

CALX MARIÆ

Rebuilding our Christian civilisation

FOCUS

True and false conscience

INCLUDING

Rome Life Forum 2018

Marching for Life

Ireland's battle for Life



YOUTH CONFERENCE & A VIGIL OF ADORATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

20 OCTOBER 2018, ROME
(LOCATION TO BE CONFIRMED)



Voice of the Family invites all aged 18-30 years to an international Youth Conference in Rome to explore the Church's traditional teaching on vocation, life and the family.



Speakers will include:

RAYMOND LEO CARDINAL BURKE

Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

JOHN-HENRY WESTEN

Editor-in chief, LifeSiteNews



DR ANTHONY MCCARTHY

Bioethicist
Director of Education, Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (UK)

A day of talks and discussions on God's universal call to holiness, and his specific calls to marriage, the priesthood, and the religious life, will be followed by an all-night vigil before the Blessed Sacrament.

At the vigil we will pray for young people and for the Church, especially at the time of the synod of bishops discussing the vocation of youth.

Further information: www.voiceofthefamily.com/youthconference
E-MAIL: enquiry@voiceofthefamily.com TEL: +44 (0)20 78203148

*How can a young man keep his way pure?
By guarding it according to your word. ~ Psalm 119:9*

CALX MARIAE

ISSUE 1  SUMMER 2018



3

CONTENTS

- 2 From the Editor
- 3 Marching for Life
- 4 Ireland's tragic abandonment of the Catholic faith
- 10 Focus: True and false conscience
- 11 St Thomas and conscience
- 17 Obedience and resistance in the history and doctrine of the Church
- 26 A true understanding of conscience – the necessity for heroic witness on the part of the pro-life and pro-family movement
- 32 Rome Life Forum 2018 highlights
- 34 The teaching of Blessed John Henry Newman on conscience and obedience
- 41 Interview with Dr Mercier: Standing for the truth (in a world that does not)
- 44 The Church Militant: a forgotten truth
- 49 Cardinal Sarah: Ordaining married men would be a 'break' with Apostolic Tradition
- 50 U.S. archbishop: Using contraception is always 'evil'
- 51 Our Lady of Revelation at Tre Fontane
- 55 The Five First Saturdays
- 56 Almost 500 British priests have issued a statement upholding the truths enshrined in *Humanae Vitae*
- 56 Catholic mother of 8: Large families are called to be a visible 'sign of contradiction'
- 58 Saints for our times: St Thomas More



4



11



17



44



51



58

Our magazine's name, *Calx Mariae*, means 'heel of Mary'. In the book of Genesis we read that, after the fall of Adam, God said to the serpent "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel" (Gen 3:15).



The serpent, our ancient enemy Satan, is terrified by the Blessed Virgin, who triumphs over all evil. To be crushed by a human creature, a woman, would already be humiliating enough for one who was created as the greatest of the angels. But it is even worse than that. The serpent is to be crushed by her heel – not by her head or her hand, but her heel, the most insignificant part of her body.

In the body of Christ, the Church, we could perhaps think of lay people as the heel. Every member of the Church has their proper place and function, each must fulfil their proper role if the body is to be healthy: the pope as head, the cardinals and bishops subject to him; priests subject to their bishops; religious to their superiors; and finally lay people to their shepherds. In our time this divinely established order is tragically disturbed in countless ways. The failure of many in authority to faithfully transmit Catholic doctrine means that it is often left to the laity to defend and proclaim the faith, and the basic truths about human life and the family, in the public square. That being the case, we should not let this be a source of distress or pride, but form ourselves in the truth and serve faithfully to the best of our ability – as the heel of the body of Christ.

In conducting our combat for life and the family we must stay close to Our Heavenly Mother. This is what filial love and duty commands, and also what common sense demands – she is the one who will crush Satan's head.

"The final battle between the Lord and the reign of Satan will be over marriage and the family" wrote Sr. Lucia, one of the three shepherd children to whom Our Lady appeared in Fatima. Of course we cannot know how long a final battle will go on before it reaches its final stage, but we do know that the sanctuary of human life – namely the family based on marriage – is the ground for a decisive battle. We also see with increasing clarity that this battleground is inseparable from the combat for the faith in the Church that we love.

