelization and salvation. She draws her zeal from the divine love. Evangelization is the proclamation of salvation, which is a gift of God. [...] But the love which impels the Church to communicate to all people a sharing in the grace of divine life also causes her, through the effective action of her members, to pursue people's true temporal good, help them in their needs, provide for their education and promote an integral liberation from everything that hinders the development of individuals. The Church desires the good of man in all his dimensions, first of all as a member of the city of God, and then as a member of the earthly city. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Instruction Libertatis conscientia*, no. 63, March 22, 1986)

PAUL VI

Without true conversion, a society that is just and fraternal is not possible

The Church considers it to be undoubtedly important to build up structures which are more human, more just, more respectful of the rights of the person and less oppressive and less enslaving, but she is conscious that the best structures and the most idealized systems soon become inhuman if the inhuman inclinations of the human heart are not made wholesome, if those who live in these structures or who rule them do not undergo a conversion of heart and of outlook. [...] Having said this, we rejoice that the Church is becoming ever more conscious of the proper manner and strictly evangelical means that she possesses in order to collaborate in the liberation of many. And what is she doing? She is trying more and more to encourage large numbers of Christians to devote themselves to the liberation of men. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 36.38, December 8, 1975)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Communicating divine life, the Church makes man and history more human

Pursuing the saving purpose which is proper to her, the Church does not only communicate divine life to men but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth, most of all by its healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which it strengthens the seams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men with a deeper meaning and importance. Thus through her individual members and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human. (Vatican Council II. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 40, December 7, 1965)

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SUFFERING

**Why do children suffer? Only when our hearts
can ask this question and weep, can we begin to understand.
There are no answers. Do not be afraid to challenge God: 'Why?'**

Antonietta Meo was born in Rome, in the year 1930, the fourth daughter of upright and believing parents. At home she learned the first truths of the faith, while the Catholic atmosphere of Rome at the time also contributed favorably toward her religious formation.

When four years old, due to an inflammation in the knee that didn't appear worrisome at first, the doctors discovered that she was the victim of a terrible illness: osteosarcoma. The torments that she underwent from that time on would make even the bravest of men shudder: painful and practically useless treatments, including the amputation of her left leg, followed by the steady advance of the disease, which even affected her lungs. The doctors were amazed to see how such a small person could endure such great sufferings.

But the most impressive aspect of the situation was, without a doubt, Antonietta's attitude toward her ordeal. For, the more she learned about the sufferings of the life of Jesus, the more she identified her own state with that of Christ, discovering in the Passion a true motive for her pain: 'Dear Crucified Jesus, I really wish You well and I love You so much. I want to be on Calvary with You and I suffer with joy because I know how to be on Calvary. Dear Jesus. Thanks that You have sent me this illness because it's a way to arrive in Paradise. Dear Jesus, tell God the Father that I love Him so much, Him too. Dear Jesus, I want to be Your lamp and Your Lily dear Jesus, dear Jesus give me the strength necessary to stand the pains that I offer for sinners...' (Letter no. 162, May 2, 1937)

Antonietta died when she was seven years old, and today her body lies in her parish church, the Basilica of Saint John Lateran. There are many people who hopefully await the recognition of her heroic virtues and elevation to the altar.

In the same city of the Popes, a scene that took place last May reminds us of the example of 'Nennolina': the Pope received children affected by grave illnesses accompanied by their parents. These children, whose bodies suffer infirmity, enjoy in their souls the fruits of Baptism and the blessings of the Church. They awaited a word of encouragement, hoping that the Pope, as the Father of the Church and especially attentive to all in need, would enlighten them on the significance of their atrocious sufferings.

However, expounding on his strange outlook on the topic of suffering which he had already mentioned in his Apostolic Journey to the Philippines, Francis stated anew that this is a situation that has no explanation, and that the only solution for the children and their parents is to weep.

To top off these perplexing statements, Francis applied an entirely rationalistic sense to the reactions of the Sorrowful Mother and her Divine Son. According to Francis, the Blessed Virgin didn't comprehend what was happening at Calvary, and her Son didn't have a clear idea of our troubles until the moment that He wept.

We are at a loss for words ...for if the teachings of the Church explain this question, would any other explanation be expected from the Vicar of Christ?

FRANCIS

She [pointing to Jun's friend] today asked the one question that doesn't have an

answer. And she couldn't say it in words. She had to say it with tears. [...] **'Why do children suffer?'** Why do children suffer? Only when our hearts can ask this question and weep, can we begin to understand. [...] Only when Christ wept, and he was capable of weeping, did he understand our troubles. (*Meeting with young people, Manila, Philippines, January 18, 2015*)

There is also a question, whose explanation one does not learn in a catechesis. It is a question I frequently ask myself and many of you, many people ask: **'Why do children suffer?'** And there are no answers. This too is a mystery. I just look to God and ask: 'But why?'. And looking at the Cross: 'Why is your Son there? Why?'. It is the mystery of the Cross. I often think of Our Lady, when they handed down to her the dead body of her Son, covered with wounds, spat on, bloodied and soiled. And what did Our Lady do? 'Did she carry him away?', No, she embraced him, she caressed him. **Our Lady, too, did not understand.** Because she, in that moment, remembered what the Angel had said to her: 'He will be King, he will be great, he will be a prophet...'; **and inside, surely, with that wounded body lying in her arms, that body that suffered so before dying, inside surely she wanted to say to the Angel: 'Liar! I was deceived.'** She, too, had no answers. [...] Do not be afraid to ask God: 'Why?', to challenge him: 'Why?', may you always have your heart open to receiving his fatherly gaze. The only answer that he could give you will be: 'My Son also suffered'. That is the answer. The most important thing is that gaze. And your strength is there: the loving gaze of the Father. (*Meeting with a group of gravely ill children and their families, May 29, 2015*)

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- ♦ All of those who suffer, especially the innocent, may feel themselves called to participate in the work of redemption, carried out through the cross
- ♦ The suffering of the innocent is especially valuable in the eyes of the Lord
- ♦ Even when the darkness is deepest, faith points to a trusting acknowledgment: 'I know that you can do all things'

Benedict XVI

- ♦ Why does the suffering of innocents exist? In the mysterious designs of Providence, God draws a greater good even from evil
- ♦ Through the wounds of Christ, we are able to see the evils that afflict humanity with eyes of hope

Sacred Scripture

- ♦ Is it not logical that we accept suffering?

- ◆ Taking up the cross is the obligation of whoever follows Jesus
- ◆ The sufferings of Christ are a cause for rejoicing
- ◆ The future glory surpasses all suffering

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ Death and all consequent bodily defects are punishments of original sin

Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ Original sin subjected all human nature to suffering
- ◆ Sufferings: a means of cooperating with God
- ◆ Means of purification and of salvation
- ◆ From the greatest of all moral evils God has brought forth the greatest of all goods

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ A new meaning for suffering – participation in the saving work of Jesus
- ◆ Makes a person more mature, helping to discern what is not essential

Saint John Chrysostom

- ◆ The remedy against pride; the power of God in weak men

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ Sorrow or pain cannot be the greatest evil

John Paul II

- ◆ The wound can become a fountain of life
- ◆ Suffering conceals a particular power that draws a person interiorly to Christ
- ◆ Suffering clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls

Benedict XVI

- ◆ We can try to limit suffering but we cannot eliminate it
- ◆ What heals us is not fleeing from suffering, but our capacity for accepting it

Sacred Scripture

- ◆ In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ

John Paul II

- ◆ The cross of Christ gives another meaning to human suffering
- ◆ The individual's personal response to God
- ◆ The Redemption, accomplished through satisfactory love, remains always open to all love expressed in human suffering

II – The role of suffering in the sanctification of humans

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ There is no holiness without the Cross

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ There is no virtue that did not have its example on the Cross

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ◆ He who wills not to suffer has not yet begun to be a Christian

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

- ♦ He that humbles himself under tribulations is wheat for paradise; he that grows enraged is chaff for hell
- ♦ Let us go out to the battle with great courage, looking at Jesus crucified

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

- ♦ Tribulation for the love of Christ precedes glory together with him

Saint Teresa of Jesus

- ♦ It is absurd to suppose that God favors with his friendship those who are strangers to suffering

Saint John of the Cross

- ♦ If we knew how beneficial suffering is, we would not wish for comfort

Saint Francis de Sales

- ♦ God is as worthy of our love when he afflicts us as when he consoles us
- ♦ How happy are the souls that drink of the chalice of suffering with Our Lord!
- ♦ Path that leads us directly to God

Saint Therese of Lisieux

- ♦ Holiness consists in suffering everything
- ♦ In order to become a Saint one must suffer much

Saint Alphonsus Liguori

- ♦ Lord, what else can I ask but sufferings and contempt?
- ♦ It is entirely just that we suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ
- ♦ The saints accepted as treasures infirmities, persecutions, the loss of property, and the most painful and desolate deaths

III – The Virgin Mary offered her Son as a victim of expiation for the sins of humanity

John Paul II

- ♦ In accepting the words of the Angel Gabriel, Mary began her participation in the drama of Redemption

Benedict XVI

- ♦ Mary renewed on Calvary at the foot of the Cross her ‘yes’ of the Annunciation

John Paul II

- ♦ Blessed is she who believed!
- ♦ Perfect model of all of those who accept to associate themselves without reserve to the redemptive offering

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ Mary freely cooperated in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience
- ♦ Lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim, her only begotten Son

John Paul II

- ♦ Mary’s consent to Jesus’ immolation is a genuine act of love

- ◆ Direct participation in the work of Redemption
- ◆ Model of unfailing constancy and extraordinary courage in facing suffering
- ◆ The first who knew and wished to participate in the salvific mystery
- ◆ An intrepid presence at the Cross
- ◆ In contrast with the faith of the disciples, who fled, Mary's was far more enlightened
- ◆ She who was linked to the Son of God by bonds of maternal love, at the foot of the Cross, experienced this union in suffering

Benedict XVI

- ◆ Mary's self-restraint prevents us from plumbing the depths of her grief

Saint Bede

- ◆ Mary had full certainty of the Resurrection

Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

- ◆ The Virgin Most Holy is a true martyr

IV – As true God and true Man, Jesus had full knowledge of his Redeeming mission

Gregory I

- ◆ Jesus, the Wisdom of God, did not ignore anything

Pius X

- ◆ Papal condemnation for the errors of modernism regarding Christ's knowledge
- ◆ According to agnosticism, there are two Christs: one real; the other, who never was in fact, but pertains to faith

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

- ◆ The temptation to diminish the Son of God to our size

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ The fullness of all grace and knowledge

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ The Word incarnate enjoyed the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans
- ◆ Jesus is inseparably true God and true man

The Formula called the 'Faith of Damasus'

- ◆ Christ operates as God; and dies as a man

Leo I

- ◆ The Son of God became man without withdrawing from the glory of the Father

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

- ◆ The confession of the divinity of Jesus Christ has been an absolutely essential part of the faith

Catechism of the Catholic Church

- ◆ Jesus willed humanly all that had decided divinely

John Paul II

- ◆ Christ's loving acceptance of the Cross

- ♦ Jesus went toward death voluntarily
- ♦ Continuous offering for the salvation of humanity
- ♦ Jesus offered himself freely in the Passion

CELAM – Document of Puebla

♦ Jesus freely surrendered himself to death on the Cross, the goal of his life's journey

The Lateran Council

♦ If anyone does not confess that God the Word voluntarily suffered let him be condemned

International Theological Commission

- ♦ The Cross is a liturgy of obedience

Saint Francis de Sales

- ♦ The will of the Father and of Christ was to redeem us by the cross

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith – Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger

- ♦ Whoever omits the cross, omits the essence of Christianity

I – BOTH INNOCENT PEOPLE AND SINNERS ARE SUBJECT TO SUFFERING. WHY?

BENEDICT XVI

Christ, innocent, took upon himself the wounds of injured humanity – Only a God who loves us to the extent of taking upon himself our pain is worthy of faith

Suffering, evil, injustice, death, especially when it strikes the innocent such as children who are victims of war and terrorism, of sickness and hunger, does not all of this put our faith to the test? Paradoxically the disbelief of Thomas is most valuable to us in these cases because it helps to purify all false concepts of God and leads us to discover his true face: the face of a God who, in Christ, has taken upon himself the wounds of injured humanity. Thomas has received from the Lord, and has in turn transmitted to the Church, the gift of a faith put to the test by the passion and death of Jesus and confirmed by meeting him risen. His faith was almost dead but was born again thanks to his touching the wounds of Christ, those wounds that the Risen One did not hide but showed, and continues to point out to us in the trials and sufferings of every human being. [...] These wounds that Christ has received for love of us help us to

understand who God is and to repeat: 'My Lord and my God!' Only a God who loves us to the extent of taking upon himself our wounds and our pain, especially innocent suffering, is worthy of faith. (Benedict XVI. *Urbi et Orbi* Message, April 8, 2007)

JOHN PAUL II

All of those who suffer, especially the innocent, may feel themselves called to participate in the work of redemption, carried out through the cross

Ever since Christ chose the cross and died at Golgotha, all of those who suffer, particularly those who suffer without fault, may find themselves faced by 'the Holy One who suffers' and encounter in his passion the total truth about suffering, its full meaning, its importance. In light of this truth, all of those who suffer may feel themselves called to participate in the work of redemption carried out through the cross. To participate in the cross of Christ means to believe in the salvific power of the sacrifice that every believer can offer together with the Redeemer. Then suffering is liberated from the shadow of the absurd, that seems to cover it, and acquires a profound dimension, it reveals its significance and creative value. One could say, then, that there is a change in the

scene of existence, from which is distanced increasingly the destructive power of evil, precisely because suffering produces copious fruits. Jesus himself revealed and promised us this, when he said: 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit' (Jn 12:23-24). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 6-7, November 9, 1988)

The suffering of the innocent is especially valuable in the eyes of the Lord

In the eyes of the Lord, the suffering of the just and the innocent is especially valuable, more than that of the sinner, because the latter, really, suffers only for himself, through an auto-expiation, whereas the innocent person makes of his pain the capital for the redemption of others. (John Paul II. *Address to 500 disabled children and their assistants*, September 24, 1979)

Even when the darkness is deepest, faith points to a trusting acknowledgment: 'I know that you can do all things'

The problem of suffering attacks above all faith and puts it to the test. How can we hear the universal anguish of man when we meditate on the Book of Job? The innocent man overwhelmed by suffering understandably asks himself: 'Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul, who long for death, but it comes not, and dig for it more than for hid treasures?' (Job 3:20-21). But even when the darkness is deepest, faith points to a trusting and adoring acknowledgment of the 'mystery': 'I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted' (Job 42:2). (John Paul II. *Encyclical Evangelium vitae*, no. 31, March 25, 1995)

BENEDICT XVI

Why does the suffering of innocents exist? In the mysterious designs of Providence, God draws a greater good even from evil

If God is supremely good and wise, why do evil

and the suffering of innocents exist? And the Saints themselves asked this very question. Illumined by faith, they give an answer that opens our hearts to trust and hope: in the mysterious designs of Providence, God can draw a greater good even from evil. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, December 1, 2010)

Through the wounds of Christ, we are able to see the evils that afflict humanity with eyes of hope

Dear sick and suffering, it is precisely through the wounds of Christ that we are able to see, with eyes of hope, all the evils that afflict humanity. In rising again, the Lord did not remove suffering and evil from the world, but he defeated them at their root. [...] Saint Bernard observed: 'God cannot suffer but He can suffer with'. God, who is Truth and Love in person, wanted to suffer for us and with us; He became man so that He could suffer with man, in a real way, in flesh and blood. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the Nineteenth World Day of the Sick*, November 21, 2010)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Is it not logical that we accept suffering?

We accept good things from God; and should we not accept evil? (Job 2:10)

Taking up the cross is the obligation of whoever follows Jesus

Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me. (Mk 8:34)

The sufferings of Christ are a cause for rejoicing

Beloved, do not be surprised that a trial by fire is occurring among you, as if something strange were happening to you. But rejoice to the extent that you share in the sufferings of Christ, so that when his glory is revealed you may also rejoice exultantly. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. (1Pet 4:12-13)

The future glory surpasses all suffering

I consider that **the sufferings of this present time are as nothing compared with the glory to be revealed for us.** (Rom 8:18)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Death and all consequent bodily defects are punishments of original sin

One thing is the cause of another if it causes it by removing an obstacle: thus it is stated in Phys. viii, text. 32, that 'by displacing a pillar a man moves accidentally the stone resting thereon.' In this way **the sin of our first parent is the cause of death and all such like defects in human nature.** [...] Wherefore, original justice being forfeited through the sin of our first parent; just as human nature was stricken in the soul by the disorder among the powers [...] so also it became subject to corruption, by reason of disorder in the body. Now **the withdrawal of original justice has the character of punishment, even as the withdrawal of grace has. Consequently, death and all consequent bodily defects are punishments of original sin.** And although the defects are not intended by the sinner, nevertheless they are ordered according to the justice of God Who inflicts them as punishments. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 85, a. 2)

COMPENDIUM OF THE CATECHISM

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Original sin subjected all human nature to suffering

In consequence of original sin human nature, without being totally corrupted, is **wounded in its natural powers. It is subject to ignorance, to suffering,** and to the dominion of death and is inclined toward sin. This inclination is called concupiscence. (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 77)

Sufferings: a means of cooperating with God

How do we collaborate with divine Providence? While respecting our freedom, **God asks us to**

cooperate with him and gives us the ability to do so through actions, prayers **and sufferings**, thus awakening in us the desire 'to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil 2:13). (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 56)

Means of purification and of salvation

By his own passion and death **he gave new meaning to our suffering which,** when united with his own, **can become a means of purification and of salvation** for us and for others. (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 314)

From the greatest of all moral evils, God has brought forth the greatest of all goods

To this question, as painful and mysterious as it is, only the whole of Christian faith can constitute a response. **God is not in any way – directly or indirectly – the cause of evil.** He illuminates the mystery of evil in his Son Jesus Christ who died and rose in order to vanquish that great moral evil, human sin, which is at the root of all other evils. [...] **Faith gives us the certainty that God would not permit evil if he did not cause a good to come from that very evil.** This was realized in a wondrous way by God in the death and resurrection of Christ. In fact, from **the greatest of all moral evils (the murder of his Son) he has brought forth the greatest of all goods** (the glorification of Christ and our redemption). (Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 57-58)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

A new meaning for suffering – participation in the saving work of Jesus

Suffering, a consequence of original sin, acquires a new meaning; it **becomes a participation in the saving work of Jesus.** (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1521)

Makes a person more mature, helping to discern what is not essential

Illness and suffering have always been among the gravest problems confronted in human life. In illness, man experiences his powerlessness, his limitations, and his finitude.

Every illness can make us glimpse death. Illness can lead to anguish, self-absorption, sometimes even despair and revolt against God. It can also **make a person more mature, helping him discern in his life what is not essential** so that he can turn toward that which is. Very often illness provokes a search for God and a return to him. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 1500-1501)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

The remedy against pride; the power of God in weak men

Suffering in the present life is the remedy against pride, which would turn us astray, against vainglory and ambition. **Through suffering the power of God shines forth in weak men**, who without His grace would not be able to bear their afflictions. Suffering, patience, manifests the goodness of him who is persecuted. By this road he is led to desire eternal life. Memory of the great sufferings of the saints leads us to support our own, by imitating the saints. Finally, pain teaches us to distinguish false goods which pass away from true goods which last eternally. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Consolationes ad Stagir. L. III*, quoted by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange. *Life everlasting and the immensity of the soul*, Ch. VI)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Sorrow or pain cannot be the greatest evil

Now pain or sorrow for that which is truly evil cannot be the greatest evil: for there is something worse, namely, either not to reckon as evil that which is really evil, or not to reject it. Again, **sorrow or pain, for that which is apparently evil, but really good, cannot be the greatest evil, for it would be worse to be altogether separated from that which is truly good. Hence it is impossible for any sorrow or pain to be man's greatest evil.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 39, a. 4)

JOHN PAUL II

The wound can become a fountain of life

Human suffering in fact can show forth the

goodness of God: **the wound can become a fountain of life** (cf. Jn 19:34). (John Paul II. *Address to the Across Trust on its Twenty-Fifth Anniversary*, October 29, 1998)

Suffering conceals a particular power that draws a person interiorly to Christ

Down through the centuries and generations it has been seen that **in suffering there is concealed a particular power that draws a person interiorly close to Christ, a special grace.** To this grace many saints, such as Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Ignatius of Loyola and others, owe their profound conversion. A result of such a conversion is not only that the individual discovers **the salvific meaning of suffering** but above all that **he becomes a completely new person.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Salvifici doloris*, no. 26, February 11, 1984)

Suffering clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls

In the Body of Christ, which is ceaselessly born of the Cross of the Redeemer, it is precisely suffering permeated by the spirit of Christ's sacrifice that is the irreplaceable mediator and author of the good things which are indispensable for the world's salvation. **It is suffering, more than anything else, which clears the way for the grace which transforms human souls.** Suffering, more than anything else, makes present in the history of humanity the powers of the Redemption. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter Salvifici doloris*, no. 27, February 11, 1984)

BENEDICT XVI

We can try to limit suffering but we cannot eliminate it

Like action, **suffering is a part of our human existence.** Suffering stems partly from our finitude, and partly from the mass of sin which has accumulated over the course of history, and continues to grow unabated today. [...] **Indeed, we must do all we can to overcome suffering, but to banish it from the world altogether is not in our power.** This is simply because we are unable to shake off our finitude and because none of us is capable of eliminating the power of evil, of sin which,

as we plainly see, is a constant source of suffering. Only God is able to do this: only a God who personally enters history by making himself man and suffering within history. We know that this God exists, and hence that this power to 'take away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29) is present in the world. [...] **We can try to limit suffering, to fight against it, but we cannot eliminate it.** (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spe salvi*, no. 36, November 30, 2007)

What heals us is not fleeing from suffering, but our capacity for accepting it

It is when we attempt to avoid suffering by withdrawing from anything that might involve hurt, when we try to spare ourselves the effort and pain of pursuing truth, love, and goodness, that we drift into a life of emptiness, in which there may be almost no pain, but the dark sensation of meaninglessness and abandonment is all the greater. **It is not by sidestepping or fleeing from suffering that we are healed, but rather by our capacity for accepting it,** maturing through it and finding meaning through union with Christ, who suffered with infinite love. (Benedict XVI. *Encyclical Spe salvi*, no. 37, November 30, 2007)

SACRED SCRIPTURE

In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ

Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh **I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church.** (Col 1:24)

JOHN PAUL II

The cross of Christ gives meaning to human suffering

The Redemption undertaken by Christ at the price of his passion and death on the cross, is a decisive and definitive happening in the history of humanity, not only because it fulfills the supreme divine plan of justice and mercy, but also because it reveals to the conscience of man a new significance of suffering. [...] **The cross of Christ – the passion – sheds**

a completely new light over this problem, giving another meaning to human suffering in general. [...] All human suffering, united to that of Christ, completes 'what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his Body' (cf. Col 1:24): and the Body is the Church as a universal salvific community. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1-2, November 9, 1988)

The individual's personal response to God

Gradually, as the individual takes up his cross, spiritually uniting himself to the Cross of Christ, **the salvific meaning of suffering is revealed before him.** He does not discover this meaning at his own human level, but at the level of the suffering of Christ. At the same time, however, from this level of Christ **the salvific meaning of suffering** descends to man's level and **becomes, in a sense, the individual's personal response.** It is then that man finds in his suffering interior peace and even spiritual joy. (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter, Salvifici doloris*, no. 26, February 11, 1984)

The Redemption, accomplished through satisfactory love, remains always open to all love expressed in human suffering

The sufferings of Christ created the good of the world's redemption. This good in itself is inexhaustible and infinite. No man can add anything to it. But at the same time, in the mystery of the Church as his Body, Christ has in a sense opened his own redemptive suffering to all human suffering. **In so far as man becomes a sharer in Christ's sufferings – in any part of the world and at any time in history – to that extent he in his own way completes the suffering** through which Christ accomplished the Redemption of the world. Does this mean that the Redemption achieved by Christ is not complete? No. **It only means that the Redemption, accomplished through satisfactory love, remains always open to all love expressed in human suffering.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic letter, Salvifici doloris*, no. 24, February 11, 1984)

II – THE ROLE OF SUFFERING IN THE SANCTIFICATION OF HUMANS

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

There is no holiness without the Cross

The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails the ascesis and mortification that gradually lead to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 2015)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

There is no virtue that did not have its example on the Cross

There is no virtue that did not have its example on the Cross. So if you seek an example of charity, then, 'greater love than this no one has, than to lay down his life for his friends' (Jn 15:13). And this Christ did upon the Cross. **If, therefore, He gave His life for us, we ought to endure any and all evils for Him:** 'What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He has done for me?' (Ps 15:12). If you seek an example of patience, you will find it in its highest degree upon the Cross. Great patience is exemplified in two ways: either when one suffers intensely in all patience, or when one suffers that which he could avoid if he so wished. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Expositio in Symbolum Apostolorum*, The Apostles Creed. Article 4)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

He who wills not to suffer has not yet begun to be a Christian

Let whatsoever holy men therefore that are suffering pressing from those that have been put afar off from the saints, give heed to this Psalm, let them perceive here themselves, let them speak what here is spoken, that suffer what here is spoken of.... [...] **Let no one say to himself, There have been troubles in our fathers' time, in our time there are not. If**

thou supposest thyself not to have troubles, not yet hast thou begun to be a Christian. And where is the voice of the Apostle, 'But even all that will live godly in Christ, persecutions shall suffer.' **If therefore thou sufferest not any persecution for Christ, take heed lest not yet thou hast begun godly to live in Christ. But when thou hast begun godly to live in Christ, thou hast entered into the winepress; make ready thyself for pressings: but be not thou dry, lest from the pressing nothing go forth.** (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Exposition on the Psalms*, Psalm LVI)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

He that humbles himself under tribulations is wheat for paradise; he that grows enraged is chaff for hell

This earth is the place for meriting, and therefore it is a place for suffering. Our true country, where God has prepared for us repose in everlasting joy, is paradise. [...] **We must suffer, and all must suffer; be they just, or be they sinners, each one must carry his cross.** He that carries it with patience is saved; he that carries it with impatience is lost. Saint Augustine says, the same miseries send some to paradise and some to hell: 'One and the same blow lifts the good to glory, and reduces the bad to ashes.' The same saint observes, that by the test of suffering the chaff in the Church of God is distinguished from the wheat: **he that humbles himself under tribulations, and is resigned to the will of God, is wheat for paradise; he that grows haughty and is enraged, and so forsakes God, is chaff for hell.** (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, Ch. 1, p. 45)

Let us go out to the battle with great courage, looking at Jesus crucified

Let us go out to the battle with great courage, looking at Jesus crucified, who from his cross offers us his assistance, the victory, and the crown. (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, Ch. 1, p. 29)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

Tribulation for the love of Christ precedes glory together with him

My brothers, **glory is hidden for us in tribulation** [...] Let us hasten to buy this field; this treasure that is hidden in it. Let us make an object of all our joy the misfortunes that befall us. [...] **'I am with him in his tribulation'** says God. **And shall I seek anything but tribulation? My joy will be to remain with God.** [...] It is better for me, Lord, to suffer tribulations if you are with me, than to reign without you, eat splendidly without you, and receive glory without you. **It is much better, Lord, for me to embrace You in tribulation, have you with me in the fire, even than to be with You in heaven,** because 'what is there in heaven for me, and what have I desired on earth outside of You? The furnace purifies the gold, and the temptation of tribulation just men.' (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Sermon 17 on the Psalm 'He who dwells'*, p. 430-431 – French)

SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

It is absurd to suppose that God favors with his friendship those who are strangers to suffering

Know that the souls dearest to my Father are those who are afflicted with the greatest sufferings. [...] It is absurd to suppose that my Father favors with his friendship those who are strangers to suffering (Saint Teresa of Avila quoted by Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, Ch. 1, p. 46, 48)

SAINT JOHN OF THE CROSS

If we knew how beneficial suffering is, we would not wish for comfort

O souls who in spiritual matters desire to walk in security and consolation! **If you but knew how much it behooves you to suffer in order to reach this security and consolation, and how without suffering you cannot attain to your desire** but rather turn back, in no way would you look for comfort either from God or from

creatures. You would instead carry the cross and, placed on it, desire to drink the pure gall and vinegar. You would consider it good fortune that, dying to this world and to yourselves, you would live to God in the delights of the spirit, and patiently **and faithfully suffering exterior trials, which are small, you would merit that God fix his eyes on you** and purge you more profoundly through deeper spiritual trials in order to give you more interior blessings. (Saint John of the Cross. *Living Flame of Love*, Stanza 2, 28)

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

God is as worthy of our love when he afflicts us as when he consoles us

God is as worthy of our love when he afflicts us as when he consoles us. [...] Considered in themselves, tribulations are terrifying; but considered in the will of God, they are lovely and delightful. (Saint Francis de Sales quoted by Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Practice of the Love of Jesus Christ*, p. 191, 149)

How happy are the souls that drink of the chalice of suffering with Our Lord!

O how happy are the souls that valiantly drink of the chalice of suffering with Our Lord! That mortify themselves carrying their cross; that lovingly suffer and receive from His divine hand all sorts of happenings with submission according to His good willing. But, my God, how few are they who do such things! (Saint Francis de Sales. *Sermon for the Feast of Saint John of the Latin Gate*, p. 279)

Path that leads us directly to God

We should do this, my dear sisters: **the path of the cross and afflictions is the sure path, and one that leads us directly to God and to the perfection of his love.** If we are faithful in valiantly drinking of his chalice, crucifying ourselves with him in this life, his divine goodness will not be deficient in glorifying us eternally in the next. (Saint Francis de Sales. *Sermon for the Feast of Saint John of the Latin Gate*, p. 279)

SAINT THERESE OF LISIEUX

Holiness consists in suffering everything

Holiness does not consist in saying beautiful things, it does not even consist in thinking them, in feeling them! ... It consists in suffering and in suffering everything. 'Holiness! It has to be conquered at the point of the sword, one has to suffer... one has to agonize! A day will come when the shadows will disappear, and then there will remain only joy, inebriation. Let us profit from our one moment of suffering!...Let us see only each moment!...A moment is a treasure...one act of love will make us know Jesus better...it will bring us closer to Him during the whole of eternity! (Saint Therese of Lisieux. *Letter 89 to Celine*)

In order to become a Saint one must suffer much

Later on, when the way of perfection was opened out before me, I realised that in order to become a Saint one must suffer much, always seek the most perfect path, and forget oneself. I also understood that there are many degrees of holiness, that each soul is free to respond to the calls of Our Lord, to do much or little for His Love--in a word, to choose amongst the sacrifices He asks. And then also, as in the days of my childhood, I cried out: 'My God, I choose everything, I will not be a Saint by halves, I am not afraid of suffering for Thee, I only fear one thing, and that is to do my own will. Accept the offering of my will, for I choose all that Thou willest.' (Saint Therese of Lisieux. *Story of a Soul*, Manuscript A, Ch. 1)

SAINT ALPHONSUS LIGUORI

Lord, what else can I ask but sufferings and contempt?

Lord, since I see you so afflicted and despised for my sake, what else can I ask but sufferings and contempt? (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Dignity and Duties of the Priest or Selva*, p.335)

It is entirely just that we suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ

But since Jesus Christ has endured so much for

the love of us, it is but just that we suffer for his sake. (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *Dignity and Duties of the Priest or Selva*, part II, instruction 8: On Mortification in General, p. 339)

The saints accepted as treasures infirmities, persecutions, the loss of property, and the most painful and desolate deaths

This has been the one chief and dearest endeavor of all saints, – to desire with their whole heart to endure every toil, all contempt, every pain, in order to please God, and thus to please that divine heart, which so much deserves to be loved, and loves us so much [...] And what greater honor, what greater comfort, can a soul have than to go through some fatigue, or to accept some labor, believing it to be acceptable to God? [...] In a word, in order to give pleasure to God, the saints have stripped themselves of their possessions, have renounced the greatest earthly dignities, and have accepted as treasures infirmities, persecutions, the loss of property, and the most painful and desolate deaths. (Saint Alphonsus Liguori. *The Way of Salvation and Perfection*, Pious Reflections, Part II, Ch. 37, p. 282-283)

III – THE VIRGIN MARY OFFERED HER SON AS A VICTIM OF EXPIATION FOR THE SINS OF HUMANITY

JOHN PAUL II

In accepting the words of the Angel Gabriel, Mary began her participation in the drama of Redemption

In accepting with complete availability the words of the Angel Gabriel, who announced to her that she would become the Mother of the Messiah, Mary began her participation in the drama of Redemption. Her involvement in her Son's sacrifice, revealed by Simeon during the presentation in the Temple, continues not only in the episode of the losing and finding of the 12-year-old Jesus, but also throughout his public life. However, the Blessed Virgin's association with Christ's mission reaches its culmination in Jerusalem, at the time of the Redeemer's Passion and Death. [...] The

Council stresses the profound dimension of the Blessed Virgin's presence on Calvary, recalling that she 'faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the Cross' (*Lumen gentium*, no. 58), and points out that this union 'in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of Christ's virginal conception up to his death' (*ibid.*, no. 57). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1-2, April 2, 1997)

BENEDICT XVI

Mary renewed on Calvary at the foot of the Cross her 'yes' of the Annunciation

Mary is a model of total self-abandonment to God's will: she received in her heart the eternal Word and she conceived it in her virginal womb; she trusted in God and, with her soul pierced by a sword (cf. Lk 2: 35), she did not hesitate to share the Passion of her Son, renewing on Calvary at the foot of the Cross her 'yes' of the Annunciation. To reflect upon the Immaculate Conception of Mary is thus to allow oneself to be attracted by the 'yes' which joined her wonderfully to the mission of Christ, Redeemer of humanity; it is to allow oneself to be taken and led by her hand to pronounce in one's turn 'fiat' to the will of God, with all one's existence interwoven with joys and sadness, hopes and disappointments, in the awareness that tribulations, pain and suffering make rich the meaning of our pilgrimage on the earth. (Benedict XVI. *Message for the Sixteenth World Day of the Sick*. January 11, 2008)

JOHN PAUL II

Blessed is she who believed!

Yes, truly 'blessed is she who believed!' These words, spoken by Elizabeth after the Annunciation, here at the foot of the Cross seem to re-echo with supreme eloquence, and the power contained within them becomes something penetrating. From the Cross, that is to say from the very heart of the mystery of Redemption, there radiates and spreads out the prospect of that blessing of faith. It goes right back to 'the beginning,' and as a sharing in the sacrifice of Christ-the new Adam-it becomes in a certain sense the counterpoise to

the disobedience and disbelief embodied in the sin of our first parents. (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris Mater*, no. 19, March 25, 1987)

Perfect model of all of those who accept to associate themselves without reserve to the redemptive offering

Saint John in his Gospel remembers that 'standing by the cross of Jesus was his mother' (Jn 19:25). It was the presence of a woman – already a widow for some years, as everything leads us to believe – who was also to lose her Son. All of the fibers of her being were shaken by all that which she had seen in the days culminating in the passion, and that which she felt and saw now at the scaffold. How could one impede that she suffer and cry? Christian tradition has perceived the dramatic experience of that Woman full of dignity and honor, but with her heart pierced, and has paused to contemplate her, participating profoundly in her sorrow: '*Stabat Mater dolorosa, iuxta Crucem lacrimosa/dum pendebat Filius*'. [...] The presence of Mary next to the cross shows her commitment of total participation in the redeeming Sacrifice of her Son. Mary wished to entirely participate in the sufferings of Jesus, since she had not reject the sword announced by Simeon (cf. Lk 2:35), but rather accepted, with Christ, the mysterious plan of the Father. She was the first participant in that sacrifice, and would remain forever as a perfect model of all of those who would accept to associate themselves without reserve to the redemptive offering. On the other hand, the maternal compassion that was expressed in this presence, contributed to make more charged with meaning and profound the drama of that death on the cross. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1-2, November 23, 1988)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Mary freely cooperated in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience

Rightly therefore the holy Fathers see her [Mary] as used by God not merely in a passive way, but as freely cooperating in the work of human salvation through faith and obedience. [...] This union of the Mother with the Son in the work of salvation is made manifest from the time of

Christ's virginal conception **up to His death** [...] (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 56-57, November 21, 1964)

Lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim, her only begotten Son

The Blessed Virgin [...] faithfully persevered in her union with her Son unto the cross, where she stood, in keeping with the divine plan, **grieving exceedingly with her only begotten Son, uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim** which she herself had brought forth. Finally, she was given by the same Christ Jesus dying on the cross as a mother to His disciple with these words: 'Woman, behold thy son' (Jn 19: 26-27). (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution, Lumen gentium*, no. 58, November 21, 1964)

JOHN PAUL II

Mary's consent to Jesus' immolation is a genuine act of love

The Council reminds us of 'Mary's compassion'; in her heart reverberates all that Jesus suffers in body and soul, **emphasizing her willingness to share in her Son's redeeming sacrifice and to join her own maternal suffering to his priestly offering**. The Council text also stresses that **her consent to Jesus' immolation is not passive acceptance but a genuine act of love**, by which she offers her Son as a 'victim' of expiation for the sins of all humanity. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 2, April 2, 1997)

Direct participation in the work of Redemption

How disconcerting is the mystery of the Cross! After having meditated fully on it, Saint Paul wrote to the Christians of Galatia: 'But may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world' (Gal 6:14). Also, **the Most Holy Virgin** could have repeated – **and with what greater truthfulness!** – these same words. Contemplating at Calvary her dying Son **she had understood that the 'glory' of her divine maternity had reached, at that moment, its height, directly participating in the work of Redemption**. Moreover, she had

understood that from that moment on, human suffering, made hers through the crucified Son, acquired an inestimable value. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 1, September 15, 1991)

Model of unfailing constancy and extraordinary courage in facing suffering

In the Fourth Gospel, Saint John says that 'standing by the Cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene' (Jn 19:25). By using the verb 'to stand', which literally means 'to be on one's feet', 'to stand erect', **perhaps the Evangelist intends to present the dignity and strength shown in their sorrow by Mary and the other women. The Blessed Virgin's 'standing erect' at the foot of the Cross recalls her unfailing constancy and extraordinary courage in facing suffering**. In the tragic events of Calvary, Mary is sustained by faith, strengthened during the events of her life and especially during Jesus' public life. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, April 2, 1997)

The first who knew and wished to participate in the salvific mystery

The Virgin of Sorrows, standing at the side of the cross, within the silent eloquence of example, speaks to us of **the significance of suffering within the Divine plan of the Redemption. She was the first who knew and wished to participate in the salvific mystery 'uniting herself with a maternal heart with His sacrifice, and lovingly consenting to the immolation of this Victim which she herself had brought forth'** (*Lumen Gentium*, no. 58). Intimately enriched by this ineffable experience, she approaches those who suffer, takes them by the hand and invites them to rise with Her to Calvary and remain before the Crucified One. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 2, September 15, 1991)

An intrepid presence at the Cross

In this hour of Marian prayer we have contemplated the Heart of Jesus victim of our sins; but before all and more profoundly than all else we contemplated his sorrowful Mother, of whom the Liturgy sings: 'For the sins of his people she saw Jesus in torment and subject to the scourge' (*Stabat Mater*, Sequence, verse 7).