As Christians we are always called to be witnesses to the truth, but this call has a particular urgency today. Our fight for natural goods, for the right to life and the wellbeing of the family, can only be fruitful if we acknowledge and affirm the rights of Christ, the Author of Life. As a movement for life and the family we are committed to defend the sanctity of human life, but as Catholics we are also called to defend the reverence and adoration due to the Divine Life in the Holy Eucharist.

It is our hope that this magazine, brought to you a few times a year, will offer you some sustenance for the battle, inspire ever greater love of God and faithful service of His Church.

In the end the Immaculate Heart will triumph. We only need to fulfil our role in the battle. Knowing this should make us confident soldiers, who remain always close to their Mother and Queen.

EDITOR

Maria Madise

EDITORIAL BOARD

Liam Gibson
Matthew McCusker
John Smeaton
John-Henry Westen

EDITORIAL OFFICE VOICE OF THE FAMILY

Unit B, 3 Whitacre Mews, Stannary Street
SE11 4AB, London, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 7820 3148
Email: editor@voiceofthefamily.com
www.voiceofthefamily.com/calxmariae

DESIGN: Perceptions Design Studio

PRINTERS: Buxton Press

Publication is sponsored by:



Society for the Protection
of Unborn Children

Special thanks to: **LIFE SITE**

Cover image: *Rome March for Life*

© don Elvir Tabaković, Can. Reg. 2018

DISCLAIMER: Great care is taken to credit photos and seek permission before publishing. If you have a query regarding copyright, please contact the Editor. No part of this magazine may be reproduced without written permission.

Donations for the continuation of this magazine in print will be gratefully received by Voice of the Family at the address above or online www.voiceofthefamily.com/donate.

Calx Mariae seeks to contribute to the rebuilding of Christian civilisation by providing essential coverage and analysis in the areas of life, family and culture. Our aim in producing this magazine is to strengthen our readers in the faith and in their witness to the truth about human life and the family.

Calx Mariae is published by Voice of the Family, an international coalition of 26 pro-life and pro-family organisations formed in support of Catholic teaching on the family. The following truths are particularly at the heart of Voice of the Family's work:

- ✓ Marriage, the exclusive, life-long union of one man and one woman, is the foundation of a stable and flourishing society and is the greatest protector of children, born and unborn.
- ✓ The procreative and unitive ends of the conjugal act cannot licitly be separated; the rejection of this truth lies at the root of modern attacks on life and the family.
- ✓ Parents are the primary educators of their children and the protection of this right is essential for building a new "culture of life".

ISSN: 2517-6455

© Voice of the Family 2018

MARCHING FOR LIFE

BY MARIA MADISE

In recent months Marches for Life have been held in many parts of the world – Buenos Aires, London, Prague, Rome, Warsaw, Zagreb and elsewhere. This wonderful public witness to the inherent value and beauty of each human life, from conception to natural death, unites millions of men and women across the globe.

London

The March for Life in London on 5 May 2018 took place in the British capital for the first time since the march began in 2012. ‘Life from conception, no exception’ was the message of the marchers, 50 years on from the Abortion Act, which has led to the deaths of nearly 9 million babies in the UK. This is the same number of human beings as the entire current population of Scotland and Wales combined.

The 1967 Abortion Act did not purport to legalise abortion-on-demand in Britain. It created certain exceptions to the law, allowing doctors to perform abortions for specific certified reasons, including a risk to the mother’s mental health. However, 50 years of abortion in Britain should teach the world how easily so-called restricted abortion becomes epidemic.

Further attempts, by radical pro-abortion MPs, to completely decriminalise abortion in the UK give an opportunity to forcefully resist anew the greatest social injustice of our times and speak out in defence of those who do not have a voice: life from conception, no exception. Every abortion is a tragedy for an individual, for a family, for a nation: in no circumstances can

50 years of the British Abortion Act =

Almost 9 000 000 abortions

Over 200 000 a year

Around 500 a day

1 abortion every 3 min

the killing of any innocent unborn child, for any reason, be tolerated.

Rome

Similarly, the March in Rome on 19 May commemorated the 40th year of the legalisation of abortion in Italy, which has resulted in nearly 6 million unborn victims.

Virginia Coda Nunziante, President of the Italian March for Life, told LifeSiteNews:

“We live in a society that challenges the Creator with a sin that cries for re-

venge in His sight. I literally feel horror over this. New generations have grown up in the last 40 years under a law that allows killing.”

“We cannot leave the public square to our opponents: Catholics must make their voices heard and reaffirm that there is no possible compromise on non-negotiable values.”

“Our secularized and anti-Christian society generates these aberrations and, unfortunately, the Church’s silence on these issues affirms people in their behaviour. Sometimes I feel great sadness in looking in the eyes of the young people today, many of whom spend their lives wholly absorbed in the things of this world, this earthly life. They do not raise their eyes to Heaven. Perhaps this is the most important motivation that I have cultivated in these years: to witness that there is a true, higher, deeper and more authentic joy that the world of today denies.”



MARCH FOR LIFE IN ROME

don Evir Tabaković, Can. Reg.



IRELAND'S TRAGIC ABANDONMENT OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH

BY JOSEPH LOUGHRAN

“[The Catholic Church] ...can therefore only count on the support of the ignorant Irish Catholics, and not even them if birth control information penetrates to them ...Rome has made no concessions ...the State cannot lawfully forbid the marriage of the poor or the physically or mentally defective. Sterilisation is absolutely forbidden, and even segregation for the purpose of preventing marriage ...Rome is fundamentally and unalterably opposed to eugenics.”¹

—Charles V Drysdale, OBE.

On 25 May 2018, the Irish Republic voted to repeal the Eighth Amendment to its Constitution, which protected unborn children from abortion. The country that re-evangelised much of Europe after the fall of Rome, and remained loyal to the Pope through centuries of persecution, became the first country to legalise abortion following a popular vote.²

The remarkable speed of the country's transformation means, however, that the roots of apostasy in the universal Church are more clearly visible in Ireland.

For centuries Irish identity was closely linked to the Catholic faith. That association became even stronger after independence, when the island was divided along denomina-

tional lines with Catholics making up 95 per cent of the newly created Free State. Deprived of most of its heavy industry by partition, the Free State economy struggled from the start and so depended on Catholic teaching and nursing orders. Inevitably, the institutional Church played a major role in political life.

Irish Catholicism of this period emphasised popular devotion and moral legalism.³ A strict social code meant that, in particular, women pregnant outside of marriage faced stigmatisation.⁴ In some rural areas, separate facilities were established to cater for unmarried mothers when, in spite of the efforts of local clergy,

“

The remarkable speed of the country's transformation means, however, that the roots of apostasy in the universal Church are more clearly visible in Ireland.

‘respectable’ women refused to use the same maternity services.⁵

Such attitudes were prevalent before Independence but were central to the welfare reforms implemented in the Free State. Workhouses were closed but some were recast as county homes while others were set aside for unmarried mothers disowned by their families. Although run by religious orders, the creation of these “mother and baby homes” was government policy and State authorities were involved in the committal and financial maintenance of women sent to them.⁶

In recent years the harsh conditions in such institutions, the lack of adequate facilities, and the personal failings of some of those who staffed them, have been used to discredit Catholic social teaching but at the time these homes were the only means of providing a basic level of care for individuals who would otherwise have been destitute.

Infant mortality, in Ireland, was extremely poor.^{7,8} It was even higher in welfare institutions than the national average. In 1923, children of unmarried mothers, mostly in institutions, were six times more likely to die than children living at home with married parents. Even by 1940, it was still four times higher.⁹

The Constitution of Éire

In 1937 Eamon de Valera, head of the Free State government drafted a new Constitution creating the sovereign state of Éire. This was adopted by referendum and could not be amended without a simple majority in a popular vote.

The preamble of this Constitution, still in effect today, invokes the authority of the Holy Trinity, “from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions both of men and States must be referred”.

“

In Ireland dissent from the teaching on contraception was initially weak, however, Rome’s unwillingness to face down open defiance elsewhere caused great damage.

It acknowledged the “special position of the Catholic Church”¹⁰ but Catholicism was seen by many as the *de facto* State religion.

Divorce and contraception

Although already unlawful, the new Constitution prohibited the Oireachtas, the Irish parliament, from legalising divorce without a referendum. This ban would remain until 1995.

Before the adoption of the Constitution, the importation and sale of birth control products were prohibited by section 17 of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1935. Similar restrictions were in place in predominantly protestant States in the USA.

The impact of Vatican II

Loyalty to the pope ensured that the changes introduced by Pope Paul VI were accepted without hesitation. The Irish Church was famous for its abundance of vocations and it was the decline in vocations which gave the first indication of the problems which lay ahead. The clergy were eager to learn about the ideas of the Council. Many of these, now recognised as deeply flawed, were accepted uncritically only to foster doubt and confusion.