Within the proximity of the liturgical memorial of the Blessed Sorrowful Virgin Mary, **we recall this intrepid and interceding presence of the Virgin beneath the cross of Calvary**, and we think, with immense gratitude that, at that moment, Christ, who was about to die, victim of the sins of the world, confided her to us as our Mother: 'Behold, your Mother' (Jn 19:27). (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 3, September 10, 1989)

In contrast with the faith of the disciples, who fled, Mary's was far more enlightened

This is perhaps the deepest 'kenosis' of faith in human history. **Through faith the Mother shares in the death of her Son, in his redeeming death; but in contrast with the faith of the disciples who fled, hers was far more enlightened.** On Golgotha, Jesus through the Cross definitively confirmed that he was the 'sign of contradiction' foretold by Simeon. At the same time, there were also fulfilled on Golgotha the words which Simeon had addressed to Mary: 'and a sword will pierce through your own soul also.' (John Paul II. *Encyclical Redemptoris Mater*, no. 18, March 25, 1987)

She who was linked to the Son of God by bonds of maternal love, at the foot of the Cross, experienced this union in suffering

'Standing by the cross of Jesus were his Mother, and his Mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene' (Jn 19:25). **She who was linked to the Son of God by bonds of blood and by maternal love, there, at the foot of the Cross, experienced this union in suffering. She alone, despite the pain of her mother's heart, knew that this suffering had meaning.** She had trust – trust in spite of everything – that the ancient promise was being fulfilled: 'I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise your head and you shall bruise his heel' (Gen 3:15). (John Paul II. *Homily at Kalwaria*, Poland, August 19, 2002)

BENEDICT XVI

Mary's self-restraint prevents us from plumbing the depths of her grief

At the foot of the Cross, the prophecy of Simeon is fulfilled: her mother's heart is

pierced through (cf. Lk 2:35) by the torment inflicted on the Innocent One born of her flesh. Just as Jesus cried (cf. Jn 11:35), so too Mary certainly cried over the tortured body of her Son. **Her self-restraint, however, prevents us from plumbing the depths of her grief; the full extent of her suffering** is merely suggested by the traditional symbol of the seven swords. (Benedict XVI. *Homily on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the apparitions at Lourdes*, September 15, 2008)

SAINT BEDE

Mary had full certainty of the Resurrection

A sword is named the affection of the passion and death of the Lord, that pierced the soul of Mary: because **not without a bitter sorrow could she contemplate him crucified and dying**, even though she did not in any way doubt that he would resurrect from his death as God. Nevertheless, she terribly grieved the death of the one whom she had begotten of her flesh. (Saint Bede. *Homily XV, In Purificatione Beatae Mariæ*)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

The Virgin Most Holy is a true martyr

Truly, o blessed Mother, the sword pierced your soul. Nor could it penetrate the body of your Son without having pierced it. And certainly, after having expired, your Jesus – he is everyone's without doubt, but especially yours – the cruel lance which opened his side – not pardoning even though dead, he who could no longer harm – did not touch his soul, but surely passed through your soul. His soul was no longer there; but yours certainly could not be torn from there. Your soul then was pierced by the force of suffering, so that not without cause we proclaim you to be more than a martyr, since in you the sentiment of compassion was greater than what could be the corporal passion. By chance, was not that word for you more than a sword, which truly pierced the soul, and which reached unto the division of the soul and the spirit: 'Woman behold your son?' O what an exchange! John is given to you in the place of Jesus, the servant in the place of the Lord, the son of Zebedee in

the place of the Son of God, a mere man in the place of the true God! How could your most affectionate soul not be pierced on hearing this, when it breaks our hearts – although they be of stone, although they be of iron – just on remembering this? Do not wonder, brethren, that Mary be called a martyr in her soul. [...] But perhaps someone will say: ‘Did she perhaps not know beforehand that her Son would die?’ Without a doubt! ‘And did she not hope that he would then rise?’ Yes, and with the greatest confidence! Then, ‘did she grieve to see him crucified?’ Greatly. In other words, who are you, brother, or what is your wisdom, that you are shocked more by Mary compassionate than by the passion of the Son of Mary? He could die in the body, and could Mary not die with him in her heart? (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Sermon on the Sunday within the octave of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, no. 14-15)

IV – AS TRUE GOD AND TRUE MAN, JESUS HAD FULL KNOWLEDGE OF HIS REDEEMING MISSION

GREGORY I

Jesus, the Wisdom of God, did not ignore anything

Who confesses that the Wisdom itself of God is incarnate say that there is anything which the Wisdom of God does not know? It is written: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him (Jn 1:13). (Denzinger-Hünemann 476. *Gregory I*, From the Epistle *Sicut aqua frigida* to Eulogius, Patriarch of Alexandria, August, 600)

PIUS X

Papal condemnation for the errors of modernism regarding Christ's knowledge

[Condemned doctrine] The critic can ascribe to Christ an unlimited knowledge only on a hypothesis that cannot be historically conceived and is repugnant to the moral sense: namely, that Christ as man possessed the knowledge of God and yet was unwilling to communicate the knowledge of so many things to his disciples and posterity. Christ

did not always possess the consciousness of his messianic dignity. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3434-3435. *Pius X. Decree Lamentabili: Errors of the Modernists*, July 3, 1907)

According to agnosticism, there are two Christs: one real; the other, who never was in fact, but pertains to faith

According to agnosticism, history, just as science, is concerned only with phenomena. Therefore, **just as God, so any divine intervention in human affairs must be relegated to faith, as belonging to it alone.** Thus, if anything occurs consisting of a double element, divine and human, such as are Christ, the Church, the sacraments, and many others of this kind, there will have to be a division and separation, so that what was human may be assigned to history, and what divine to faith. Thus, the distinction common among the modernists between the Christ of history and the Christ of faith [...] **Thus they do not will that Christ said those things which appear to exceed the capacity of the listening multitude. [...] For they distinguish sharply between these two histories; the history of faith (and this we wish to be well noted) they oppose to the real history, as it is real. Thus, as we have already said, the two Christs: one real, the other, who never was in fact, but pertains to faith.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 3495-3498. *Pius X. Encyclical Pascendi Dominici gregis*, September 8, 1907)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The temptation to diminish the Son of God to our size

Today, the temptation is great to diminish Jesus Christ, the Son of God, into a merely historical Jesus, into a pure man. **One does not necessarily deny the divinity of Jesus, but by using certain methods one distills from the Bible a Jesus to our size, a Jesus possible and comprehensible within the parameters of our historiography.** But this ‘historical Jesus’ is an artifact, the image of his authors rather than the image of the living God (see 2Cor 4:4ff, Col 1:15). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Intervention of Cardinal Ratzinger during the Congress of Catechists and Religion Teachers*, December 10, 2000)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The fullness of all grace and knowledge

The fullness of all grace and knowledge was due to Christ's soul of itself, from the fact of its being assumed by the Word of God; and hence Christ assumed all the fullness of knowledge and wisdom absolutely. But He assumed our defects economically, in order to satisfy for our sin, and not that they belonged to Him of Himself. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 14, a. 4, ad 2)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Word incarnate enjoyed the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans

By its union to the divine wisdom in the person of the Word incarnate, Christ enjoyed in his human knowledge the fullness of understanding of the eternal plans he had come to reveal. What he admitted to not knowing in this area, he elsewhere declared himself not sent to reveal. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 474)

Jesus is inseparably true God and true man

The Church thus confesses that Jesus is inseparably true God and true man. He is truly the Son of God who, without ceasing to be God and Lord. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 469)

THE FORMULA CALLED THE 'FAITH OF DAMASUS'

Christ operates as God; and dies as a man

For he who was God, was born a man, and he who was born a man, operates as God; and he who operates as God, dies as a man; and he who dies as a man, arises as God. (Denzinger-Hünemann 72. *The Formula called the 'Faith of Damasus'*)

LEO I

The Son of God became man without withdrawing from the glory of the Father

Consequently, the Son of God entered into

these lowly conditions of the world, after descending from His celestial throne, and though He did not withdraw from the glory of the Father, He was generated in a new order and in a new nativity. In a new order, because invisible in His own, He was made visible in ours; incomprehensible [in His own], He wished to be comprehended; permanent before times, He began to be in time; the Lord of the universe assumed the form of a slave [...] For He who is true God, is likewise true man, and there is no falsehood in this unity. (Denzinger-Hünemann 294. Leo I. *Epistle Lectis dilectionis tuae to Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople*, June 13, 449)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

The confession of the divinity of Jesus Christ is an absolutely essential part of the faith

The divinity of Jesus has been the object of the Church's faith from the beginning, long before his consubstantiality with the Father was proclaimed by the Council of Nicea. The fact that this term was not used does not mean that the divinity of Jesus was not affirmed in the strict sense. [...] The divinity of Jesus is clearly attested to in the passages of the New Testament [...] The numerous Conciliar declarations in this regard are in continuity with that which the New Testament affirms explicitly and not only 'in seed'. The confession of the divinity of Jesus Christ has been an absolutely essential part of the faith of the Church since her origins. It is explicitly witnessed to since the New Testament. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Notification on the works of Jon Sobrino, SJ, November 26, 2006)

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Jesus willed humanly all that had decided divinely

Similarly, at the sixth ecumenical council, Constantinople III in 681, the Church confessed that Christ possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human. They are not opposed to each other, but co-operate in such a way that the Word made flesh willed humanly in obedience to his Father all that he had

decided divinely with the Father and the Holy Spirit for our salvation (cf. Council of Constantinople III, 681 AD). Christ's human will 'does not resist or oppose but rather submits to his divine and almighty will'. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 475)

JOHN PAUL II

Christ's loving acceptance of the Cross

The Christ that suffers is, as a modern poet sang, 'the holy one who suffers', the **innocent one who suffers; and precisely because of this, his suffering has a much greater profundity in relation to that of other men**, including that of all the of Jobs, that is, those who suffer in the world without any fault of their own. Since **Christ is the only one who is truly without sin, and who, in fact, could not even sin. He is, therefore, the one – the only one – who absolutely does not deserve suffering. And yet, he is also the one who accepted it in the most full and resolute manner, he accepted it voluntarily and with love.** This is signified by his desire, almost his kind of interior angst to entirely drink the chalice of suffering (Jn 18:11), and this, 'for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world', as the Apostle Saint John explains (1Jn 2:2). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no.2, November 9, 1988)

Jesus went toward death voluntarily

Did Jesus foresee his death and understand it as a death for mankind? Did he accept it and wish it to be so? In the Gospels it becomes clear that **Jesus voluntarily went toward death. [...] Jesus accepted his death voluntarily. In fact we know that he predicted it on repeated occasions; he announced it three times while going up to Jerusalem. [...] There is no doubt that Jesus considered his life and death as a means of rescue (lythron) for men.** (John Paul II. *General audience*, September 14, 1983)

Continuous offering for the salvation of humanity

Jesus offered himself on the cross and continues to be offered in the celebration of the Eucharist for the glory of God and the salvation of humanity. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Christifideles laici*, no. 14, December

30, 1988)

Jesus offered himself freely in the Passion

Jesus is the voluntary victim, because he offered himself 'freely to his Passion' (Roman Missal, *Eucharistic Prayer II*), as a **victim of expiation for the sins of men** (cf. Lev 1: 4; Heb 10: 5-10) that he consumed in the fire of his love. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 2, September 10, 1989)

CELAM – DOCUMENT OF PUEBLA

Jesus freely surrendered himself to death on the Cross, the goal of his life's journey

Fulfilling the mandate received from his Father, **Jesus freely surrendered himself to death on the Cross, the goal of his life's journey.** The bearer of the freedom and joy of God's kingdom chose to be the decisive victim of **this world's injustice and evil.** The sorrow of creation is assumed by **the Crucified One, who offers his life as a sacrifice for all.** He is the High Priest who can share our weaknesses; the Paschal Victim who redeems us from our sins; the obedient Son who, in the face of his Father's saving justice, incarnates the cry of all men for liberation and redemption. (Denzinger-Hünemann 4615. John Paul II, *Document of the Third General Assembly of the Latin American Bishops in Puebla (Mexico) 'The Evangelization'*, February 13, 1979)

THE LATERAN SYNOD

If anyone does not confess that God the Word voluntarily suffered, let him be condemned

If anyone does not properly and truly confess in accordance with the Holy Fathers that **God the Word himself [...] was crucified in the flesh, voluntarily suffered for us [...] let him be condemned.** (Denzinger-Hünemann 502. *The Lateran Synod*, October 31, 649)

INTERNATIONAL THEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

The Cross is a liturgy of obedience

The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross was not

only *passio*, but also *actio*. The latter aspect, **the voluntary self-offering to the Father, with its pneumatic content, is the most important aspect of his death.** The drama is not a conflict between fate and the individual. On the contrary, the Cross is a liturgy of obedience manifesting the unity between the Father and the Son in the eternal Spirit. (International Theological Commission. *Select Questions on the Theology of God the Redeemer*, no. 12, 1995)

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

The will of the Father and of Christ was to redeem us by the cross

Any action of the life of Our Lord, even the smallest, would have been infinitely sufficient to operate our salvation. **However, the will of God his Father, and his own, was to not accomplish it except on the Cross.** (Saint Francis de Sales. *Sermon for the day of the finding of the Holy Cross*, p. 271)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

Whoever omits the cross, omits the essence of Christianity

In the reconstruction of the 'historical Jesus', usually the theme of the cross has no meaning. **In a 'bourgeois' interpretation it becomes an incident per se evitable, without theological value, in a revolutionary interpretation it becomes the heroic death of a rebel. The truth is quite different. The cross belongs to the divine mystery – it is the expression of his love to the end (Jn 13:1).** The following of Christ is participation in his cross, uniting oneself to his love, to the transformation of our life, which becomes the birth of the new man, created according to God (cf. Eph 4:24). **Whoever omits the cross, omits the essence of Christianity** (cf. 1Cor 2:2). (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Intervention of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger during the Congress of Catechists and Religion Teachers*, December 10, 2000)

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RELIGIOUS LIFE

Life is complicated; it consists of grace and sin.

He who does not sin is not human

Imagine someone who becomes seriously ill, and after a long search for a cure, finally finds a doctor who prescribes an effective remedy. After some days of treatment, he is cured. Naturally, gratitude will bring him to transmit to as many as possible the competence of the doctor and the efficacious prescription, emphasizing the gravity of the illness he was saved from. His testimony, besides honoring the doctor, will be useful for future incidences of this illness and encourage all of those who suffer from it to hope for healing. Evidently, no one would regard this propagation as a tribute to the sad condition of the infirm...

Something similar happens in the spiritual field. All of us are affected by the same infirmity – sin – and we need living examples that encourage us to reach perfection. For even though it seems difficult, we only need to have recourse to the Divine Doctor and benefit from his grace. And all becomes possible. God himself deigns to assign to some men and women the special vocation of serving as a testimony of sanctity for others. They are those who embrace the Evangelical counsels as a means of achieving the perfection of charity. Their lives should be a continuous manifestation of the power of our loving God, who became man as ourselves to free us from sin. What should we think, then, of a religious who does not reflect this divine power in his way of life, content to boast that he is a sinner just like everyone else?

FRANCIS

You should be real witnesses of a way of doing and acting differently. But in life it is difficult for everything to be clear, precise, outlined neatly. **Life is complicated; it consists of grace and sin. He who does not sin is not human.** We all make mistakes and we need to recognize our weakness. **A religious who recognizes himself as weak and a sinner does not negate the witness that he is called to give, rather he reinforces it, and this is good for everyone.** What I expect of you therefore is to give witness. **I want this special witness from religious.** (*Conversation about the Religious Life with the Union of Superiors General, November 29, 2013*)

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♦ Consecrated life is a rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church's purpose: the sanctification of humanity

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

♦ The more fervently Religious are joined to Christ the richer the life of the Church becomes

Code of Canon Law

♦ The consecrated life: totally dedicated to God and foretells the heavenly glory

John Paul II

- ◆ Consecrated persons: follow Christ with one's whole heart and conform their whole existence to Him

Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes

- ◆ Religious know that before the world they are a sign capable of attracting and inspiring a profound revision of life and values
- ◆ What counts most is not what religious do, but what they are as persons consecrated to the Lord

Saint Teresa of Avila

- ◆ Great evils exist in the Church because the religious life is not properly observed

IV – What testimony should Christians receive from Religious?

Pius IX

- ◆ Religious are distinguished for their doctrine, adorned with virtue, aflame with burning love for God and men

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ◆ The profession of the evangelical counsels: a sign to attract all to an effective fulfillment of the Christian duties

John Paul II

- ◆ Testimony of incalculable value for the Church and an unequaled efficacy for all of those who seek the kingdom of God
- ◆ The religious state has rendered abundant fruits of sanctity
- ◆ Religious continually foster in the People of God the awareness of the call to holiness

Pius XII

- ◆ A canonical Religious life is closely interwoven with the holiness and Catholic apostolate of the Church itself

Congregation for the Clergy

- ◆ The Religious life constitutes a gift to the whole Christian community that can never be substituted for by priests or by laity

Paul VI

- ◆ The witness of holiness of Religious is of prime importance in evangelization
- ◆ The world needs to see Religious dedicating their lives to witnessing the love of Jesus Christ

I – DOES SIN COMPLETE OR CORRUPT MAN?

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

God created man without sin

God created man in his image and established him in his friendship. A spiritual creature,

man can live this friendship only in free submission to God. [...] Man is dependent on his Creator, and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 396)

In sinning, man acted against the requirements of his creaturely status

Man, tempted by the devil, let his trust in

his Creator die in his heart and, (cf. Gen 3:1-11) **abusing his freedom, disobeyed God's command.** This is what man's first sin consisted of (cf. Rom 5:19). [...] In that sin man preferred himself to God and by that very act scorned him. He chose himself over and against God, against the requirements of his creaturely status and therefore against his own good. Created in a state of holiness, man was destined to be fully 'divinized' by God in glory. (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 397-398)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Sin has diminished man, blocking his path to fulfillment

Although he was made by God in a state of holiness, from the very onset of his history man abused his liberty, at the urging of the Evil One. Man set himself against God and sought to attain his goal apart from God. Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, but their senseless minds were darkened and they served the creature rather than the Creator. What divine revelation makes known to us agrees with experience. Examining his heart, man finds that he has inclinations toward evil too, and is engulfed by manifold ills which cannot come from his good Creator. Often refusing to acknowledge God as his beginning, man has disrupted also his proper relationship to his own ultimate goal as well as his whole relationship toward himself and others and all created things. Therefore man is split within himself. As a result, all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness. [...] For sin has diminished man, blocking his path to fulfillment. (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 13, December 7, 1965)

JOHN PAUL II

Sin is contrary to human dignity

It is precisely sin that since the 'beginning' has, in a certain way, 'disinherited' man from his own humanity. Sin 'takes' from man, in diverse manners, that which determines his

true dignity: the image and likeness of God. Each sin in a certain way 'reduces' his dignity! The more the one becomes 'a slave to sin' (Jn 8:34), the less he enjoys the liberty of the sons of God. **He is no longer his own master, as the structure itself of his personal being, that is to say, that of a rational, free and responsible creature, demands.** [...] For the rational being it is normal to tend to the truth and exist in the truth. **Instead of the truth regarding good, sin introduces non-truth: the true good is eliminated by sin in favor of an 'apparent' good,** which is not a true good, the true good having been eliminated in favor of the 'false'. **The alienation that takes place with sin touches the cognitive sphere, but through the knowledge it affects the will.** [...] As can be seen, **the real alienation of man – the alienation of a being made in the image and likeness of God, rational and free – is nothing other than 'the domination of sin'** (Rom 3:9). And this aspect of sin is strongly emphasized by Sacred Scripture. Sin is not only against God, it is at the same time against man. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 9-10, November 12, 1986)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

Free choice was given not in order that man sin, but that he might appear more glorious in not sinning

To man alone, amongst living creatures, was it given, on account of his prerogative of free choice, to be able to sin. But it was given to him not in order that he should accordingly sin, but in order that, if he did not sin when he was able to have sinned, he might appear more glorious. For what could have redounded more to his glory, than if it could have said of him, as the Scripture runneth: 'Who is he, and we will praise him?' Why is he thus praiseworthy? **'For wondrous things he did while he lived. What things? 'Who was able to transgress', it saith, 'yet did he not transgress; go do evil yet did he not do evil;'** This honour, then, he preserved so long as he did not sin; when he sinned he lost it. But he sinned, because he was free to sin; nor was he free otherwise than by virtue of freedom of choice, whence it was indeed that he had in him the possibility of sinning. Yet was it not the fault of Him who gave him

free choice, but of himself who abused it, in that plainly **he converted to the use of sinning the faculty which he received for the glory of not sinning**. For although he sinned by means of the power which he received, he did not sin because he possessed the power to do so, but because he willed to do so. [...] **Man's fall, when he sinned, is to be ascribed, therefore, not to the gift of the power to sin, but to the fault of the will.** (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Treatise on grace and free will*, Ch. VII, p. 38-39)

JOHN PAUL II

The acknowledgement of sin is an essential first step of returning to God

To acknowledge one's sin, indeed – penetrating still more deeply into the consideration of one's own personhood – **to recognize oneself as being a sinner, capable of sin and inclined to commit sin, is the essential first step in returning to God.** [...] For it is not possible to deal with sin and conversion only in abstract terms. **In the concrete circumstances of sinful humanity**, in which there can be no conversion without the acknowledgment of one's own sin, **the church's ministry of reconciliation intervenes in each individual case with a precise penitential purpose.** That is, **the church's ministry intervenes in order to bring the person to the 'knowledge of self' – in the words of Saint Catherine of Siena – to the rejection of evil, to the re-establishment of friendship with God, to a new interior ordering, to a fresh ecclesial conversion.** (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 13, December 2, 1984)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Christ is the perfect man, in whom human nature has been raised up to a dignity without equal

The truth is that only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light. For **Adam, the first man, was a figure of Him Who was to come**, namely Christ the Lord. **Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear.** It is not surprising, then,

that in Him all the aforementioned truths find their root and attain their crown. **He Who is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col 1:15), is Himself the perfect man. To the sons of Adam He restores the divine likeness which had been disfigured from the first sin onward. Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too.** (Vatican Council II. *Pastoral constitution Gaudium et spes*, no. 22, December 7, 1965)

PONTIFICAL WORK FOR ECCLESIASTICAL VOCATIONS

Mary is the perfectly realized image of a woman

Mary, finally, is the perfectly realised image of woman, the perfect synthesis of the feminine genius and the fantasy of the Spirit, who in her finds and chooses His spouse, the virgin mother of God and man, daughter of the Most High and mother of all the living. (Pontifical Work for Ecclesiastical Vocations. *Final document of the Congress on vocation to the priesthood and to consecrated life in Europe*, no. 23, January 6, 1998)

JOHN PAUL II

All people are called to be 'divinized'

Proclaiming Jesus of Nazareth, true God and perfect Man, the Church opens to all people the prospect of being 'divinized' and thus of becoming more human. **This is the one path which can lead the world to discover its lofty calling** and to achieve it fully in the salvation wrought by God. (John Paul II. *Bull Incarnationis mysterium*, no. 2, November 30, 1998)

II – THE GRACE THAT CHRIST BRINGS TO THE WORLD WITH THE REDEMPTION LEADS HUMANS TO ABANDON SIN

SACRED SCRIPTURE

The mandate of Christ: be perfect

So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Mt 5:48)

JOHN PAUL II

Christians receive a commandment to not sin – and not a mere invitation

In this sense too we can say with Saint Paul that ‘great indeed is the mystery of our religion.’ In this sense too piety, as a force for conversion and reconciliation, confronts iniquity and sin. In this case too the essential aspects of the mystery of Christ are the object of piety in the sense that the Christian accepts the mystery, contemplates it and draws from it the spiritual strength necessary for living according to the Gospel. Here too one must say that ‘no one born of God commits sin’; but the expression has an imperative sense: Sustained by the mystery of Christ as by an interior source of spiritual energy, the Christian, being a child of God, is warned not to sin and indeed receives the commandment not to sin but to live in a manner worthy of ‘the house of God, that is, the church of the living God’ (1Tim 3:15). (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 21, December 2, 1984)