If Karl Rahner’s theory of the ‘anonymous Christian’, was acceptable to Rome, then a lifetime commitment to the missions seemed futile.¹¹ Missionary orders continued with smaller numbers.

Gradually their emphasis shifted from evangelisation to alleviation of poverty, the promotion of social justice, equality and the empowerment of women.

In his 2010 Pastoral Letter to the Church in Ireland, Pope Benedict XVI identified some of the contributing factors which led to the child abuse scandals in the Irish Church. Among these was the misinterpretation of the “programme of renewal proposed by the Second Vatican Council” and a tendency even on the part of priests and religious “to adopt ways of thinking and assessing secular realities without sufficient reference to the Gospel”.¹²

In 1973 when the Bishops’ Conference decided to update religious education in primary schools the resulting curriculum was heavily influenced by this secular way of thinking. A second revision, introduced in 1993 was even more seriously compromised in its attitude to both scripture and the sacraments. The final year of the program, for 11 to 12-year-olds, even included an optional sex-education component.¹³

Humanae Vitae

By the time *Humanae Vitae* was published, the change in attitude to birth control in Ireland had already begun. In 1969 West German author Heinrich Boll noted this development with regret:

“...a certain something has made its way to Ireland, that om-

inous something known as The Pill—and this something absolutely paralyzes me: the prospect that fewer children might be born in Ireland fills me with dismay. I know: it’s all very well for me to talk, it’s easy for me to want them in large quantities: I’m neither their father nor their government, I’m not required to part from them when many, as they must start out on the road to emigration. Nowhere in the world have I seen so many, such lovely and such natural children, and to know that His Majesty The Pill will succeed where all the Majesties of Great Britain have failed—in reducing the number of Irish children—seems to me to be no cause for rejoicing.”¹⁴

In Ireland dissent from the teaching on contraception was initially weak, however, Rome’s unwillingness to face down open defiance elsewhere caused great damage.

The decisive battle over birth control came in 1973 in *McGee v Attorney General*. Mary McGee (27) a mother of four children, advised by doctors that her life would be at risk if she became pregnant, ordered contraceptives from England. These were seized by customs officers. The resulting court case was heavily influenced by the US case of *Griswold v Connecticut* (1965). Finding that section 17 of the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1935 violated the “imprescriptible rights of the family” enshrined by Article 41 of the Constitution, the Supreme Court ruled that these rights included access to contraception. In his judgement Mr Justice Walsh stated:

“...the great additional virtue introduced by Christianity was that of charity, not the charity

which consists of giving to the deserving, for that is justice, but the charity which is also called mercy. ...It is but natural that from time to time the prevailing ideas of these virtues may be conditioned by the passage of time; no interpretation of the Constitution is intended to be final for all time. It is given in the light of prevailing ideas and concepts.”¹⁵

Appeals to mercy and Christian compassion would be used repeatedly to undermine Christian morality in Ireland.

Six years after the McGee case, the government made it lawful for chemists to sell contraceptives on prescription. The new law took birth control out of the criminal law and reframed the question as a health issue. Monsignor Patrick Cremin, professor of moral theology at Maynooth characterised the bishops’ response to the Health (Family Planning) Act 1979 as “weakness or non-action”.¹⁶ He said:

“The Statement of the Irish bishops has been generally understood by the press, radio and television, and inevitably therefore by the public generally, as conveying that the Irish bishops, without expressing any disapproval, accept that legislation will be enacted amending the Criminal Law of 1935 and legalising contraceptives.”

“

Appeals to mercy and Christian compassion would be used repeatedly to undermine Christian morality in Ireland.

He warned that the hard fact “must be faced, however incredible it might seem, that legislation legalising the availability of contraceptives was inevitably opening the door in due time to the legalisation of abortion, of divorce, and even however far-fetched this might seem just now — of euthanasia after it has been introduced, if it is, in England.”¹⁷

Pope John Paul II

The visit of Pope John Paul II in 1979, to celebrate the centenary of Our Lady’s apparition at Knock, came only two months after the passage of the Health (Family Planning) Act. The Pope’s address in Limerick recognised the confrontation with secularism that was becoming ever more apparent.

“Yes, Ireland, that has overcome so many difficult moments in her history, is being challenged in a new way today... The most sacred principles, which were the sure guides for the behaviour of individuals and society, are being hollowed out by false pretences concerning freedom, the sacredness of life, the indissolubility of marriage, the true sense of human sexuality, the right attitude towards the material goods that progress has to offer.”¹⁸

Over the next decade, it appeared that Ireland might withstand these challenges. In 1983 the people voted by 66.9 per cent to 33.1 per cent, to

adopt the Eighth Amendment. Then in 1986, they rejected a referendum to legalise divorce by 63.48 per cent to 36.52 per cent.

Mary Robinson

Serious problems began to emerge, however, with the election of Mary Robinson as President (1990-1997). Robinson, whose campaign benefited from relentless media attacks on her main rival, acknowledged that she won the support of many opposed to the socially liberal policies she championed.

In February 1992, the abortion law was challenged by parents of a 14-year-old girl, known as X, pregnant as a result of statutory rape. The Supreme Court found that alleged threats of suicide by X posed a risk to her life. And since the Eighth Amendment guaranteed “the equal right to life of the mother” it ruled that an abortion to prevent her suicide was lawful. In her public comments on the case, Robinson presented the ban on abortion as oppressive of women. This undoubtedly increased political pressure on the judges to subvert the purpose of the Eighth Amendment. It was, however, the precedent of the McGee case and

the principle that “no interpretation of the Constitution is intended to be final for all time” which allowed the Court to effectively reverse the meaning of the text. In a complete distortion of logic, the judges ruled that a measure intended to prevent the introduction of abortion by equating the right to life of an unborn child with that of his mother, had, in fact, legitimised abortion when a woman threatened to take her own life.

1992 abortion referendum

In response to the X-case, the government sought to remove the threat of suicide as justification for an abortion but also hoped to legalise it on health grounds, including a threat to mental health. Separate proposals creating a right to travel outside the State for an abortion and a right to receive information about abortion services abroad were adopted, by 62.39 per cent of the vote to 37.61 on travel and by 59.88 per cent to 40.12 on information.

On the actual rights of the unborn, the pro-life movement was divided and the Bishops’ Conference said Catholics were free to vote according to their consciences. Shortly before the refer-

endum, however, five bishops publicly declared their desire for a No vote. The Amendment was eventually rejected by 65.35 per cent to 34.65.

Further challenges to sexual ethics

In 1993, Robinson, who as a lawyer had successfully challenged Ireland’s criminalisation of homosexual acts before the European Court of Human Rights, as President signed legislation permitting them. No party in the Oireachtas opposed the change.

The following year, a series of revelations, began to expose the failure of church authorities, sometimes with the complicity of state agencies, to respond to evidence of child abuse by members of the clergy. The scale of the problem was to do immeasurable damage to the credibility of the bishops at a time when Catholic sexual ethics were increasingly coming under attack.

By 1995, nine years after the legalisation of divorce was rejected, it was adopted by 50.28 per cent of the vote to 49.72. Political support for the ban had dwindled as the hierarchy’s defence of marriage vacillated. Priests who supported the change received a disproportionate amount of media coverage.

When Robinson stood down in 1997, Ireland had changed significantly. She was succeeded by Mary McAleese, whom she, herself, had succeeded as legal advisor to the Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform.

Commercial developments in the field of embryology and the increasing availability of the morning-after pill led the government in 2001 to make a second attempt to address the ruling in the X-case. Again it sought to remove suicide as grounds for an abortion but this time, it would also

“

Over the next decade, it appeared that Ireland might withstand these challenges.

In 1983 the people voted by 66.9 per cent to 33.1 per cent, to adopt the Eighth Amendment. Then in 1986, they rejected a referendum to legalise divorce by 63.48 per cent to 36.52 per cent.

have removed protection for embryos prior to implantation and replace the statute prohibiting abortion. It even designated regional hospitals where abortions would be performed. Remarkably, the hierarchy and a section of the pro-life movement backed the plan. Despite losing the referendum (by 50.42 per cent of the vote to 49.58) the government moved ahead with initiatives which identified abortion outside the jurisdiction as one of a number of ‘positive’ options for those facing a crisis pregnancy.

Materialism and multiculturalism

Sustained economic growth between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s also had a dramatic effect as materialism accelerated the pace of secularisation. So too did sudden mass immigration. New arrivals from countries where abortion was widespread provided a further pretext for attacks on the Eighth Amendment. In 2010 the European Court of Human Rights ruled on a case taken by two Irish women and a third from Lithuania. Although the Court did not find that Irish law violated human rights, it nevertheless called for liberalisation.