Sinlessness is not inherent in man, but Christians receive the necessary strength to not sin as a result of God’s action

Saint John too undoubtedly referring to this mystery, but in his own characteristic language which differs from Saint Paul’s, was able to write that ‘anyone born of God does not sin, but he who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him’ (1Jn 5:18). In this Johannine affirmation there is an indication of hope, based on the divine promises: The Christian has received the guarantee and the necessary strength not to sin. It is not a question therefore of a sinlessness acquired through one’s own virtue or even inherent in man, as the Gnostics thought. It is a result of God’s action. In order not to sin the Christian has knowledge of God, as Saint John reminds us in this same passage. But a little before he had written: ‘No one born of God commits sin; for God’s seed abides in him’ (1Jn 3:9). If by ‘God’s seed’ we understand, as some commentators suggest, Jesus the Son of God, then we can say that in order not to sin or in order to gain freedom from sin the

Christian has within himself the presence of Christ and the mystery of Christ, which is the mystery of God’s loving kindness. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Reconciliatio et paenitentia*, no. 20, December 2, 1984)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

He who recognizes his own sin, is displeased with it and condemns it, receives God’s pardon

For ‘He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,’ provided you always displease yourself, and be changing until you be perfected. Accordingly, what follows? ‘My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not’ (1Jn 2:1). But perchance sin overtakes us from our mortal life: what shall be done then? What? Shall there be now despair? Hear: ‘And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiator for our sins’ (1Jn 2:1-2). He then is the advocate; do your endeavor not to sin: if from the infirmity of this life sin shall overtake you, see to it straightway, straightway be displeased, straightway condemn it; and when you have condemned, you shall come assured unto the Judge. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Homily 1 on the First Epistle of John*, no. 7)

SAINT JOHN OF AVILA

Those who enjoy a perfect cleanliness from sin manifest and enhance the glory of God

Have nothing to fear in attributing the highness of spiritual honor, and grandeur of spiritual riches, and perfect cleanliness from sins, to those that the celestial Father justified by the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. May no one think that they being as such harms the honor of the Lord. For since all that they have comes from Christ, not only do they not diminish His honor by being so worthy, but they even manifest and enhance it; for it is clear that the more just and beautiful they are, the more are manifested to be of great value the merits of Him who obtained so much good for those who of themselves did not possess

nor deserved anything. [...] The Lord is not like some, who are upset or little pleased with the honor and virtue of their servants, thinking that it diminishes their own; nor like vain women, who avoid being accompanied by beautiful servants in order not to obscure their own beauty. Certainly, Jesus Christ our Lord has charity, and such that which exceeds our knowledge, as Saint Paul said (Eph 3:19), in order to have our good for his own; and for us to possess many goods, he lost his most worthy life on the cross. (Saint John of Avila. *Audi, filia* – Listen, O Daughter, Ch. 90)

Jesus has the power of liberating man not only from condemnation, but even from sin

The confession, like the other similar things that in the divine Scripture exist, of the goods that come to us from Jesus Christ, certainly give more honor to Jesus Christ, than saying that neither the virtue of his blood, nor of his grace, nor the sacraments, nor the infusing of the Holy Spirit in man, nor incorporating him in Himself, are sufficient to take the sin from a man, but only that he not be condemned by Him. What is this other than to think little of God the Father, who, having promised to send with his only Son remedy for sin, and that at its time sin would be ended (Dan 9:24), did not fulfill his promise, for although the Son having come, sin remains in the one who participates in the Son? How can the word: 'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all of your uncleanness' (Ezek 36:25), be fulfilled, if in truth mine is not cleaned, but rather a clean mantle is merely thrown upon me, telling me that justice and purity of Our Lord Jesus Christ shall be imputed to me? This would be more to cover my filth, than to remove it. And whoever says this, on the same account denies that the Messiah promised in the Law is Jesus Christ Our Lord; and should await another, who delivers not only from the condemnation of sin, but from sin itself. For it is clear that the one who delivers from both things, would be a better savior than he who delivers from only one. (Saint John of Avila. *Audi, filia* – Listen, O Daughter, Ch. 90)

III – THE RELIGIOUS STATE IS A STATE OF PERFECTION: RELIGIOUS MUST COMBAT SIN MORE THAN THE LAITY

JOHN PAUL II

Religious life is an express calling to tend toward perfection – it must be attained

Way of perfection means, evidently, a way of a perfection that must be attained, and not of perfection already obtained, as Saint Thomas Aquinas clearly explained (cf. Summa Theologica, q. 184, a. 5.7). Those who are committed to the practice of the evangelical counsels do not pretend at all that they have attained perfection. They recognize themselves as sinners, as all other men, saved sinners. But they feel and they are called more expressly to tend toward perfection, which consists essentially in charity (cf. Summa Theologica, II, q. 184, aa. 1.3). (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 1, November 9, 1994)

Consecrated life is a rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church's purpose: the sanctification of humanity

As a way of showing forth the Church's holiness, it is to be recognized that the consecrated life, which mirrors Christ's own way of life, has an objective superiority. Precisely for this reason, it is an especially rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church's purpose, which is the sanctification of humanity. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Vita consecrata*, no. 32, March 25, 1996)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The more fervently Religious are joined to Christ the richer the life of the Church becomes

Despite such a great variety of gifts, all those called by God to the practice of the evangelical counsels and who, faithfully responding to the call, undertake to observe the same, bind themselves to the Lord in a special way, following Christ, who chaste and poor (cf. Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58) redeemed and sanctified

men through obedience even to the death of the Cross (cf. Phil 2:8). **Driven by love with which the Holy Spirit floods their hearts** (cf. Rom 5:5) they live more and more for Christ and for His body which is the Church (cf. Col 1:24). **The more fervently, then, they are joined to Christ** by this total life-long gift of themselves, **the richer the life of the Church becomes and the more lively and successful its apostolate.** (Vatican Council II. *Decree Perfectae caritatis*, no. 1, October 28, 1965)

CODE OF CANON LAW

The consecrated life: totally dedicated to God and foretells the heavenly glory

The life consecrated through the profession of the evangelical counsels is a **stable form of living by which the faithful**, following Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, **are totally dedicated to God who is loved most of all**, so that, having been dedicated by a new and special title to His honor, to the building up of the Church, and to the salvation of the world, **they strive for the perfection of charity in the service of the kingdom of God and, having been made an outstanding sign in the Church, foretell the heavenly glory.** (Code of Canon Law, can. 573 §1)

JOHN PAUL II

Consecrated persons: follow Christ with one's whole heart and conform their whole existence to Him

In the consecrated life, then, it is **not only a matter of following Christ with one's whole heart**, of loving him 'more than father or mother, more than son or daughter' (cf. Mt 10:37) – for this is required of every disciple – **but of living and expressing this by conforming one's whole existence to Christ** in an all-encompassing commitment which foreshadows the eschatological perfection, to the extent that this is possible in time and in accordance with the different charisms. **By professing the evangelical counsels**, consecrated persons not only make Christ the whole meaning of their lives but **strive to reproduce in themselves, as far as possible, 'that form of life which he, as the Son of God, accepted in entering this**

world'. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Vita consecrata*, no. 16, March 25, 1996)

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND FOR SECULAR INSTITUTES

Religious know that before the world they are a sign capable of attracting and inspiring a profound revision of life and values

Faithful to this supreme norm (PC 2a), **religious know that they are caught up daily in a path of conversion to the kingdom of God**, which makes them in the Church and before the world **a sign capable of attracting, thus inspiring a profound revision of life and values** (LG 44; EN 69). This is, without doubt, the most needed and fruitful commitment to which they are called (MR 16, 26-28), even in those areas where the Christian community works for human promotion and for the development of social relations inspired by principles of solidarity and fraternal communion. [...] **The power of transformation, which is contained in the spirit of the beatitudes** and penetrates dynamically the life of religious, **characterizes their vocation and mission** (LG 31). (Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, Plenary, no. 18, April 25-28, 1978)

What counts most is not what religious do, but what they are as persons consecrated to the Lord

Their continuous individual renewal of life should be a source of new growth in the institutes to which they belong, recalling the words of Pope John Paul II: **'What counts most is not what religious do, but what they are as persons consecrated to the Lord'** (Message to the Plenary Assembly of the SCRIS, March 1980). Not only directly in works of announcing the Gospel but even more forcefully in the very way that they live, **they should be voices that affirm with confidence and conviction: We have seen the Lord. He is risen. We have heard his word.** (Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes. *Essential elements in the Church's teaching on religious life*, no. 33, May 31, 1983)

SAINT TERESA OF AVILA

Great evils exist in the Church because the religious life is not properly observed

Oh, what terrible harm, what terrible harm is wrought in religious (I am referring now as much to men as to women) when the religious life is not properly observed; when of the two paths that can be followed in a religious house – one leading to virtue and the observance of the Rule and the other leading away from the Rule – both are frequented almost equally! No, I am wrong: they are not frequented equally, for our sins cause the more imperfect road to be more commonly taken; being the broader, it is the more generally favoured. The way of true religion is frequented so little that, if the friar and the nun are to begin to follow their vocation truly, they need to be more afraid of the religious in their own house than of all the devils. They must observe greater caution and dissimulation when speaking of the friendship which they would have with God than in speaking of other friendships and affections promoted in religious houses by the devil. I cannot think why we should be astonished at all the evils which exist in the Church, when those who ought to be models on which all may pattern their virtues are annulling the work wrought in the religious Orders by the spirit of the saints of old. (Saint Teresa of Avila. *Autobiography*, Ch. 7)

IV – WHAT TESTIMONY SHOULD CHRISTIANS RECEIVE FROM RELIGIOUS?

PIUS IX

Religious are distinguished for their doctrine, adorned with virtue, aflame with burning love for God and men

Among the chief goals of Our Apostolic ministry is to embrace your religious families with fatherly love, giving them Our most zealous attention, support and protection, and planning and providing for their greater good and dignity. For your Orders were founded by extremely holy men under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit for the greater glory of Almighty God and for the salvation of souls. In this, the founders were encouraged by this Holy See.

By their many different forms, they adorn the Church with variety. As the **select auxiliary troops among the soldiers of Christ**, they have always been of very great benefit, adornment and protection to both the Christian and the civil commonwealth. Their members, called by God despise all earthly things with their sublime unconquerable spirit. In regarding only heavenly things, they devote themselves to and accomplish with noble toil those important works which are an excellent service to the Catholic Church and civil society. From their beginnings, the religious families have been noted for their talented members who excel in every sort of teaching and learning. These are virtuous and distinguished men of high offices, **aflame with burning love for God and men**, and superb examples to the world, to angels and to men. **They wished nothing more than to meditate on divine things day and night and to endure suffering in imitation of Jesus. They wished also to spread the Catholic faith and teaching** and to fight bravely for it, eagerly enduring bitterness, torture, and punishment. They were even willing to sacrifice their very life to bring primitive savage peoples out of the darkness of error, ferocious customs, and the mud of vices to the light of Gospel truth, the practice of virtue, and the pursuits of civil society. They also developed and supported letters, studies, and arts, thus protecting them from perishing. They formed the tender minds and malleable hearts of the young by instilling in them sound teaching. In addition, they recalled the wandering to the path of salvation. Furthermore, since they are merciful, **they have practiced every sort of heroic charity at the risk of their lives.** This enables them to lovingly provide aid for those who are captive in jail, those who are sick or dying and all who are wretched in want or struck by disaster; they hope to lessen their pain, wipe away their tears, and look after their needs with their entire resources and efforts. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Ubi primum arcano*, no. 1-2, June 17, 1847)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

The profession of the evangelical counsels: a sign to attract all to an effective fulfillment of the Christian duties

The profession of the evangelical counsels, then, appears as a sign which can and ought

to attract all the members of the Church to an effective and prompt fulfillment of the duties of their Christian vocation. The people of God have no lasting city here below, but look forward to one that is to come. Since this is so, the religious state, whose purpose is to free its members from earthly cares, more fully manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods already possessed here below. Furthermore, it not only witnesses to the fact of a new and eternal life acquired by the redemption of Christ, but it foretells the future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom. Christ proposed to His disciples this form of life, which He, as the Son of God, accepted in entering this world to do the will of the Father. **This same state of life** is accurately exemplified and perpetually made present in the Church. The religious state clearly manifests that the Kingdom of God and its needs, in a very special way, are raised above all earthly considerations. Finally it clearly shows all men both the unsurpassed breadth of the strength of Christ the King and the infinite power of the Holy Spirit marvelously working in the Church. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 44, November 21, 1964)

JOHN PAUL II

Testimony of incalculable value for the Church and an unequalled efficacy for all of those who seek the kingdom of God

The religious state tends to put in practice and helps to discover and love the evangelical beatitudes, showing the profound happiness that is obtained through renunciation and sacrifices. This is a 'splendid' testimony, as the Council says, because it reflects something of the divine light that pervades the word, the call, the counsels of Jesus. Moreover, of an inestimable testimony, because the evangelical counsels, such as voluntary celibacy or evangelical poverty, constitute a particular style of life that has an incalculable value for the Church and an unparalleled efficacy for all of those who, in the world, more or less directly or conscientiously, seek the kingdom of God. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 4, February 8, 1995)

The Religious state has rendered abundant fruits of sanctity

Most dear ones, you represent within the Church a state of life that goes back to the first centuries of its history and which has always rendered, time and time again, abundant and delectable fruits of sanctity, of incisive Christian testimony, of efficacious apostolate, and even of notable assistance toward the formation of a rich patrimony of culture and civilization in the ambit of diverse religious families. Very well, all of this has been and is always possible in virtue of that total and faithful union with Christ, of which the Council speaks, and which is not only asked of you but is also favorably achieved by the special condition of religious consecrated to the Lord. (John Paul II. *Address to the Council of the Union of General Superiors*, no. 2, November 26, 1979)

Religious continually foster in the People of God the awareness of the call to holiness

The consecrated life thus continually fosters in the People of God an awareness of the need to respond with holiness of life to the love of God poured into their hearts by the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom 5:5), by reflecting in their conduct the sacramental consecration which is brought about by God's power in Baptism, Confirmation or Holy Orders. In fact it is necessary to pass from the holiness communicated in the sacraments to the holiness of daily life. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Vita consecrata*, no. 33, March 25, 1996)

PIUS XII

A canonical Religious life is closely interwoven with the holiness and Catholic apostolate of the Church itself

We have only to look at the glorious calendar of religious men and women through the ages to see how a canonical religious life is closely interwoven with the holiness and catholic apostolate of the Church itself. The relationship is integral to the Church and to the Religious Orders and Congregations, which by the grace of the life-giving Spirit has grown gradually and steadily in deeper and firmer self-

consistency and unity and in wonderful variety of forms. (Pius XII. *Apostolic constitution Provida Mater Ecclesia*, no. 7, February 2, 1974)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

The Religious life constitutes a gift to the whole Christian community that can never be substituted for by priests or by laity

The profession of the evangelical counsels, which characterizes the religious life, constitutes a gift to the whole Christian community. In diocesan catechetical activity their original and particular contribution can never be substituted for by priests or by laity. This original contribution is born of public witness to their consecration, which makes them a living sign of the reality of the Kingdom: 'it is the profession of these counsels, within a permanent state of life recognized by the Church, that characterizes the life consecrated to God' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 915). Although evangelical values must be lived by every Christian, those in consecrated life 'incarnate the Church in her desire to abandon herself to the radicalism of the beatitudes' (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 69). (Congregation for the Clergy. *General Directory for Catechesis*, no. 228)

PAUL VI

The witness of holiness of Religious is of prime importance in evangelization

Religious, for their part, find in their consecrated life a privileged means of

effective evangelization. At the deepest level of their being they are caught up in the dynamism of the Church's life, which is thirsty for the divine Absolute and called to holiness. It is to this holiness that they bear witness. They embody the Church in her desire to give herself completely to the radical demands of the beatitudes. By their lives they are a sign of total availability to God, the Church and the brethren. As such they have a special importance in the context of the witness which, as we have said, is of prime importance in evangelization. At the same time as being a challenge to the world and to the Church herself, this silent witness of poverty and abnegation, of purity and sincerity, of self-sacrifice in obedience, can become an eloquent witness capable of touching also non-Christians who have good will and are sensitive to certain values. (Paul VI. *Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 69, December 8, 1975)

The world needs to see Religious dedicating their lives to witnessing the love of Jesus Christ

Today more than ever, the world needs to see in you men and women who have believed in the Word of the Lord, in His resurrection and in eternal life, even to the point of dedicating their lives to witnessing to the reality of that love, which is offered to all men. In the course of her history, the Church has ever been quickened and gladdened by many holy religious who, in the diversity of their vocations, have been living witnesses to love without limit and to the Lord Jesus. (Paul VI. *Apostolic exhortation Evangelica testificatio*, no. 53, June 29, 1971)

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The Distorted Tendency of Emphasizing Asceticism, Silence and Penance has Become Widespread even within the Society of Jesus

Jesus tells us in the Gospel that, 'A sound tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit' (Mt 7:18). Evidently, any botanist who claims a tree to be defective, even though it visibly produces appetizing and nutritious fruit, would be considered mad. He would be taken as a liar or a charlatan for making such an unfounded affirmation.

This is also what happens within the spiritual garden of the Church. Throughout the centuries, diverse schools of spirituality – as so many trees – have been planted there, and have produced magnificent and varied fruits. Besides nourishing the members of their respective foundations, some of them have also extended their benefits to other religious families, and even to the lay faithful, who have had the opportunity to profit from the sacred sap of grace that flows forth with different manifestations, continually encouraging people to seek the perfection of charity, that is, sanctity.

One of the particularly privileged trees of this generous sort was the one planted by Saint Ignatius of Loyola through his Spiritual Exercises. With a quick look at a list of saints from the last five centuries one can see what fruits this method has produced, and why the founder of the Company of Jesus is honored with the title of Patron of the Spiritual Exercises.

Now then, what should we think of Francis' affirmations regarding the traditional and official manner of performing the spiritual exercises?

FRANCIS

Ignatius is a mystic, not an ascetic. **It irritates me when I hear that the Spiritual Exercises are 'Ignatian' only because they are done in silence.** In fact, the Exercises can be perfectly Ignatian also in daily life and without the silence. **An interpretation of the Spiritual Exercises that emphasizes asceticism, silence and penance is a distorted one that became widespread even in the Society, especially in the Society of Jesus in Spain.** (*Interview with Antonio Spadaro, August 19, 2013*)

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I – THE IMPORTANCE OF ASCETICISM, SILENCE AND PENANCE WITHIN THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES

SAINT IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA

Motives for the practice of external penance during the Spiritual Exercises

The first Note is that the exterior penances are done chiefly for three ends: First, as satisfaction for the sins committed; Second, to conquer oneself – that is, to make sensuality obey reason and all inferior parts be more subject to the superior; Third, to seek and find some grace or gift which the person wants and desires; as, for instance, if he desires to have interior contrition for his sins, or to weep much over them, or over the pains and sufferings which Christ our Lord suffered in His Passion, or to settle some doubt in which the person finds himself. [...] Third Note. The third: When the person who is exercising himself does not yet find what he desires – as tears, consolations, etc., – it often helps for him to make a change in food, in sleep and in other ways of doing penance, so that he change himself, doing penance two or three

days, and two or three others not. For it suits some to do more penance and others less, and we often omit doing penance from sensual love and from an erroneous judgment. (Saint Ignatius of Loyola. *Spiritual Exercises*, Addition 10, Rule of Penance)

Asceticism in the important ‘Additions to make the exercises better’ by Saint Ignatius

Sixth Addition. The sixth: Not to want to think on things of pleasure or joy, such as heavenly glory, the Resurrection, etc. Because whatever consideration of joy and gladness hinders our feeling pain and grief and shedding tears for our sins: but to keep before me that I want to grieve and feel pain, bringing to memory rather Death and Judgment.

Seventh Addition. The seventh: For the same end, to deprive myself of all light, closing the blinds and doors while I am in the room, if it be not to recite prayers, to read and eat.

Eighth Addition. The eighth: Not to laugh nor say a thing provocative of laughter.