Then, in 2012 Savita Halappanavar, from India, died in a hospital in Galway from an antibiotic-resistant infection. She was seventeen weeks pregnant and the media blamed her death on Ireland’s abortion ban. The case had a significant impact on public opinion and the government, now openly hostile to the Church, pushed through the legislation shelved following the 2002 referendum.

Earlier that year, Aisha Chithira (32) another foreign national who was 20 weeks pregnant, travelled to Britain for an abortion. She died in a taxi after

having the procedure at a Marie Stopes facility in London. News of her death was only disclosed in 2013 just days after the Dáil passed the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act by 127 votes to 31. The media’s treatment of Aisha’s death was in marked contrast to that of Savita.

Same-sex marriage

In May 2015 Ireland became the first nation to legalise same-sex marriage by referendum with 62.07 per cent of the vote in favour and 37.93 against. The referendum campaign showed just how demoralised the Church in Ireland had become after unrelenting attacks since the 1990s. While at first these were predicated on scandals, hostility was soon directed at Catholic moral teaching. Even within the clergy, some adopted the attitudes of the Church’s enemies and disparaged Catholics who defended the moral law. A number of priests publicly supported the redefinition of marriage and a large section of the laity accepted the homosexual agenda in what Mr Justice Walsh referred to as “the charity which is also called mercy”. These two factors can only be explained by a systematic failure in the formation of Ireland’s priests, and the religious instruction provided by Catholic schools.

“

In May 2015 Ireland became the first nation to legalise same-sex marriage by referendum with 62.07 per cent of the vote in favour and 37.93 against.

Conclusion

Whilst protecting its unborn children Ireland had one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the world.¹⁹ This fact made it a target for the international abortion lobby. In 2016, internal documents of the Women’s Rights Program of George Soros’ Open Society Foundation were leaked to the public. These showed the importance the abortion industry attached to its success in Ireland.

“With one of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world, a win there could impact other strongly Catholic countries in Europe, such as Poland, and provide much-needed proof that change is possible, even in highly conservative places...”²⁰

Isolated on the abortion issue internationally, persistent concerns about human respect led many in Ireland to see their laws as backward.

Ultimately Charles Drysdale’s prediction that even the Irish would abandon the Catholic Faith once they accepted birth control was shown to be correct. This factor was decisive since no country has ever resisted the pressure to legalise the killing of its unborn children once its people embraced a culture of contraception. As the Church marks the 50th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae*, it should be clear

to all Catholics, that unless they are prepared to defend God's law on marriage and sexuality, it will be impossible to defeat the evil of abortion.

“To you, Triune God, confident in the loving protection of Mary, Queen of Ireland, our Mother, and of Saint Patrick, Saint Brigid and all the saints,

do we entrust ourselves, our children, and the needs of the Church in Ireland.”²¹

ENDNOTES

1. Charles V Drysdale on "Roman Catholic Methods of Birth Control by Marie Stopes", *Eugenics Review*, October 1933, p190.
2. The result was 66.4 per cent in favour of repeal and 33.6 against, with a 64.3 per cent turnout.
3. For further discussion of this important question see D Vincent Twomey, *The End of Irish Catholicism?* (Dublin, Veritas, 2003). Prof Twomey argues that Catholicism in Ireland at this time largely lacked the theological structure which underpinned the Church in other nations.
4. Illegitimacy rates in Ireland were low, below 3 per cent until the 1970s (and still only 4.5 per cent in 1979), but the mortality rate for illegitimate children was double that of legitimate infants. See Lindsey Earner-Byrne *Mother and Child: Maternity and Child Welfare in Dublin, 1922-60*. (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007) p173.

5. *The Connaught Tribune*, 17 July 1926, reported that paying patients in the Galway Hospital had objected to sharing a ward with unmarried women. On 1 September 1928 the paper reported that the County Galway Home and Home Assistance Committee decided to attach a maternity ward for unmarried mothers to the Children's Home in Tuam, Co Galway. The reasons given were economic. The plan was opposed by a local priest on the committee, Canon Ryder, who wanted to find accommodation for the unmarried mothers in existing facilities.
6. See Donnacha Seán Lucey *The End of the Irish Poor Law? Welfare and Healthcare Reform in Revolutionary and Independent Ireland* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, October 2015).
7. For the first half of the twentieth century tuberculosis was the third leading cause of death among Irish children, eclipsed only by gastroenteritis and pneumonia. Anne MacLellan, *Dorothy Stopford Price and the Irish tuberculosis epidemic. The 1916 Diary of Dorothy Stopford Price*. <http://dh.tcd.ie/pricediary/about-dorothy-price-her-family/dorothy-stopford-price-and-the-irish-tuberculosis-epidemic/>, [Accessed 5 September 2017].
8. Between 1941 and 1950 the mortality rate in Éire (and, from 1948, the Republic of Ireland) for children under one year of age was 66 deaths per 100,000 compared with 60 in Northern Ireland, 57 in Scotland and 43 in England and Wales. An Phríomh-Oifig Staidrimh (Central Statistics Office) Report on Vital Statistics 2010 Chpt 4 Infant Mortality, Stillbirths and Maternal Mortality 2010, p95. <http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasespublications/documents/vitalstats/2010/chapter42010.pdf> [Accessed 5 September 2017].
9. Annual Report of the Registrar General, 1923, p xviii and the Annual Report of the Registrar General, 1940 (Dublin 1941) p viii. Cited by Lindsey Earner-Byrne, *Mother and Child: Maternity and Child Welfare in Dublin, 1922-60*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2007) p7.
10. This acknowledgement was removed from the Constitution with approval of the Catholic bishops in 1973.
11. See Twomey, D Vincent *The End of Irish Catholicism?* p37.
12. *Pastoral Letter of the Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, to the Catholics of Ireland*, 19 March 2010. http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20100319_church-ireland.html [Accessed 2 June 2018].
13. John-Paul Sheridan, "The Alive-O Programme -30 November 1999", *Catholic Ireland*. <https://www.catholicireland.net/the-alive-o-programme/>, [Accessed 5 September 2017].
14. Heinrich Boll *Irish Journal, A Traveller's Portrait of Ireland* (Abacus, London, 1984) p112.
15. WALSH J: McGee v Attorney General and Revenue Commissioners [1971 No. 2314 P] 19 December 1973.
16. The opinion of Monsignor Patrick Cremin expressed in an Interview with Joseph Power, Religious Affairs Correspondent of the *Irish Independent*, 8th November, 1978. The text of the interview is available at Lux Occulta <https://lko.wordpress.com/2013/12/17/the-irish-bishops-and-the-legalisation-of-contraception-1978-mgr-cremin-speaks-out-full-text-of-interview/> [Accessed 6 September 2017].
17. Monsignor Patrick Cremin, *Irish Independent*.
18. Homily of the Holy Father John Paul II, Greenpark Racecourse, Limerick, 1 October 1979.
19. The maternal mortality rate in the Irish Republic in 2015 was 8 deaths per 100,000 live births, compared with 9 in the UK and 14 in the USA. "Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2015 Estimates by WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division," November 2015. http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/193994/1/WHO_RHR_15_23_eng.pdf?ua=1 [Accessed 11 September 2017].
20. Dr Susan Berry "Leaked George Soros Plan to Turn Ireland into a Pro-Abortion Country" *Breitbart News*, 1 August 2017. <http://www.breitbart.com/london/2017/08/01/leaked-george-soros-plan-to-turn-ireland-into-a-pro-abortion-country/> [Accessed 9 September 2017].
21. From *Prayer for the Church in Ireland*, Pope Benedict XVI, 19 March 2010.



CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC FAMILIES



Booking Now Available

VENUE: Ballsbridge Hotel, Dublin

Wednesday 22nd & Thursday 23rd August 2018

The Lumen Fidei Institute Presents: God's Plan for Marriage and Family.