Ninth Addition. The ninth: To restrain my sight, except in receiving or dismissing the

person with whom I have spoken. (Saint Ignatius of Loyola. *Spiritual Exercises*, Additions 6-9)

The Sentire cum Ecclesia not only requires the performance of penance, but also that it be praised

[To have the true sentiment which we ought to have in the Church Militant] Seventh Rule. **To praise Constitutions about fasts and abstinence**, as of Lent, Ember Days, Vigils, Friday and Saturday; **likewise penances, not only interior, but also exterior**. (Saint Ignatius of Loyola. *Spiritual Exercises*, Rules for the *Sentire cum Ecclesia*, Rule 7)

PIUS XI

Recollection in the Exercises is the best remedy for curing levity and thoughtlessness

The most grave disease by which our age is oppressed, and at the same time the fruitful source of all the evils deplored by every man of good heart, is that levity and thoughtlessness which carry men hither and thither through devious ways. [...] Now, if we would cure this sickness from which human society suffers so sorely, what healing remedy could we devise more appropriate for our purpose than that of calling these enervated souls, so neglectful of eternal things, to the recollection of the Spiritual Exercises? And, indeed, if the Spiritual Exercises were nothing more than a brief retirement for a few days, wherein a man removed from the common society of mortals and from the crowd of cares, was given, not empty silence, but the opportunity of examining those most grave and penetrating questions concerning the origin and the destiny of man: 'Whence he comes; and whither he is going'; surely, no one can deny that great benefits may be derived from these sacred exercises. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mens nostra*, no. 4, December 20, 1929)

The Ignatian method: its primacy among other spiritual exercises

Now it is recognized that among all the methods of 'Spiritual Exercises' which very laudably adhere to the principles of sound Catholic asceticism one has ever held the foremost

place and adorned by the full and repeated approbation of the Holy See and honored by the praises of men, distinguished for spiritual doctrine and sanctity, has borne abundant fruits of holiness during the space of well nigh four hundred years; we mean the method introduced by Saint Ignatius of Loyola, whom we are pleased to call the chief and peculiar Master of 'Spiritual Exercises' [...] And in very deed, the excellence of spiritual doctrine altogether free from the perils and errors of false mysticism, the admirable facility of adapting the exercises to any order or state of man, whether they devote themselves to contemplation in the cloisters, or lead an active life in the affairs of the world, the apt co-ordination of the various parts, the wonderful and lucid order in the meditation of truths that seem to follow naturally one from another; and lastly the spiritual lessons which after casting off the yoke of sin and washing away the diseases inherent in his morals lead a man through the safe paths of abnegation and the removal of evil habits. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mens nostra*, no. 16, December 20, 1929)

PIUS XII

The perseverance of the Spaniards during the war was due in part to the Spiritual Exercises

Effectively, what are you now if not representatives of a profoundly Catholic people whose ardent and lively perseverance in the faith is due perhaps, among other reasons, to the blossoming of the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius in your country? [...] Great was your valor in the hour of trial, when, in the midst of persecution, your fidelity and spirit of sacrifice was written with the very blood of your heroic brothers. You put the resolutions of the Exercises into practice well, demonstrating their fulfillment not in life, but in death! (Pius XII. *Speech to pilgrims from Spain on a pilgrimage organized by the Society for Parish Exercises*, October 24, 1948)

The Exercises are efficacious when fidelity to the Ignatian spirit and method are conserved

But your example also serves us in commending the efficacy of the Exercises of Saint Ignatius,

when fidelity to its spirit and method are conserved, as it is among you, thanks be to God. It is not true that the method has lost its efficacy, or that it no longer corresponds to the needs of modern man. Actually, the sad reality is that the liqueur loses its potency when diluted in the waters of over-adaptation, and the machine loses its strength when basic gears of the Ignatian system are dismantled. **The Exercises of Saint Ignatius will always be one of the most efficacious means for spiritual renovation and proper order in the world, but on condition that they continue to be authentically Ignatian.** (Pius XII. *Speech to pilgrims from Spain on a pilgrimage organized by the Society for Parish Exercises*, October 24, 1948)

PIUS XI

The Ignatian method reforms and teaches obedience to God

Not that We should little worth the **methods of exercises used by others, but in those that are carried out according to the Ignatian method, the entire scheme is so wisely arranged, each part leading so well to the next, that where there is no opposition to divine grace, there is, so to say, a radical renewal of the individual and his total submission to the divine will.** Prepared in this manner for a life of action, Ignatius concentrated his efforts on forming his chosen companions, desiring their exemplary obedience to God and His Vicar, the Roman Pontiff, and that they consider obedience to be the main characteristic of his Company. Consequently, he not only desired that his followers enhance their spiritual fervor through the Exercises, **but he also armed them with this instrument so that they themselves might employ it in their efforts to lead straying souls back to the Church, thus submitting them entirely to the power of Christ.** (Pius XI. *Apostolic letter Meditantibus nobis*, December 3, 1922)

PIUS XII

An increased desire for greater mortification is one of the effects of the Exercises

We affirm without a doubt that it is always, in all cases and for all people, there will be

a participation in that fruit which consists of 'ordering one's life' (*Spirit. Exer.*, 21) after 'conquering oneself', and stripping oneself 'of all disordered affections...in order to seek and fulfill the divine will in the ordering of one's life' (*Ibid* 1); **always derives from them a greater practice of prayer and examination of conscience, along with an increased desire for mortification, with a deeper moral formation, the person is consequently more disposed to 'love and serve his divine majesty in all things'** (*Ibid.*, 233). (Pius XII. *Speech*, June 15, 1956)

JOHN PAUL II

A spirituality that has resisted the wear of time and still shows vitality

I hope that your own lives and the lives of those with whom you have contact will benefit from the deeper knowledge and understanding that you are gaining of **the decisive and self-sacrificing spirituality of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.** It is a form of spirituality that has stood the test of centuries and is daily demonstrating its vitality and relevance to our own times and needs. (John Paul II. *General audience*, January 28, 1981)

PIUS XI

Exercises performed in private are preferable to those practiced publically

Wherefore before all things it is necessary that **the mind, assisted by solitude should devote itself to the sacred meditations, leaving aside all the cares and solitudes of daily life.** For as that golden book, the 'Imitation of Christ', clearly teaches: **'The devout soul makes progress in silence and in peace'** (*De Imit. Chr.*, L.I., c. 206). For this reason, **although we regard those meditations as worthy of praise and pastoral approval in which many make the exercises together in public – for these have received many blessings from God – still we most strongly recommend those Spiritual Exercises which are made in private, and are called 'closed.'** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mens nostra*, no. 13, December 20, 1929)

CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH

A positive form of liberty is not possible without asceticism

The seeking of God through prayer has to be preceded and accompanied by an ascetical struggle and a purification from one's own sins and errors, since Jesus has said that only 'the pure of heart shall see God' (Mt 5:8). [...] The passions are not negative in themselves (as the Stoics and Neo-Platonist thought), but their tendency is to selfishness. It is from this that the Christian has to free himself in order to arrive at that state of positive freedom which in classical Christian times was called 'apatheia,' in the Middle Ages 'impassibilitas' and in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises 'indiferencia.' This is impossible without a radical self-denial, as can also be seen in Saint Paul who openly uses the word 'mortification' (of sinful tendencies). Only this self-denial renders man free to carry out the will of God and to share in the freedom of the Holy Spirit. (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on some aspects of Christian meditation*, no. 18, October 15, 1989)

PIUS IX

Those who perform the Exercises should be free from exterior occupations

Furthermore, you realize that spiritual exercises contribute greatly to the preservation of the dignity and holiness of ecclesiastical orders. Therefore do not neglect to promote this work of salvation and to advise and exhort all clergy to often retreat to a suitable place for making these exercises. Laying aside external cares and being free to meditate zealously on eternal divine matters, they will be able to wipe away stains caused by the dust of the world and renew their ecclesiastical spirit. (Pius IX. *Encyclical Qui pluribus*, no. 29, November 9, 1846)

LEO I

Penance liberates from concupiscence of the flesh and favors meditation

For by daily experience, beloved, it is proved that

the mind's edge is blunted by over-indulgence of the flesh, and the heart's vigor is dulled by excess of food, so that the delights of eating are even opposed to the health of the body, unless reasonable moderation withstands the temptation and the consideration of future discomfort keep from the pleasure. For although the flesh desires nothing without the soul, and receives its sensations from the same source as it receives its motions also, yet it is the function of the same soul to deny certain things to the body which is subject to it, and by its inner judgment to restrain the outer parts from things unseasonable, in order that it may be the oftener free from bodily lusts, and have leisure for Divine wisdom in the palace of the mind, where, away from all the noise of earthly cares, it may in silence enjoy holy meditations and eternal delights. (Leo I. *Sermon 19, In the fast of the tenth month, VIII, Ch. 1*)

JOHN PAUL II

The Holy Spirit acts through those who practice silence and mortification

This involves maintaining silence and an attitude of humble adoration before God, for the divine word reveals its depths to those who, through silence and mortification, are attentive to the Spirit's mysterious action. While the requirement of regular silence establishes times when human words must be stilled, it points to a style marked by great moderation in verbal communication. If it is perceived and lived in its profound sense, it slowly teaches the interiorization by which the monk opens himself to a genuine knowledge of God and man. (John Paul II. *Message to the Abbot of Subiaco on the occasion of the feast of Saint Benedict*, no. 4, July 7, 1999)

A lack of silence puts interior peace at risk

Today it is difficult to create 'zones of isolation and silence', for we are continually caught up in mechanism of occupations, in the tumult of happenings, and the attraction of the means of communication. Consequently, interior peace is threatened and the elevated thoughts that should direct human existence encounter obstacles. It is difficult, but it is important to know how to achieve it. (John Paul II. *General*

audience, Address to the Youth visiting the Vatican Basilica, no. 2, March 18, 1981)

PIUS XI

Solitude attracts humanity particularly during turbulent epochs

But as time went on men were still held by the desire of placid solitude wherein away from witnesses the soul might give attention; nay more, it is found that in the most turbulent ages of human society men thirst for justice and truth were the more vehemently urged by the Divine Spirit seek the solitude 'in order being free from bodily desire they might more often be intent on the divine wisdom in the court of the mind where all the tumult of earthly cares being silent, they may rejoice in holy meditations and eternal delights'(S. Leo Magn. serm. 19. PL 54). (Pius XI. *Encyclical, Mens nostra*, no. 6, December 20, 1929)

BENEDICT XVI

It is necessary to educate the faithful in the value of silence and recollection

Ours is not an age which fosters recollection; at times one has the impression that people are afraid of detaching themselves, even for a moment, from the mass media. For this reason, it is necessary nowadays that the People of God be educated in the value of silence. Rediscovering the centrality of God's word in the life of the Church also means rediscovering a sense of recollection and inner repose. (Benedict XVI. *Apostolic exhortation Verbum Domini*, no. 66, September 30, 2010)

II – THE IMPORTANCE OF ASCETICISM IN THE CHURCH

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Souls who dedicate themselves to penance are the glory of the Church

Communities which are entirely dedicated to contemplation, so that their members in solitude and silence, with constant prayer

and penance willingly undertaken, occupy themselves with God alone, retain at all times, no matter how pressing the needs of the active apostolate may be, an honorable place in the Mystical Body of Christ, whose 'members do not all have the same function' (Rom 12:4). For these offer to God a sacrifice of praise which is outstanding. Moreover the manifold results of their holiness lends luster to the people of God which is inspired by their example and which gains new members by their apostolate which is as effective as it is hidden. Thus they are revealed to be a glory of the Church and a well-spring of heavenly graces. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Perfectae caritatis*, no. 7, October 28, 1965)

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS

AND FOR SECULAR INSTITUTES

Asceticism is necessary in order to live the evangelical counsels

The consecration of religious enters into this way of his; it cannot be a reflection of his consecration if its expression in life does not hold an element of self-denial. [...] It is true that much of today's penance is to be found in the circumstances of life and should be accepted there. However, unless religious build into their lives 'a joyful, well-balanced austerity' (ET 30) and deliberately determined renunciations, they risk losing the spiritual freedom necessary for living the counsels. Indeed, without such austerity and renunciation, their consecration itself can be affected. This is because there cannot be a public witness to Christ poor, chaste, and obedient without asceticism. (Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes. *Essential elements in the Church's teaching on religious life*, no. 31, May 31, 1983)

PIUS XI

Great efforts are necessary to overcome the effects of Original Sin

'Original sin' is the hereditary but impersonal fault of Adam's descendants, who have sinned in him (Rom 5:12). It is the loss of grace, and therefore of eternal life, together with a

propensity to evil, which everybody must, with the assistance of grace, penance, resistance and moral effort, repress and conquer. The passion and death of the Son of God has redeemed the world from the hereditary curse of sin and death. **Faith in these truths**, which in your country are today the object of vile derision of Christ's enemies, **belongs to the inalienable treasury of Christian revelation.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Mit Brennender Sorge*, no. 25, March 14, 1937)

No one is exempt from the responsibility to expiate sins

For since we are **all sinners** and laden with many faults, our God must be honored by us not only by that worship wherewith we adore His infinite Majesty with due homage, or acknowledge His supreme dominion by praying, or praise His boundless bounty by thanksgiving; but besides this we **must need make satisfaction to God the just avenger, 'for our numberless sins and offenses and negligences.'** To Consecration, therefore, whereby we are devoted to God and are called holy to God, by that holiness and stability which, as the Angelic Doctor teaches, is proper to consecration (S.Th. II-II q. 81, a. 8. c.), **there must be added expiation, whereby sins are wholly blotted out, lest the holiness of the Supreme Justice may punish our shameless unworthiness, and reject our offering** as hateful rather than accept it as pleasing. Moreover **this duty of expiation is laid upon the whole race of men since**, as we are taught by the Christian faith, after Adam's miserable fall, infected by hereditary stain, subject to concupiscence and most wretchedly depraved, it would have been thrust down into eternal destruction. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Miserentissimus Redemptor*, no. 7-8, May 8, 1928)

them as instruments of justice' (Rom 6:13, Rom 6:19), **unto sanctification** through the observance of the commandments of God and of the Church; in this justice received through the grace of Christ 'faith cooperating with good works' (Jas 2:22), they increase and are further justified [can. 24 and 32], as it is written: **'He that is just, let him be justified still'** (Apoc 22:11), and again: 'Be not afraid to be justified even to death' (Sir 18:22), and again: 'You see, that by works a man is justified and not by faith only' (Jas 2:24). (Denzinger-Hünemann 1535. *Council of Trent*, Session VI, Decree on justification, Ch. X, January 13, 1547)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

The incorruptible crown is not obtained without mortification

But the body is to be mortified and the sensual appetites to be repressed not only by fasting, and particularly, by the fasts instituted by the Church, but also by watching, pious pilgrimages, and other works of austerity. By these and similar observances is the virtue of temperance chiefly manifested. In connection with this subject, Saint Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says: 'Every one that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one' (1Cor 9: 24). A little after he says: **'I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway'** (1Cor 9:27). And in another place he says: 'Make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscence' (Rom 13:14). (Catechism of the Council of Trent, no. 3600. *The Sixth Commandment, mortification*)

COUNCIL OF TRENT (ECUMENICAL XIX)

Those pardoned should grow in virtue by means of mortification

Having, therefore, been thus justified and having been made the **'friends of God'** and **'his domestics'** (Jn 15:15, Eph 2:19), 'advancing from virtue to virtue' (Ps 83:8), 'they are renewed' (as the Apostle says) **'from day to day'** (2Cor 4:16), that is, by **mortifying the members of their flesh** (Col 3:5), and by 'presenting

JOHN XXIII

He who does not seek mortification puts his eternal salvation at serious risk

Jesus Christ taught us self-discipline and self-denial when He said: **'If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me'** (Lk 9:23). Yet there are many people, alas, who join instead the immoderate quest for earthly

pleasures, thus debasing and weakening the nobler powers of the human spirit. It is all the more necessary, therefore, for Christians to repudiate this unworthy way of life which gives frequent rein to the turbulent emotions of the soul and seriously endangers its eternal salvation. They must repudiate it with all the energy and courage displayed by the martyrs and those heroic men and women who have been the glory of the Church in every age of her history. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Paenitentiam agere*, no. 36, July 1, 1962)

The Gospel demands an intense mortification of the passions among Christians

But we must remind you here of an important truth: the Christian conception of life demands of all – whether highborn or lowly – a spirit of moderation and sacrifice. That is what God calls us to by His grace. There is, alas, a spirit of hedonism abroad today which beguiles men into thinking that life is nothing more than the quest for pleasure and the satisfaction of human passions. This attitude is disastrous. Its evil effects on soul and body are undeniable. Even on the natural level temperance and simplicity of life are the dictates of sound policy. On the supernatural level, the Gospels and the whole ascetic tradition of the Church require a sense of mortification and penance which assures the rule of the spirit over the flesh. (John XXIII. *Encyclical Mater et magistra*, no. 234-235, May 15, 1961)

JOHN PAUL II

It is necessary that one discipline the will with penance to obtain interior order

Here, then, is the paradoxical consequence: faced with ever greater and more complex machines, the human being ends up finding himself morally ever more reduced and insignificant, at the mercy of the dark powers of his own subconscious, or by the equally deceptive and forceful power of mass psychology. To have his liberty restored, man primarily requires assistance from on high, which he may obtain through prayer, in order to re-establish his interior world damaged by sin. He needs, moreover, a strong and determined will, capable of escaping from

the false suggestions of sin, in order to bravely undertake the paths of goodness: and this entails the generous practice of renunciation and sacrifice, that is, it demands the courage to do penance, to obtain that self-control, which permits easy domination of self in harmony with the most profound truth of ones being. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 2-3, February 24, 1985)

Everyone should seek forms of penance according to their personal necessities

Furthermore, through the action of grace, the believer who makes generous efforts in the practice of penance is gradually identified with Christ, who is man's true liberator. 'Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom' (2Cor 3:17). Today the penitential practices ordered by the Church are so limited, that they do not fulfill at all the duty and the necessity that each person has to do penance. The rest is left to the generous initiative of each one. Consequently, it is necessary that the maturity of conscience among the faithful urges them to spontaneously seek, rather to create within the limits of their liberty the forms and ways of penance according to their own personal necessities of liberation from sin, of purification and of perfection. (John Paul II. *Angelus*, no. 2, March 10, 1985)

Silence and solitude are lasting elements of priestly formation

Jesus often went off alone to pray (cf. Mt 14:23). The ability to handle a healthy solitude is indispensable for caring for one's interior life. Here we are speaking of a solitude filled with the presence of the Lord who puts us in contact with the Father, in the light of the Spirit. In this regard, concern for silence and looking for places and times of 'desert' are necessary for the priest's permanent formation, whether in the intellectual, spiritual or pastoral areas. In this regard too, it can be said that those unable to have a positive experience of their own solitude are incapable of genuine and fraternal fellowship. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*, no. 74, March 25, 1992)

PAUL VI

A priest is obliged to practice a virile asceticism

The priestly life certainly requires an authentic spiritual intensity in order to live by the Spirit; (Gal 5: 25) **it requires a truly virile asceticism – both interior and exterior – in one who, belonging in a special way to Christ, has in Him and through Him ‘crucified the flesh with its passions and desires’** (Gal 5:24), not hesitating to face arduous and lengthy trials in order to do so (1Cor 9:26-27). (Paul VI. *Encyclical Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, no. 78, June 24, 1967)

PIUS XI

The Poverello of Assisi was one of the greatest penitents

And even for men individually, penance is the foundation and bearer of true peace detaching them from earthly and perishable goods, lifting them up to goods that are eternal, giving them, even in the midst of privations and adversity, a peace that the world with all its wealth and pleasures cannot give. **One of the most pleasing and most joyous songs ever heard** in this vale of tears is without doubt the famous ‘Canticle of the Sun’ of Saint Francis. Now the man who composed it, who wrote it and sang it, was one of the greatest penitents, the Poor Man of Assisi, who possessed absolutely nothing on earth, and bore in his emaciated body the painful Stigmata of His Crucified Lord. Prayer, then, and penance are the two potent inspirations sent to us at this time by God, that we may lead back to Him mankind that has gone astray and wanders about without a guide: they are the inspirations that will dispel and remedy the first and principal cause of every form of disturbance and rebellion, the revolt of man against God. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Caritate Christi compulsi*, no. 27-28, May 3, 1932)

LEO XIII

Those who seek the easy life do not understand the meaning of faith

Having joy set before Him, He endured the Cross, and He bade us deny ourselves. The very dignity of human nature depends upon this disposition of mind. For, as even the ancient Pagan philosophy perceived, **to be master of oneself and to make the lower part of the soul, obey the superior part, is so far from being a weakness of will that it is really a noble power, in consonance with right reason and most worthy of a man.** [...] We would remind those persons of this truth who desire a kind of Christianity such as they themselves have devised, whose precepts should be very mild, much more indulgent towards human nature, and requiring little if any hardships to be borne. They do not properly understand the meaning of faith and Christian precepts. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Tametsi futura*, no. 6,10, November 1, 1900)

PIUS XI

In order to defeat the evils tormenting the world today, a crusade of prayers and penance is necessary

When the Apostles asked the Savior why they had been unable to drive the evil spirit from a demoniac, Our Lord answered: ‘This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting’ (Mt 17:20). So, too, the evil which today torments humanity can be conquered only by a world-wide crusade of prayer and penance. We ask especially the Contemplative Orders, men and women, to redouble their prayers and sacrifices to obtain from heaven efficacious aid for the Church in the present struggle. Let them implore also the powerful intercession of the Immaculate Virgin who, having crushed the head of the serpent of old, remains the sure protectress and invincible ‘Help of Christians’. (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini Redemptoris*, no. 59, March 19, 1937)

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You will make mistakes, you will make blunders, this happens! Perhaps even a letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will arrive to you, telling you that you said such or such thing... But do not worry

To really get to know somebody, it is necessary to observe different aspects of their character. We Catholics reveal our moral worth in diverse circumstances: for example, during times of physical and spiritual suffering, when we need to pardon our neighbor, when we detach ourselves from material goods – it is in these and so many other trials, that charity is really proven.

For religious men and women, this may be noted in a specific aspect: the virtue of obedience. Their sincerity in giving their lives to the Church is proved by the capacity they have of renouncing themselves and fulfilling the will of those who represent the Lord to them. We know that an obedient religious is loved by the Lord, while one who does his own will, strays from virtue.

This is the surest teaching of the Church, followed by numerous generations of consecrated people until our days. To accept rebellion as a characteristic of religious life is to consent to the transgression of the most sacred principles, above all when this is done, supposedly, to better serve God.

FRANCIS

You will make mistakes, you will make blunders, this happens! Perhaps even a letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith will arrive for you, telling you that you said such or such thing... But do not worry. Explain whatever you have to explain, but move forward... Open the doors, do something there where life cries out. I prefer a Church that makes mistakes for doing something than one that gets sick by staying closed up... (Conversation with the Official Leaders of CLAR – Conference of Latin American Religious, June 6, 2013 – English summary)¹

TEACHINGS OF THE MAGISTERIUM

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Sacred Scripture

- ◆ Obedience is better than sacrifice

Saint John Chrysostom

- ◆ God needs not toils, but our obedience

¹ **Note:** As has already become customary, the CLAR (Conference of Latin American Religious) published a declaration stating that these words, which were widely published in the media, cannot be attributed to Francis as if they were verbatim since this summary is merely ‘based on the memories of the participants;’ and there has been no official version or rectification... Therefore, without focusing on the existence or not of such a declaration, it is a good opportunity to remember here what the Magisterium has affirmed on obedience, which the CLAR – and all religious men and women of the world – are obliged to follow.

Saint Teresa of Jesus

- ◆ Whoever fails in obedience will be neither good in contemplative nor in active life

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ◆ It is also necessary to submit oneself to the human magisterium

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ Superiors act in virtue of the authority established by God

Saint Francis de Sales

- ◆ We should desire what God desires, that is, what the superiors desire
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- ◆ The pastor's task is to instruct on faith and good conduct

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- ◆ The mission of the Church is to educate, to direct and fashion

Benedict XVI

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Leo XIII

- ◆ Obey rulers as God himself

Saint Thomas Aquinas

- ◆ The order of justice requires our obedience

Benedict XV

- ◆ Those who resist any legitimate authority, resist God

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ◆ Do the will of him who sent you and not your own will

- ♦ Accept and adhere to the Bishops in matters of faith and morals

Congregation for the Clergy

- ♦ Obedience is intrinsically required by the hierarchical structure of the Church

Saint Ignatius of Antioch

- ♦ Be unanimous in obedience in order to be sanctified

Pius X

- ♦ Always grow in obedience to the pastors of the Church

Pius XI

- ♦ Catholics should love obedience and discipline

Catechism of Trent

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IV – The consequences of resisting authority

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Leo XIII

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Congregation for the Clergy

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Saint Bernard of Clairvaux

- ♦ To Pope Eugene III – regarding the harm caused by disobedience
-

I – WHAT DOES GOD PREFER: ACTIONS OR OBEDIENCE?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Obedience is better than sacrifice

Does the Lord so delight in holocausts and sacrifices as in obedience to the command of the Lord? **Obedience is better than sacrifice**, and submission than the fat of rams. (1Sam 15:22)

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

God needs not toils, but our obedience

God needs not toils, but obedience. (Saint John Chrysostom. *Homily 56, On the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, no. 8)

SAINT TERESA OF JESUS

Whoever fails in obedience will be neither good in contemplative nor in active life

If anyone is under a **vow of obedience** and goes astray through **not taking the greatest care to observe these vows** with the highest degree of perfection, I do not know why she is in the convent. I can assure her, in any case, that, **for so long as she fails in this respect, she will never succeed in leading the contemplative life, or even in leading a good active life: of that I am very very certain.** (Saint Teresa of Jesus. *The Way of Perfection*, Ch. 18)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

It is also necessary to submit oneself to the human magisterium

If one should obey the commandments of

the Lord, it is also necessary to submit to the human magisterium, for He himself said: 'Whoever listens to you listens to me. Whoever rejects you rejects me.' (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Combat between the vices and virtues*, Ch. V)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

Superiors act in virtue of the authority established by God

Just as the actions of natural things proceed from natural powers, so do human actions proceed from the human will. On natural things it behooved the higher to move the lower to their actions by the excellence of the natural power bestowed on them by God: and so in human affairs also the higher must move the lower by their will in virtue of a divinely established authority. Now to move by reason and will is to command. Wherefore just as in virtue of the divinely established natural order the lower natural things need to be subject to the movement of the higher, so too in human affairs, in virtue of the order of natural and divine law, inferiors are bound to obey their superiors. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologica II-II*, q. 104, a. 1)

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES

We should desire what God desires, that is, what the superiors desire

Do not desire, then, anything but that which God desires, and do what the one who commands tells you to do, as long as there is no sin involved. Desire that which the superiors desire and you shall desire that which God desires: thus you shall be truly obedient and blessed. (Saint Francis de Sales. *Letters*, frag. XLVI, I c)

II – CORRECTION IS THE DUTY OF ECCLESIASTICAL SHEPHERDS

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Reprimand and encourage with the desire to teach

I charge you in the presence of God and of

Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingly power: proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching. For the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths. (2Tim 4:1-5)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The pastor's task is to instruct on faith and good conduct

The pastor's specific task in the Church is to instruct the people in what pertains to faith and good conduct. (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Commentary on the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Ephesians*, lect. 4, Eph 4:11-13)

PIUS XI

The mission of the Church is to educate, to direct and fashion

The first title [of the Church] is founded upon the express mission and supreme authority to teach, given her by her divine Founder: 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.' Upon this magisterial office Christ conferred infallibility, together with the command to teach His doctrine. Hence the Church 'was set by her divine Author as the pillar and ground of truth, in order to teach the divine Faith to men, and keep whole and inviolate the deposit confided to her; to direct and fashion men, in all their actions individually and socially, to purity of morals and integrity of life, in accordance with revealed doctrine.' (Pius XI. *Encyclical Divini illius magistri*, no. 16, December 31, 1931)

BENEDICT XVI

Admonishing sinners is an act of mercy

The Church's tradition has included **'admonishing sinners' among the spiritual works of mercy**. It is important to recover this dimension of Christian charity. **We must not remain silent before evil. I am thinking of all those Christians who**, out of human regard or purely personal convenience, **adapt to the prevailing mentality**, rather than warning their brothers and sisters against ways of thinking and acting that are contrary to the truth and that do not follow the path of goodness. (Benedict XVI. *Message for Lent 2012*, no. 1. November 3, 2011)

PIUS XI

The Christian spirit is lost without the authority of the Church

There is no doubt that **human society will always suffer the most grievous harm whenever the guiding authority of the Church** and its salutary influence **is eliminated** from the private and public education of youth, **for on this education depends, in great measure, the good order of spiritual and material matters**. Due to this exclusion, human society will lose, little by little, that Christian spirit which alone may sustain the foundation of public order and tranquility and which alone is capable of fomenting real and advantageous progress for civilization, and of providing man with the means necessary to achieve the end that is beyond the frontiers of this life, that is, the acquisition of eternal salvation. (Pius IX. *Letter Quam non sine*, July 14, 1864)

III – MAY RELIGIOUS DISPENSE THEMSELVES FROM OBEDIENCE?

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Docility in obedience

Obey your leaders and defer to them, for they keep watch over you and will have to give an account, that they may fulfill their task with joy and not with sorrow, for that would be of no advantage to you. (Heb 13:17)

JOHN PAUL II

CLAR has the responsibility to manifest firm adherence to the Holy See

The confidence that the religious men and women of this continent place in you, is a motive of great responsibility **for CLAR to manifest in all things a firm adherence to the Magisterium of the Pope**, to the norms of the Holy See and of the Bishops, **and that it promote the authenticity of the religious life** and of the diverse charisms, respecting and favoring – in common dialogue – the particular character of each institute. (John Paul II. *Address to the members of the Conference of Latin American Religious (CLAR)*, no. 3, Bogota, July 2, 1986)

Religious should act in accordance with the directives of the Pastors

The Church expresses to you, dear brothers and sisters, her gratitude for your consecration and for your profession of the evangelical counsels, which are a special witness of love. She also expresses anew her great confidence in you who have chosen a state of life that is a special gift of God to the Church. She **counts upon your complete and generous collaboration** in order that, as faithful stewards of this precious gift, you may 'think with the Church' and always act in union with her, **in conformity with the teachings and directives of the Magisterium of Peter and of the pastors in communion with him**, fostering, at the personal and community level, a renewed ecclesial awareness. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Redemptionis Donum*, no. 14, March 25, 1984)

Living with filial obedience to the Magisterium of the Church

You belong to an ecclesial movement. The word 'ecclesial' here is more than merely decorative. It implies a precise task of Christian formation, and involves a deep convergence of faith and life. **The enthusiastic faith** which enlivens your communities is a great enrichment, but it is **not enough. It must be accompanied by a Christian formation which is solid, comprehensive and faithful to the Church's Magisterium [...]** As an ecclesial movement, **one of your distinguishing marks should be to sentire cum Ecclesia**, to live, that is, in

filial obedience to the Church's Magisterium, to the Pastors and to the Successor of Peter, and with them to build the communion of the whole body. (John Paul II. *Message to the 8th International Meeting of the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships*, no. 3, June 1, 1998)

The authority of the Magisterium impedes deviations

The moral conscience of the person grows and matures precisely within the Church; it is helped by the Church to 'not let be carried by any wind of doctrine, by the errors of men.' In effect, the Church is 'pillar and bulwark of the truth' (cf. 1Tim 3:15). **Fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church impedes, thus, that moral conscience be deviated from the truth regarding the good of man. It is unjust, therefore, to conceive the individual moral conscience and the Magisterium of the Church as two opponents, as two realities in conflict.** The authority which, by the will of Christ, is enjoyed by the Magisterium exists in order that the moral conscience attain truth with security and remain in it. (John Paul II. *General audience*, no. 3, August 24, 1983)

Submission to ecclesiastical authority guarantees the charism

How is it possible to safeguard and guarantee a charism's authenticity? **It is essential in this regard that every movement submit to the discernment of the competent ecclesiastical authority.** For this reason **no charism can dispense with reference and submission to the Pastors of the Church.** [...] **This is the necessary guarantee that you are taking the right road!** In the confusion that reigns in the world today, it is so easy to err, to give in to illusions. **May this element of trusting obedience to the Bishops, the successors of the Apostles, in communion with the Successor of Peter never be lacking in the Christian formation provided by your movements! [...] I ask you always to adhere to them with generosity and humility,** bringing your experiences to the local Churches and parishes, while always remaining in communion with the Pastors and attentive to their direction. (John Paul II. *Address during the World Congress of Ecclesial Movements and New Communities*, no. 8, May 30, 1998)

LEO XIII

Obey rulers as God himself

Whence it will behoove citizens to submit themselves and to be obedient to rulers, as to God, not so much through fear of punishment as through respect for their majesty; nor for the sake of pleasing, but through conscience, as doing their duty. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Diuturnum illud*, no. 13, June 29, 1881)

SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS

The order of justice requires our obedience

'Each person is subject to superior powers' (v.1): Superior powers mentioned here mean **men in authority, to whom we must subject ourselves according to the order of justice.** (Saint Thomas Aquinas. *Super Epistolam ad Romanos*, Ch.13, lect. 1 – French)

BENEDICT XV

Those who resist any legitimate authority, resist God

The spirit of insubordination and independence, so characteristic of our times, has, as We deplored above, not entirely spared the ministers of the Sanctuary. [...] It is not rare for pastors of the Church to find sorrow and contradiction where they had a right to look for comfort and help. [...] Let them remember that if, as we have seen, **those who resist any legitimate authority, resist God,** much more impiously do they act who refuse to obey the Bishop, whom God has consecrated with a special character by the exercise of His power. [...] Moreover, **bishops have a very heavy burden in consequence of the difficulties of the times; and heavier still is their anxiety for the salvation of the flock committed to their care:** 'For they watch as being to render an account of your souls' (Heb 8:17). (Benedict XV. *Encyclical Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum*, no. 28- 29, November 1, 1914)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Do the will of him who sent you and not your own will

Among the virtues that priests must possess for their sacred ministry none is so important as a frame of mind and soul whereby **they are always ready to know and do the will of him who sent them and not their own will.** The divine task that they are called by the Holy Spirit to fulfill surpasses all human wisdom and human ability. 'God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the strong' (1Cor 1:27). (Vatican Council II. *Decree Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 15, December 7, 1965)

Accept and adhere to Bishops in matters of faith and morals

Bishops, teaching in communion with the Roman Pontiff, are to be respected by all as witnesses to divine and Catholic truth. In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. (Vatican Council II. *Dogmatic constitution Lumen gentium*, no. 25, November 21, 1964)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

Obedience is intrinsically required by the hierarchical structure of the Church

Obedience is a virtue of **primary importance** [...] Just like that of Christ, the priest's obedience expresses total and joyful readiness to do God's will. This is why the priest recognises that this will also becomes evident in the indications of legitimate superiors. [...] **The virtue of obedience, intrinsically requested by the Sacrament and the hierarchical structure of the Church, is explicitly promised by the cleric,** first in the rite of ordination to the diaconate, and then in the rite of ordination to the priesthood. (Congregation for the Clergy. *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, no. 56 (New Edition), 2013)

SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

Be unanimous in obedience in order to be sanctified

It is therefore befitting that you should in every way glorify Jesus Christ, who has glorified you, that by a **unanimous obedience** you may be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment, and may all speak the same thing concerning the same thing, 1Corinthians 1:10 and that, being subject to the bishop and the presbytery, **you may in all respects be sanctified.** (Saint Ignatius of Antioch. *Epistle to the Ephesians*, Ch. II)

PIUS X

Always grow in obedience to the pastors of the Church

May the reverence and obedience which you solemnly pledged to those whom the Holy Spirit has appointed to rule the Church, **increase and gain strength;** and especially, may your minds and hearts be linked by ever closer ties of loyalty to this Apostolic See which justly claims your respectful homage. (Pius X. *Encyclical Haerent animos*, no. IV, August 4, 1908)

PIUS XI

Catholics should love obedience and discipline

With all Our spirit, therefore, We **conjure** the good Mexican Catholics to hold obedience and discipline dear. [...] And let this obedience be full of joy and a stimulus to greater energies. [...] **He who obeys unwillingly and only through force,** venting his interior resentment in bitter criticism of his superiors and companions in work, of all that which is not according to his own way of viewing things, **drives away the Divine benedictions,** destroys the strength of discipline, **and destroys where he ought to construct.** (Pius XI. *Encyclical Firmissimam constantiam*, no. 34, March 28, 1937)

CATECHISM OF TRENT

Many are the incredulous who wish to live freely

The role the will plays in the faith is most important; a sincere will, stripped of its passions, prejudices and human respect. **Many are incredulous**, not due to questions of understanding, **but due to the passions that has taken over their hearts: they prefer to live freely instead of submitting themselves to the yoke of obedience.** (Catechism of Trent 100, I, 3)

IV – THE CONSEQUENCES OF RESISTING AUTHORITY

SACRED SCRIPTURE

Whoever resists authority brings judgment upon himself

Let every person be subordinate to the **higher authorities**, for there is no authority except from God, and **those that exist have been established by God.** Therefore, **whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgment upon themselves.** For rulers are not a cause of fear to good conduct, but to evil. **Do you wish to have no fear of authority? Then do what is good and you will receive approval from it,** for it is a servant of God for your good. **But if you do evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword without purpose; it is the servant of God to inflict wrath on the evildoer.** Therefore, it is necessary to be subject not only because of the wrath but also because of conscience. (Rom 13:1-5)

LEO XIII

Disregard for the authority of the Church, principle cause of the evils of our days

Now, the **source of these evils lies chiefly,** We are convinced, **in this, that the holy and venerable authority of the Church,** which in God's name rules mankind, upholding and defending all lawful authority, **has been despised and set aside.** (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilii*, no.3, April 21, 1878)

Consequences of despising legitimate power

Undoubtedly, that cannot by any means be accounted the perfection of civilized life which sets all legitimate authority boldly at defiance; [...] **Such principles, as a matter of course, must hurry nations, corrupted in mind and heart, into every kind of infamy,** weaken all right order, and thus, sooner or later, bring the standing and peace of the State to the very brink of ruin. (Leo XIII. *Encyclical Inscrutabili Dei consilii*, no. 6, April 21, 1878)

CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY

The gravity of dissenting from the Magisterium in matters of faith and morals

The obligation to follow the Magisterium in matters of faith and morals is **intrinsically linked to all the functions the priest must perform in the Church.** **Dissent in this area is to be considered grave** insofar as it leads to scandal and confusion among the faithful. [...] Insofar as a minister of Christ and his Church, **the priest generously takes upon himself the duty to comply faithfully with each and every norm, avoiding those forms of partial compliance, according to subjective criteria, which create division** and have damaging effects upon the lay faithful and public opinion. (Congregation for the Clergy. *Directory for the ministry and life of priests*, no. 57, New Edition, 2013)

SAINT BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX

To Pope Eugene III – regarding the harm caused by disobedience

It remains for you now to **direct your attention to the general state of the whole Church,** to see if the people are submissive to the clergy, with all due humility, the clergy to the bishops, and the bishops to God; to see if good order and strict discipline are maintained in monasteries and other religious establishments; to see if evil deeds and false doctrines are sternly repressed by ecclesiastical censures; to see if the mystical vines are flourishing by reason of the virtues and good morals of the priests, and if the flowers

are yielding fruit in the obedience of a faithful people; to see if your own Apostolic decrees and the constitutions of your predecessors are observed with becoming solicitude; **to see finally lest there should be anything growing wild through neglect in the field of thy Lord,** or anything surreptitiously removed there from. Doubt not that something needing correction can still be discovered. [...] **But the only real consequence of this legislation is something worthy to be wept with bitterest tears.** Do you ask me what that is? **It is impunity,** the daughter of indifference, the mother of arrogance, the root of impudence, the nurse of transgression. **Blessed art you if with all assiduity you endeavour to guard against this indifference,** which is the first parent of all our evils. (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux. *Treatise on Consideration to Pope Eugene III*, III, 5, 9 – French)

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**A Church or a movement, a community that is closed becomes ill.
It has all of the sicknesses of isolation**

Ever since the beginning of Christianity, certain men and women have been called to offer themselves entirely to God: they leave the world to dedicate themselves exclusively to prayer, fasting and penance in intimacy with the Lord. Many obtained such a fame of sanctity that they ended up attracting multitudes – their example awakened in many others the desire of imitating their lives of perfection. Small communities were thus originated; and these became the starting point for the great religious orders of the future.

Regrettably, however, it is not unusual for some people – who lack supernatural vision – to consider this holy recollection as some kind of egoistic cowardice. They fail to understand the value of the oblation of contemplative souls in sustaining the evangelizing action of the Church. But, the Church knows well that the inaction of a missionary would be just as culpable as the abandonment of the contemplative life on the part of those called to such a sublime vocation. In light of these principles, are certain generalized statements that strike a blow to the contemplative life reasonable, helpful, or even desirable?

FRANCIS

I repeat this often. **A Church that does not go out is a Church of snobs. An ecclesial movement that does not go out on mission is a movement of snobs.** Furthermore, instead of going out to find sheep, to bring, or help, or give testimony, they dedicate themselves to their little group, combing sheep, not so? **They become spiritual hairdressers! That's no good!** To go out means to go out of ourselves. **A Church or a movement, a community that is closed becomes ill. It has all of the sicknesses of isolation.** A movement, a Church, a community that goes out makes mistakes, makes mistakes. But it is so beautiful to ask for forgiveness when we make mistakes. Therefore, **do not be afraid. Go out on mission. Set out on the road.** (*Audience to the Schoenstatt Movement, October 25, 2014*)

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♦ The active life was instituted for the contemplative life

John Paul II

♦ The cloister does not 'isolate', but places in the heart of the Church, who manifests the preeminence of contemplation over action

- ♦ The life of the religious contemplatives proclaims the primacy of God

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life

- ♦ The monastery is a place where God can be sought more freely
- ♦ The monastery represents what is most intimate to the Church – its heart

John Paul II

- ♦ Religious devoted to contemplation are a reason for pride for the Church, and contribute to the growth of the People of God
- ♦ Contemplative vocations are very necessary and enrich the entire life of the Church. This life neither excludes from the Church nor impedes efficacious apostolate

Benedict XVI

- ♦ The religious have at their disposal a wisdom that the world does not possess
- ♦ In a world increasingly incapable of silence, the charism of the Charterhouse is a precious gift
- ♦ Your place is not on the fringes – you are in the heart of the Church

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ♦ Communities entirely dedicated to contemplation hold an honorable place in the Mystical Body of Christ

Paul VI

- ♦ Cloistered religious are a sign of the presence of God

Saint Augustine of Hippo

- ♦ Ceasing the interior noise

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life

- ♦ Cloistered contemplatives conform to Christ Jesus – a unique way of sharing in Christ's relationship with the Father
- ♦ In contemplation, one fulfils to the highest degree the First Commandment

John Paul II

- ♦ The life of cloistered nuns is an anticipation of the contemplation of God

II – The significance of contemplative life for the apostolate

Pius XII

- ♦ Nuns participate in the apostolate of love for neighbor through example, prayer and penance

Paul VI

- ♦ Cloistered religious are in solidarity with the entire Church

John XXIII

- ♦ The primacy in the service of God corresponds to the cloistered religious

Congregation for the Institute of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life

- ♦ Cloistered religious should not be considered as excluded from the Church

John Paul II

- ♦ Even some Christians, more sensitive to concrete compromise, consider contemplative life as an antiquated activity and even useless

Pius XII

- ◆ Contemplative nuns possess an entirely apostolic vocation

Vatican Council II (Ecumenical XXI)

- ◆ Great importance in the conversion of souls – the contemplative life

Benedict XVI

- ◆ Deep bond between pastoral service and the contemplative vocation

John Paul II

- ◆ Contemplative religious spread the Kingdom of God – their great contribution to evangelization
- ◆ The prayer of contemplative religious sustains the fervor of the priesthood
- ◆ An apostolate of greatest ecclesial and redemptive value – example of Saint Therese of Lisieux: the ‘Patroness of the Missions’
- ◆ You accompany the apostolic mission of evangelizers, your collaboration in the new evangelization is particularly important

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life

- ◆ Cloistered nuns are the missionary heart of the Church

Benedict XVI

- ◆ The authentic missionary spirit Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who never left her Carmel

John Paul II

- ◆ Saint Therese of the Child Jesus – model of missionary commitment and patroness of the missions

Pius XI

- ◆ Contemplatives draw down from heaven a shower of divine graces, without which evangelical laborers would reap a scanty crop

Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life

- ◆ The faithful should learn to honor the specific role of contemplatives
- ◆ Bishops are the chief guardians of the contemplative charism.

**I – SUPREMACY OF THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE
OVER THE ACTIVE LIFE**

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, many founded religious families which the Church gladly welcomed

Indeed from the very beginning of the Church men and women have set about following Christ with greater freedom and imitating Him more closely through the practice of the evangelical counsels, each in his own way

leading a life dedicated to God. Many of them, **under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit**, lived as hermits or founded religious families, which the Church gladly welcomed and approved by her authority. So it is that in accordance with the Divine Plan a wonderful variety of religious communities has grown up which has made it easier for the Church not only to be equipped for every good work (cf. 2Tim 3:17) [...] but also to appear adorned with the various gifts of her children like a spouse adorned for her husband (cf. Apoc. 21:2) and for the manifold Wisdom of God to be revealed through her (cf. Eph. 3:10). (Vatican Council II. *Degree Perfectae caritatis*, no. 1, October 28, 1965)

SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA

The active life was instituted for the contemplative life

The contemplative life is not instituted for the active, but the active for the contemplative. (Saint Anthony of Padua, Sermon Third Sunday after Easter, no. 14)

JOHN PAUL II

The cloister does not 'isolate', but places in the heart of the Church, who manifests the preeminence of contemplation over action

The abandoning of the cloister would mean to fall short in what is characteristic to one of the forms of religious life, by which the Church manifests before the world the preeminence of contemplation over action, of what is eternal over that which is temporal. The cloister does not 'isolate' the contemplative souls from the communion of the Mystical Body. Rather, it places them in the heart of the Church. (John Paul II. *Address to the plenary session of the Sacred Congregation for the religious and secular institutes*, no. 3, March 7, 1980)

The life of the religious contemplatives proclaims the primacy of God

Your life – with its separation from the world expressed concretely and effectively – proclaims the primacy of God and is a constant reminder of the preeminence of contemplation over action, of the eternal over the transitory. Consequently it suggests, as an expression and anticipation of the goal towards which the ecclesial community is heading, the future recapitulation of all things in Christ. (John Paul II. *Address to women religious of the Bologna Area*, no. 4, September 28, 1997)

CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED

LIFE AND FOR SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

The monastery is a place where God can be sought more freely

Whether in a place apart or in the heart of

the city, the monastery, with its distinctive architectural form, is intended to create a space of separation, solitude and silence, where God can be sought more freely in a life not only for him and with him but also in him alone. (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life. *Verbi sponsa*, no. 5, May 13, 1999)

A contemplative monastery represents what is most intimate to the Church – its heart

A contemplative monastery is a gift also for the local Church to which it belongs. Representing the prayerful face of the Church, a monastery makes the Church's presence more complete and meaningful in the local community. A monastic community may be compared to Moses who, in prayer, determined the fate of Israel's battles (cf. Ex 17:11), or to the guard who keeps the night watch awaiting the dawn (cf. Is 21:6). The monastery represents what is most intimate to a local Church – its heart, where the Spirit always groans in supplication for the entire community and where thanksgiving rises unceasingly for the Life which he sends forth each day (cf. Col 3:17). (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life. *Verbi sponsa*, no. 8, May 13, 1999)

JOHN PAUL II

Religious devoted to contemplation are a reason for pride for the Church, and contribute to the growth of the People of God

Institutes completely devoted to contemplation, composed of either women or men, are for the Church a reason for pride and a source of heavenly graces. By their lives and mission, the members of these Institutes imitate Christ in his prayer on the mountain, bear witness to God's lordship over history and anticipate the glory which is to come. In solitude and silence, by listening to the word of God, participating in divine worship, personal asceticism, prayer, mortification and the communion of fraternal love, they direct the whole of their lives and all their activities to the contemplation of God. In this way they

offer the ecclesial community a singular testimony of the Church's love for her Lord, and they contribute, with hidden apostolic fruitfulness, to the growth of the People of God. (John Paul II. *Apostolic exhortation Vita consecrata*, no. 8, March 25, 1996)

Contemplative vocations are very necessary and enrich the entire life of the Church. This life neither excludes from the Church nor impedes efficacious apostolate

The contemplative life has occupied and continues to occupy a place of honor in the Church. Dedicated to prayer and silence, adoration and penance from within the cloister. [...] **The Church knows well that your silent and isolated life, in the exterior solitude of the cloister, is the yeast of renovation and the presence of the Spirit of Christ in the world.** That is why the Council said that the contemplative religious 'maintain an eminent place in the Mystical Body of Christ' [...] **Your life of enclosure, lived in entire fidelity, does not exclude you from the Church nor impede an efficacious apostolate.** Remember the daughter of Teresa of Jesus, Theresa of Lisieux, who was so close, from her cloister, to the missions and missionaries of the world. That, like her, 'in the heart of the Church you shall be love' [...] **The world needs, more than we might realize, your presence and your testimony.** [...] With respect to this, **I would like to call on the Christian communities and their Pastors, reminding them of the irreplaceable place that the contemplative life holds within the Church.** We should all value and profoundly esteem the dedication of contemplative souls to prayer, to praise and sacrifice. **They are very necessary for the Church.** They are living prophets and teachers to all; the forerunners of the Church toward the kingdom. Their attitude toward the realities of this world, that they contemplate according to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, enlightens us regarding the final possessions and makes us comprehend the gratuitousness of the salvific love of God. **I exhort all, therefore, to attempt to awaken vocations among the youth for the monastic life; in the certainty that these vocations enrich the entire life of the Church.** (John Paul II. *Address to the Cloistered Sisters in the Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila*, no. 2-5, November 1, 1982)

BENEDICT XVI

The religious have at their disposal a wisdom that the world does not possess

Men and women who withdraw to live in God's company acquire by making this decision a great sense of compassion for the suffering and weakness of others. As friends of God, **they have at their disposal a wisdom that the world – from which they have distanced themselves – does not possess** and they amiably share it with those who knock at their door. **I therefore recall with admiration and gratitude the women and men's cloistered monasteries.** Today more than ever they are oases of peace and hope, a precious treasure for the whole Church, especially since they recall the primacy of God and the importance, for the journey of faith, of constant and intense prayer. (Benedict XVI. *General audience*, December 1, 2010)

In a world increasingly incapable of silence, the charism of the Charterhouse is a precious gift

In recent decades, moreover, the development of the media has spread and extended a phenomenon that had already been outlined in the 1960s: **virtuality risks predominating over reality.** Unbeknownst to them, people are increasingly becoming immersed in a virtual dimension because of the audiovisual messages that accompany their life from morning to night. [...] **Some people are no longer able to remain for long periods in silence and solitude.** I chose to mention this socio-cultural condition because it highlights **the specific charism of the Charterhouse as a precious gift for the Church and for the world, a gift that contains a deep message for our life and for the whole of humanity.** (Benedict XVI. *Homily in the church of the Charterhouse of Serra San Bruno*, October 9, 2011)

Your place is not on the fringes – you are in the heart of the Church

This is why I have come here, dear Brothers who make up the Carthusian Community of Serra San Bruno, to tell you that **the Church needs you** and that you need the Church! **Your place is not on the fringes: no vocation in the People of God is on the fringes. We are one**

body, in which every member is important and has the same dignity, and is inseparable from the whole. You too, who live in voluntary isolation, are in the heart of the Church and make the pure blood of contemplation and of the love of God course through your veins. (Benedict XVI. *Homily in the church of the Charterhouse of Serra San Bruno*, October 9, 2011)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Communities entirely dedicated to contemplation hold an honorable place in the Mystical Body of Christ

Communities which are entirely dedicated to contemplation, so that their members in solitude and silence, with constant prayer and penance willingly undertaken, occupy themselves with God alone, retain at all times, no matter how pressing the needs of the active apostolate may be, an honorable place in the Mystical Body of Christ, whose 'members do not all have the same function' (Rom. 12:4). For these offer to God a sacrifice of praise which is outstanding. Moreover the manifold results of their holiness lends luster to the people of God which is inspired by their example and which gains new members by their apostolate which is as effective as it is hidden. Thus they are revealed to be a glory of the Church and a well-spring of heavenly graces. (Vatican Council II. *Decree Perfectae caritatis*, no. 7, October 28, 1965)

PAUL VI

Cloistered religious are a sign of the presence of God

In a world like this which surrounds us, forgetful of God, indifferent toward God, and in denial toward God, you are tranquil testimonies, austere and genteel, recollected in your monasteries almost as though to observe a kind of religious enchantment. [...] **Your presence is a sign of the presence of God among men.** You sing, who hears you? You celebrate, who observes you? It is as though incomprehension surrounds you and solitude mortifies you. But it is not like this. It is possible for anyone to discern that you have started a fire; anyone can

notice that from your cloisters light and heat flow out; anyone may stop, look and think. **You are the sign for today's world, a principle of reflection that is frequently beneficial and regenerating.** (Paul VI. Address to the Abbots and Priors of the Monastic Congregations of the Benedictine Order, September 30, 1966)

SAINT AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Ceasing the interior noise

In effect, no one will exceed me in my desire to live in this certainty of absolute peace: [there is] nothing better, nothing sweeter than to turn one's gaze to the heart of the divine treasure, ceasing the interior noise; it is a sweet and good thing; on the other hand, preaching, disputing, correcting, edifying, being preoccupied with each one individually, is a great responsibility, a huge load, a great weight and a terrible toil. (Saint Augustine of Hippo. *Sermon 339*, 4)

CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED

LIFE AND FOR SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

Cloistered contemplatives conform to Christ Jesus – a unique way of sharing in Christ's relationship with the Father

In a specific and radical way, cloistered contemplatives conform to Christ Jesus in prayer on the mountain and to his Paschal Mystery, which is death for the sake of resurrection. The ancient spiritual tradition of the Church, taken up by the Second Vatican Council, explicitly connects the contemplative life to the prayer of Jesus 'on the mountain', or solitary place not accessible to all but only to those whom he calls to be with him, apart from the others (cf. Mt 17:1-9, Lk 6:12-13, Mk 6:30-31, 2Pt 1:16-18). [...] **This association of the contemplative life with the prayer of Jesus in a solitary place suggests a unique way of sharing in Christ's relationship with the Father.** [...] solitary cell, the closed cloister, are the place where the nun, bride of the Incarnate Word, lives wholly concentrated with Christ in God. The mystery of this communion is revealed to her to the extent that, docile to the Holy Spirit and enlivened by his gifts, she

listens to the Son (cf. Mt 17:5), fixes her gaze upon his face (cf. 2Cor 3:18), and allows herself to be conformed to his life, to the point of the supreme self-offering to the Father (cf. Phil 2:5 ff.), for the praise of his glory. (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life. *Verbi sponsa*, no. 3, May 13, 1999)

In contemplation, one fulfils to the highest degree the First Commandment

The contemplative nun fulfils to the highest degree the First Commandment of the Lord: 'You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, **with all your mind**' (Lk 10:27), making it the full meaning of her life and loving in God all the brothers and sisters. **She moves towards the perfection of charity, choosing God as 'the one thing necessary'** (cf. Lk 10:42), **loving him exclusively** as All in all. Through her unconditional love of him and **in the spirit of renunciation** proposed by the Gospel (cf. Mt 13:45, Lk 9:23), she accomplishes the sacrifice of all good things, 'consecrating' every good thing to God alone. This is so that he alone may dwell in the utter silence of the cloister, filling it with his word and presence, and the Bride may truly dedicate herself to the Only One, 'in constant prayer and ardent penance' in the mystery of a total and exclusive love. (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life. *Verbi sponsa*, no. 5, May 13, 1999)

JOHN PAUL II

The life of the cloister nuns is an anticipation of the contemplation of God

The monastic life of women and the cloister deserve special attention because of the great esteem in which the Christian community holds this type of life [...] Indeed, **the life of cloistered nuns, devoted in a special way to prayer, to asceticism and diligent progress in the spiritual life, 'is nothing other than a journey to the heavenly Jerusalem and an anticipation of the eschatological Church immutable in its possession and contemplation of God'**. In the light of this vocation and ecclesial mission, the cloister responds to the need, felt as paramount, to be with the Lord. (John Paul

II. *Apostolic exhortation Vita consecrata*, no. 59, March 25, 1996)

II – THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE FOR THE APOSTOLATE

PIUS XII

Nuns participate in the apostolate of love for neighbor through example, prayer and penance

It is evident that these exclusively contemplative nuns participate in the apostolate of love for neighbor in its three forms: of example, of prayer and of penance. (Pius XII. *Radio Message to the cloistered nuns of the world*, August 2, 1958)

PAUL VI

Cloistered religious are in solidarity with the entire Church

Your monastic vocation requires solitude and cloister; **but you should never consider yourselves isolated and separated from the solidarity with the entire Church. You are not separate**, we say, from the ecclesial communion; you are separated in order to dedicate yourselves to the special plan of your religious vocation. (Paul VI. *Address to the Abbesses and Prioresses of the Benedictine Monasteries of Italy*, October 28, 1966)

JOHN XXIII

The primacy in the service of God corresponds to the cloistered religious

From here We are pleased to send an especially paternal greeting to Our dear daughters, who the cloistered life retains in each one of the houses in Rome and the world. **To the cloistered religious corresponds, in fact, the primacy in the service of God, which is unceasing prayer, absolute detachment from everything and everyone, love of sacrifice, expiation for the sins of the world.** (John XXIII. *Address to the women religious of Rome*, January 29, 1960)

CONGREGATION FOR THE INSTITUTE OF CONSECRATED

LIFE AND THE SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

Cloistered religious should not be considered as excluded from the Church

It is not because monks and nuns are separated from other people that they should be considered as isolated and excluded from the world and the Church; rather, on the contrary, they are present to them 'in a more profound manner within the familiarity with Christ' (Congregation for the Institute of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life. *Instruction Venite seorsum*, no. III, August 15, 1969)

JOHN PAUL II

Even some Christians, more sensitive to concrete compromise, consider contemplative life as an antiquated activity and even useless

Though profoundly loving our epoch, it is necessary to recognize that modern thought easily closes itself in subjectivism with respect to religions, the faith of believers, and religious sentiments. And this vision makes no exceptions with respect to the monastic life. This occurs to such a point, that **public opinion and at times, unfortunately, inclusively some Christians – who are more sensitive to concrete compromise – find themselves tempted to consider your contemplative life as an evasion from the real; an antiquated activity and even useless. This misunderstanding might bring you suffering, even humiliations.** I say to you as Christ: 'Fear not, little flock' (cf. Lk 12:32). A certain monastic flowering, that is manifesting itself in your country, should maintain you, moreover, in hope. (John Paul II. *Address to the contemplative Sisters of the Carmel of Lisieux*, no. 2, June 2, 1980)

PIUS XII

Contemplative nuns possess an entirely apostolic vocation

Mother Church requires that all of the canonically consecrated nuns of contemplation, combine perfect love of God with perfect

charity toward neighbor. [...] Therefore, **may all nuns understand well that their vocation is fully and entirely apostolic, not constrained in any way by the limits of time, place or thing, but rather extends, always and in all places [...] practiced principally through [...] the example of Christian perfection; because their lives, even without the use of words, continually and significantly take the faithful to Christ and to Christian perfection, and for the good soldiers of Christ it is like a standard or flag that excites them to real combat and stimulates them toward the crown.** (Pius XII. *Apostolic constitution Sponsa Christi*, no. 39, November 21, 1950)

VATICAN COUNCIL II (ECUMENICAL XXI)

Great importance in the conversion of souls – the contemplative life

Institutes of the contemplative life, by their prayers, sufferings, and works of penance have a very great importance in the conversion of souls, because it is God who sends workers into His harvest when He is asked to do so (cf. Mt 9:38) God who opens the minds of non-Christians to hear the Gospel (cf. Acts 16:14), and God who fructifies the word of salvation in their hearts (cf. 1Cor. 3:7). (Vatican Council II. *Decree Ad gentes*, no. 40, December 7, 1965)

BENEDICT XVI

Deep bond between pastoral service and the contemplative vocation

I would like our meeting to highlight **the deep bond that exists between Peter and Bruno, between pastoral service to the Church's unity and the contemplative vocation in the Church. Ecclesial communion, in fact, demands an inner force, that force which Father Prior has just recalled, citing the expression 'captus ab Uno', ascribed to Saint Bruno: 'grasped by the One', by God, 'Unus potens per omnia', as we sang in the Vespers hymn. From the contemplative community the ministry of pastors draws a spiritual sap that comes from God. 'Fugitiva relinquere et aeterna captare': to abandon transient realities and seek to grasp that which is eternal.** These words from the letter your Founder addressed to

Rudolph, Provost of Rheims, contain the core of your spirituality (cf. Letter to Rudolph, no. 13): the strong desire to enter in union of life with God, abandoning everything else, everything that stands in the way of this communion, and letting oneself be grasped by the immense love of God to live this love alone. **Dear brothers you have found the hidden treasure, the pearl of great value** (cf. Mt 13:44–46). (Benedict XVI. *Homily in the church of the Charterhouse of Serra San Bruno*, October 9, 2011)

JOHN PAUL II

The prayer of contemplatives sustains the fervor of the priesthood

In certain places in Africa, a monastery of contemplative religious has been established in the vicinity of the major seminary. Is it not especially meaningful that those who saw the necessity of promoting vocations to the priesthood, so as to enable the young churches to become fully implanted in the native soil, also professed their conviction that **only the grace of God, humbly sought in constant prayer, could sustain the fervor of the priesthood?** I ask you therefore, as a special request on this occasion, to make it one of the primary intentions of your prayers, to beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest (cf. Mt 9:38). (John Paul II. *Address to the Sisters of the Order of Carmel*, Nairobi, no. 4, May 7, 1980)

An apostolate of greatest ecclesial and redemptive value – example of Saint Theresa of Lisieux: the ‘Patroness of the Missions’

Following the steps of Saint Benedict, or Saint Bernard, Saint Clare of Assisi or Saint Teresa of Avila, cloistered nuns assume, full time, **this service of divine praise and intercession** in the name of the Church. **This form of life is also an apostolate of greatest ecclesial and redemptive value, which Saint Theresa of the Child Jesus illustrated magnificently in the course of her short existence in the Carmel of Lisieux.** Let us not forget that Pope Pius XI proclaimed her as **‘Patroness of the Missions.’** (John Paul II. *Address to women religious gathered in the Carmel of Kinshasa, Zaire*, no. 3, May 3, 1980)

You accompany the apostolic mission of evangelizers, your collaboration in the new evangelization is particularly important

Dear sisters, you are the representatives of the special vocation of contemplative life that has passed through the history of the Church, reminding everyone of the urgency of constantly walking toward the definitive encounter with God and the blessed. [...] **How precious is your vocation of special consecration! It is truly a gift situated in the heart of the mystery of ecclesial communion, accompanying the apostolic mission of so many in their efforts to announce the Gospel. The collaboration that you are called to offer in the new evangelization is particularly important.** (John Paul II. *Address to cloistered religious*, Loreto, no. 1, 4, September 10, 1995)

CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED

LIFE AND FOR SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

Cloistered nuns are the missionary heart of the Church

Cloistered nuns fulfil that mission by dwelling at the missionary heart of the Church, by means of constant prayer, the oblation of self and the offering of the sacrifice of praise. Their life thus becomes a mysterious source of apostolic fruitfulness (cf. Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, 7; John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata* (March 25, 1996), 8; 59) and blessing for the Christian community and for the whole world. (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life. *Verbi sponsa*, no. 7, May 13, 1999)

JOHN PAUL II

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux – model of missionary commitment and patroness of the missions

Today, World Mission Sunday, we turn our attention especially to Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, whom this morning I had the joy of proclaiming a doctor of the universal Church. She is a model of missionary commitment and the patroness

of the missions, although she never left the cloister of the Lisieux Carmel. (John Paul II. Angelus, Proclamation of Saint. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face as a 'Doctor of the Church', no. 1, October 19, 1997)

PIUS XI

Contemplatives draw down from heaven a shower of divine graces, without which evangelical laborers would reap a scanty crop

It is, besides, easy to understand how they who assiduously fulfill the duty of prayer and penance contribute much more to the increase of the Church and the welfare of mankind than those who labor in tilling the Master's field; **for unless the former drew down from heaven a shower of divine graces to water the field that is being tilled, the evangelical laborers would reap forsooth from their toil a more scanty crop. [...] Seeing that since they keep the rule of their Order not only accurately but also with generous ardor, and since that rule easily carries those who observe it to the higher degree of sanctity, it is impossible that those religious should not become and remain powerful pleaders with our most merciful God for all Christendom.** (Pius XI. *Apostolic constitution Umbratilem*, no. 12–13, July 8, 1924)

CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED

LIFE AND FOR SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

The faithful should learn to honor the specific role of contemplatives

It is important that the faithful learn to honor the charism and the specific role of contemplatives, their discreet but crucial presence, and their silent witness which constitutes a call to prayer and a reminder of the truth of God's existence. (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life. *Verbi sponsa*, no. 8, May 13, 1999)

Bishops are the chief guardians of the contemplative charism

As pastors and guides of all of God's flock, the Bishops are the chief guardians of the contemplative charism. Therefore, they must nurture contemplative communities with the bread of the Word and the Eucharist, offering where necessary the spiritual assistance of properly trained priests. **At the same time they share with the community the task of keeping watch so that, in today's society marked by dispersion, a lack of silence and illusory values, the life of monasteries, nourished by the Holy Spirit, may remain genuinely and wholly directed towards the contemplation of God.** (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life. *Verbi sponsa*, no. 8, May 13, 1999)

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APPENDIX

The significance of the Denzinger-Bergoglio texts

Many of the readers of The Denzinger-Bergoglio have been encouraged in their defense of Catholic truths within the ecclesial ambiances they frequent, supported by the abundant magisterial documentation offered in this work. Nevertheless, it is possible that they are often confronted with arguments such as: ‘the documents are very good, but it is necessary to interpret what Jesus is telling us today, for our concrete reality, as a Church that journeys in this concrete historical moment’. These kind of people also contrast doctrine with the personal experience of encounter with God, as though they excluded each other.

As an aid to our readers who are more familiar with apologetics, we offer this concise appendix that aims at simply portraying how such arguments are nothing more than the basis of a doctrine defined by Pope Pius X as ‘a synthesis of all heresies’, that is, Modernism. It is not surprising that such people reject the documents of the Magisterium for, just as Saint Pius X said, ‘they recognize that the three chief difficulties which stand in their way are the scholastic method of philosophy, the authority and tradition of the Fathers, and the Magisterium.’ It is interesting that these are exactly the points that The Denzinger-Bergoglio presents to its readers as elements for sound judgment.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Modernism is a whole system of doctrines disclosed by Saint Pius X, mainly by means of a magnificent Encyclical entitled *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. The brilliance of this Encyclical consisted in presenting this system – whose ideas were, until that time, disguised by multiple intricacies in diverse fields and in the writings of authors who apparently had nothing to do with one another – in a coherent and structured manner, as a whole. It would be an arduous task to undertake an exhaustive study on this topic, and it would stray from the objective at hand, the crucial aspect of which is to briefly and concisely demonstrate how this type of argument is derived from the fundamental theory of the modernists. According to their belief, these formulas (which they refer to in a derogatory tone, and which we true Catholics call dogmas) are subject to constant mutation. Yes, they insist that a dogma not only may develop and change, but that it necessarily must do so. Consequently, there should be a fundamental distinction made between the concrete meaning of the formulas and the religious and moral impulse that flows from the human being. This mysterious ‘personal encounter with God’ allegedly may contradict that which the Church teaches us, whereby an excessive adherence to the formulas may doubtlessly suffocate that which they consider to be true religion. To better understand this confusing line of thought, let us take a look at what the Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* itself has to teach us. As usual, the subtitles are ours – to facilitate the comprehension of the text.

KEY MODERNIST THEORIES UNMASKED IN THE ENCYCLICAL PASCENDI

1 – Faith is not infused by God, but rather arises from the interior of man by the natural need of the divine that dwells within him

Therefore, since God is the object of religion, we must conclude that faith, which is the basis and the foundation of all religion, consists in a sentiment which originates

from a need of the divine. This need of the divine, which is experienced only in special and favourable circumstances, cannot, of itself, appertain to the domain of consciousness; it is at first latent within the consciousness, or, to borrow a term from modern philosophy, in the subconsciousness, where also its roots lies hidden and undetected.

2 – Thus, faith is nothing more than a sentiment, which would be the starting point of religion

Should anyone ask how it is that this need

of the divine which man experiences within himself grows up into a religion, the Modernists reply thus: Science and history, they say, are confined within two limits, the one external, namely, the visible world, the other internal, which is consciousness. When one or other of these boundaries has been reached, there can be no further progress, for beyond is the unknowable. In presence of this unknowable, whether it is outside man and beyond the visible world of nature, or lies **hidden within in the subconsciousness, the need of the divine**, according to the principles of Fideism, **excites in a soul with a propensity towards religion a certain special sentiment**, without any previous advertence of the mind: and this sentiment possesses, implied within itself both as its own object and as its intrinsic cause, the reality of the divine, and in a way unites man with God. It is **this sentiment to which Modernists give the name of faith, and this it is which they consider the beginning of religion.**

3 – Revelation is verified in accordance with this religious sentiment. The result: this sentiment is upheld as the universal rule, and the teachings of the Church are irrelevant

But we have not yet come to the end of their philosophy, or, to speak more accurately, their folly. **For Modernism finds in this sentiment not faith only, but with and in faith, as they understand it, revelation, they say, abides.** For what more can one require for revelation? Is not that religious *sentiment* which is perceptible in the consciousness revelation, or at least the beginning of revelation? Nay, is not God Himself, as He manifests Himself to the soul, indistinctly it is true, in this same religious sense, revelation? [...] Hence **the law, according to which religious consciousness is given as the universal rule, to be put on an equal footing with revelation, and to which all must submit, even the supreme authority of the Church, whether in its teaching capacity, or in that of legislator in the province of sacred liturgy or discipline.**

4 – From the expression of this religious sentiment, there subsequently arise propositions, with the help of the intellect,

that summarize such this erroneous concept of 'faith'

In that sentiment of which We have frequently spoken, since sentiment is not knowledge, **God indeed presents Himself to man, but in a manner so confused and indistinct** that He can hardly be perceived by the believer. It is therefore necessary that a ray of light should be cast upon this sentiment, so that God may be clearly distinguished and set apart from it. This is the task of the intellect, whose office it is to reflect and to analyse, and by means of which man first transforms into mental pictures the vital phenomena which arise within him, and then expresses them in words. Hence the common saying of Modernists: that 'the religious man must ponder his faith'. **The intellect, then, encountering this sentiment directs itself upon it, and produces in it a work resembling that of a painter who restores and gives new life to a picture that has perished with age.** The simile is that of one of the leaders of Modernism.

5 – From these assertions of the intelligence, formulas will arise, which, sanctioned by the Church, are transformed into dogmas

The operation of the intellect in this work is a double one: first by a natural and spontaneous act it expresses its concept in a simple, ordinary statement; then, on reflection and deeper consideration, or, as they say, by elaborating its thought, it expresses the idea in secondary propositions, which are derived from the first, but are more perfect and distinct. These secondary *propositions*, if they finally receive the **approval of the supreme magisterium of the Church, constitute dogma.**

6 – Therefore dogmas are nothing other than formulas to give rational support to the aforementioned religious experience, but they can never be absolute, for they must be adapted to the religious sentiment, just as it is lived within a concrete historic moment

Thus, We have reached one of the principal points in the Modernists' system, namely the origin and the nature of dogma. [...] To

ascertain the nature of dogma, we must first find the relation which exists between the religious formulas and the religious sentiment. This will be readily perceived by him who realizes that **these formulas have no other purpose than to furnish the believer with a means of giving an account of his faith to himself.** These formulas therefore **stand midway** between the believer and his faith; in their relation to the faith, they are the **inadequate expression** of its object, and are **usually called symbols**; in their relation to the believer, they are **mere instruments.** Hence it is **quite impossible to maintain that they express absolute truth:** for, in so far as they are symbols, they are the **images of truth**, and so **must be adapted to the religious sentiment** in its relation to man; and as instruments, they are the **vehicles of truth**, and must therefore in their turn be adapted to man in his relation to the religious sentiment. But the object of the religious sentiment, since it embraces that absolute, possesses an infinite variety of aspects of which now one, now another, may present itself. In like manner, he who believes may pass through different phases.

In conclusion, the fundamental theory of the modernists dogma is perfectly liable to change, according to the intimate religious experience of each time period

Consequently, the formulae too, which we call dogmas, must be subject to these vicissitudes, and are, therefore, liable to change. Thus the way is open to the intrinsic evolution of dogma.

An immense collection of sophisms this, that ruins and destroys all religion.

Dogma is not only able, but ought to evolve and to be changed. This is strongly affirmed by the Modernists, and as clearly flows from their principles. [...] it is necessary that the primitive formula be accepted and sanctioned by the heart; and similarly the subsequent work from which spring the secondary formulas must proceed under the guidance of the heart. Hence it comes that **these formulas, to be living, should be, and should remain, adapted to the faith and to him who believes. Wherefore if for any reason this adaptation should cease to exist, they lose their first meaning and accordingly must be changed.** And since the character and lot of dogmatic

formulas is so precarious, there is no room for surprise that Modernists regard them so lightly and in such open disrespect. **And so they audaciously charge the Church both with taking the wrong road from inability to distinguish the religious and moral sense of formulas from their surface meaning, and with clinging tenaciously and vainly to meaningless formulas whilst religion is allowed to go to ruin.**

Consequence: The so-called formulas (dogmas), are used by the modernists to the degree of their own convenience

Since symbols are but symbols in regard to their objects and only instruments in regard to the believer, **it is necessary first of all,** according to the teachings of the Modernists, that the believer **do not lay too much stress on the formula,** but avail himself of it only with the scope of uniting himself to the absolute truth which the formula at once reveals and conceals, that is to say, endeavours to express but without succeeding in doing so. They would also have **the believer avail himself of the formulas only in as far as they are useful to him, for they are given to be a help and not a hindrance;** with proper regard, however, for the social respect due to formulas which the public magisterium has deemed suitable for expressing the common consciousness until such time as the same magisterium provide otherwise. [...]

[Summary:] To begin with dogma, we have already indicated its origin and nature. Dogma is born of the species of impulse or necessity by virtue of which the believer is constrained to elaborate his religious thought so as to render it clearer for himself and others. This elaboration consists entirely in the process of penetrating and refining the primitive formula, not indeed in itself and according to logical development, but as required by circumstances, or vitally as the Modernists more abstrusely put it. Hence it happens that around the primitive formula secondary formulas gradually continue to be formed, and these subsequently grouped into bodies of doctrine, or into doctrinal constructions as they prefer to call them, and further sanctioned by the public magisterium as responding to the common consciousness, are called dogma. (Pius X. *Encyclical Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, no. 19.21, September 8, 1907)

We have now covered – in a condensed, though hopefully clear, manner – the main line of modernist thought. Yes, that’s how things are... this horrible sophism, which upholds the ‘synthesis of all heresies’, has penetrated to the grassroots with complete normality. Consistent with their theory, the aforementioned might claim that all of this was from the time of Pius X, an out-dated and radical Pope who made the Church regress one hundred years in the midst of an epoch of flourishing progress. However, this line of thought (appropriately adapted) has been upheld by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, quite recently, in the Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae*, ratified by various disciplinary decisions a very few years ago. Let us take a look:

MYSTERIUM ECCLESIAE – REGARDING CATHOLIC DOCTRINE: DEFENDING THE CHURCH FROM CURRENT ERRORS

1 – How to understand a possible historical conditioning in the formulation of the dogmas

With regard to this historical condition, it must first be observed that the meaning of the pronouncements of faith depends partly upon the expressive power of the language used at a certain point in time and in particular circumstances. Moreover, it sometimes happens that some **dogmatic truth is first expressed incompletely (but not falsely), and at a later date, when considered in a broader context of faith or human knowledge, it receives a fuller and more perfect expression.** In addition, when the Church makes new pronouncements she intends to confirm or clarify what is in some way contained in Sacred Scripture or in previous expressions of Tradition; but at the same time she usually has the intention of solving certain questions or removing certain errors. All these things have to be taken into account in order that these pronouncements may be properly interpreted. Finally, even though the truths which the Church intends to teach through her dogmatic formulas are distinct from the changeable conceptions of a given epoch and can be expressed without them, nevertheless it can sometimes happen that these truths may be enunciated by the Sacred Magisterium in terms that bear traces of

such conceptions.

2 – The dogmatic formulas of the Magisterium are always suitable for communicating revealed truth

In view of the above, it must be stated that the dogmatic formulas of the Church’s Magisterium were from the beginning suitable for communicating revealed truth, and that as they are they remain forever suitable for communicating this truth to those who interpret them correctly. (Cf. Pius IX, Brief *Eximiam Tuam*: DS 2831; Paul VI, *Mysterium Fidei*, AAS 57 (1965), p.757ff. and *L’Oriente cristiano nella luce di immortali Concilii*, in *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, vol. 5). It does not however follow that every one of these formulas has always been or will always be so to the same extent. For this reason theologians seek to define exactly the intention of teaching proper to the various formulas, and in carrying out this work they are of considerable assistance to the living Magisterium of the Church, to which they remain subordinated. For this reason also it often happens that ancient dogmatic formulas and others closely connected with them remain living and fruitful in the habitual usage of the Church, but with suitable expository and explanatory additions that maintain and clarify their original meaning. In addition, it has sometimes happened that in this habitual usage of the Church certain of these formulas gave way to new expressions which, proposed and approved by the Sacred Magisterium, presented more clearly or more completely the same meaning.

3 – The significance of dogmatic formulas manifests the truth without deformation or alteration.

As for the meaning of dogmatic formulas, this remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it is expressed with greater clarity or more developed. The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulas (or some category of them) cannot signify truth in a determinate way, but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it; secondly, that these formulas signify the truth only in an indeterminate way, this truth being like a goal that is constantly being sought by means

of such approximations. Those who hold such an opinion do not avoid dogmatic relativism and they corrupt the concept of the Church's infallibility relative to the truth to be taught or held in a determinate way. Such an opinion clearly is in disagreement with the declarations of the First Vatican Council, which, while fully aware of the progress of the Church in her knowledge of revealed truth, nevertheless taught as follows: 'That meaning of sacred dogmas...must always be maintained which Holy Mother Church declared once and for all, nor should one ever depart from that meaning under the guise of or in the name of a more advanced understanding' (cf. Conc. Vaticano I, Const. dogm. *Dei Filius*, c. 4: DzS 3020). The Council moreover condemned the opinion that 'dogmas once proposed by the Church must, with the progress of science be given a meaning other than that which was understood by the Church, or which she understands' (ibid. c.3). There is no doubt that, according to these texts of the Council, the meaning of dogmas which is declared by the Church is determinate and unalterable. **The aforementioned opinion also differs from the declaration made by the high Pontiff John XXIII regarding Christian doctrine, during the inauguration of Vatican Council II:** 'This certain and unchangeable doctrine, to which faithful obedience is due, has to be explored and presented in a way that is demanded by our times. One thing is the deposit of faith, which consists of the truths contained in sacred doctrine, another thing is the manner of presentation, always however with the same meaning and signification' (John XXIII, Alloc. in the inauguration of the Vatican Council; *Gaudium et spes*, 62). Since the Successor of Peter is here speaking about certain and unchangeable Christian doctrine, about the deposit of faith which is the same as the truths contained in that doctrine and about the truths which have to be preserved with the same meaning, it is clear that he admits that we can know the true and unchanging meaning of dogmas. What is new and what he recommends in view of the needs of the times pertains only to the modes of studying, expounding and presenting that doctrine while keeping its permanent meaning. **In a similar way the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI** exhorted the pastors of the Church in the following words: 'Nowadays a serious effort is required of us to ensure that the teaching of the faith should keep the fullness

of its meaning and force, while expressing itself in a form which allows it to reach the spirit and heart of the people to whom it is addressed' (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Quinque iam anni*). (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. *Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church against certain errors of the present day*, *Mysterium ecclesiae*, no. 5, June 24, 1973. Ratified and confirmed by Paul VI on May 11, 1973; and published in the *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* an. 65 (1973), p. 396-408).

In concrete practice, the same Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith has found itself obliged to correct certain theologians who defended the modernist theory. We may observe this in two examples, one of which is very recent.

Example I – Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Notification on the works of Father Jon Sobrino, SJ, November 26, 2006 – *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* an. 99 (2007), p. 181-194

Father Sobrino considers the dogmatic development of the first centuries of the Church including the great Councils to be ambiguous and even negative. Although **he does not deny the normative character of the dogmatic formulations, neither does he recognize in them any value except in the cultural milieu in which these formulations were developed.** He does not take into account the fact that the transtemporal subject of the faith is the believing Church, and that the pronouncements of the first Councils have been accepted and lived by the entire ecclesial community.

[Exemplifying:] **The divinity of Jesus has been the object of the Church's faith from the beginning, long before his consubstantiality with the Father was proclaimed by the Council of Nicea. The fact that this term was not used does not mean that the divinity of Jesus was not affirmed in the strict sense, contrary to what the Author seems to imply.** Father Sobrino does not deny the divinity of Jesus when he proposes that it is found in the New Testament only 'in seed' and was formulated dogmatically only after many years of believing reflection. Nevertheless he fails to

affirm Jesus' divinity with sufficient clarity. This reticence gives credence to the suspicion that the historical development of dogma, which Sobrino describes as ambiguous, has arrived at the formulation of Jesus' divinity without a clear continuity with the New Testament.

But the divinity of Jesus is clearly attested to in the passages of the New Testament to which we have referred. **The numerous Conciliar declarations in this regard are in continuity with that which the New Testament affirms explicitly and not only 'in seed'.** The confession of the divinity of Jesus Christ has been an absolutely essential part of the faith of the Church since her origins. It is explicitly witnessed to since the New Testament.

Example II – Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Christi Ecclesia*, on the works of Professor Hans Küng, February 5, 1975 – *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* an. 67 (1975), p. 203-204

The opinion which at least puts in doubt the dogma of infallibility in the Church or reduces it to a certain fundamental indefectibility of the Church in truth, **with the possibility of error in doctrinal statements which the Magisterium of the Church teaches must be held definitively [...]** contradicts the doctrine defined by Vatican Council I and confirmed by Vatican Council II.

As a conclusion, it is fitting to include some of the modernist propositions explicitly condemned by Saint Pius X.

SOME MODERNIST PROPOSITIONS CONDEMNED BY THE CHURCH

22. **The dogmas** which the Church professes as revealed **are not truths fallen from heaven**, but they **are a kind of interpretation of religious facts**, which the human mind by a laborious effort prepared for itself.

26. The dogmas of faith are to be held **only according to a practical sense**, that is, as preceptive norms for action, but **not as norms for believing**

39. The opinions about the origin of the

sacraments with which the Fathers of Trent were imbued, and which certainly had an influence on their dogmatic canons, are far different from those which now rightly obtain among historical investigators of Christianity.

51. Matrimony could not have emerged as a sacrament of the New Law in the Church, since in order that matrimony might be held to be a sacrament, it was necessary that a full theological development of the doctrine on grace and the sacraments take place first.

54. **The dogmas**, the sacraments, the hierarchy, as far as pertains both to the notion and to the reality, **are nothing but interpretations and the evolution of the Christian intelligence**, which have increased and perfected the little germ latent in the Gospel.

58. **Truth is no more immutable than man himself, inasmuch as it is evolved with him, in him, and through him.**

62. The principal articles of the Apostles' Creed did not have the same meaning for the Christians of the earliest times as they have for the Christians of our time.

63. **The Church shows herself unequal to the task of preserving the ethics of the Gospel**, because she clings obstinately to immutable doctrines which cannot be reconciled with present day advances.

64. **The progress of the sciences demands that the concepts of Christian doctrine about God, creation, revelation, the Person of the Incarnate Word, the redemption, be recast.**

65. Present day Catholicism cannot be reconciled with true science, unless it be transformed into a kind of nondogmatic Christianity, that is, into a broad and liberal Protestantism. (Denzinger-Hünemann 3422. 2426.3439.3451.3454.3458.3462.3463.3464.3465. Saint Pius X, *Lamentabili Sine Exitu*, from the Decree on the errors of Modernism, July 3, 1907)