'The Lumen Fidei Institute' will host a two day conference to present God's plan for the Family as the only solution to society's current problems and in doing so will promote the constant teachings of of the Catholic Church on Marriage and Family life. The conference will take as its foundation the great encyclical of Pope Pius XI on Catholic marriage, *'Casti Connubii'*. The conference will also host part of the Vatican International Exhibition on Eucharistic Miracles of the world. All are welcome to attend and tickets are now available.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME & SPEAKERS		Cost
<p>H.E. Cardinal Raymond Burke (Video Presentation) Dr Robert Royal President of the Faith & Reason Institute, Editor in Chief at 'The Catholic Thing'. Dr Gerard van den Aardweg Psychologist and world renowned expert in same-sex attraction who rejects the idea that homosexuality is an innate biological trait. Dr Thomas Ward Medical doctor, founder of the 'National Association of Catholic Families', former corresponding member of the Pontifical Academy for Life. John-Henry Westen Co-Founder and editor at Lifesite News.</p>	<p>Rev Thomas G Weinandy OFM Cap A leading scholar in the Roman Catholic Church and a Member of the International Theological Commission. John Smeaton Director of SPUC. Dr Stéphane Mercier A Catholic Lecturer in Philosophy who was suspended from a Catholic University in Belgium for teaching the truth about abortion. Other Speakers Include Bishop Schneider (via video), Jose Antonio Ureta, John Lacken, Anthony Murphy</p>	<p>2 Day Conference Ticket €35.00 1 Day Conference Ticket €20.00 Gala Dinner Ticket €60.00 Lunch Voucher (per day) €12.00 (soup, sandwiches, tea/coffee at hotel)</p>
<p>Full Programme for each day from 9.30am - 5.30pm to be announced. (programme subject to change)</p>		<p>How to Book Online: www.lumenfidei.ie By Post: Send Order and payment to, John Lacken, Raith Aghamore, Ballyhaunis, Co Mayo, F35 V127, Ireland (Please include your full contact details and make cheques etc payable to The Lumen Fidei Institute) By Phone: 059 867 0137 (ROI) 00353 59 867 0137 (outside Ireland)</p>

Gala Dinner: On the night of Thursday 23rd August, we shall host a Gala Dinner at the conference venue. This occasion promises to be a memorable social event for like-minded Catholics to enjoy a 3 course meal, music, and entertainment, while raising funds for 'The Lumen Fidei Institute'. Tickets €60 euro each.

FOCUS

Conscience



ROME LIFE FORUM 2018: *True and false conscience*

The Rome Life Forum is an annual meeting of pro-life and pro-family leaders from around the world, organised by Voice of the Family. The Forum this year was held at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas from 17 and 18 May.

The theme of the recent Rome Life Forum – conscience – was proposed by the late Cardinal Caffarra at the Forum last year. He urged us to study the true nature of conscience, so that we can order our lives and our society according to natural and divine law.

Voice of the Family was formed to uphold three principles of Catholic teaching that are fundamental to the protection of life and the flourishing of the family. Firstly, that marriage, the exclusive, life-long union of one man and one woman, is the foundation of a stable society and is the greatest protector of children, born and unborn. Secondly, that the procreative and unitive ends of the conjugal act cannot licitly be separated; the rejection of this truth is a root cause of modern attacks on life and the family. Thirdly, parents are the primary educators of their children

and the protection of this right is essential for building a ‘culture of life’ for future generations.

A well-formed conscience is necessary in upholding all these principles. On the other hand, the promotion of false theories of conscience undermines the Catholic faith throughout the world and in particular, in our times, Catholic teaching on the truths of the moral law and on the worthy reception of the sacraments.

It is our hope that this selection of papers from the Forum will provide an opportunity to study the authentic role of conscience.

ST THOMAS AQUINAS'S TEACHING ON CONSCIENCE, AND TWO MODERN DISTORTIONS

BY FR THOMAS CREAN OP

In this talk I wish, first, to state briefly what St Thomas Aquinas meant by the term 'conscience'; and secondly, to describe two ways in which his teaching on conscience is often distorted, and to show the serious consequences of this for the life of the Church today.

First, then, what does St Thomas mean by the term conscience, in Latin, *conscientia*? Some people have used the word to denote a special power of the soul, whose province would be the making of moral judgements. However, Aquinas did not believe in the existence of such a power; since our intellect is already a power made for apprehending truth, it follows that any kind of truth, whether 'moral' or 'non-moral', can be an object of the intellect. Thus it is our intellect that sees, for example, both that 'twice two is four' and that 'lying is wrong'. By conscience, St Thomas means a certain class of judgements made by our intellect; namely, the judgements that we make about acts that we have done or are doing or are thinking of doing. By its etymology, he notes, *conscientia* suggests the application of knowledge to something; and we are said to make a judgement of conscience when we apply our knowledge to our own actions. He distinguishes three cases: either we are simply aware of the fact of having done something; or else we judge about the goodness or evil of something which we have done; or

we judge that a possible future act is something we should or should not or may do.

This explains the actions that are commonly attributed to conscience: for it is said to bear witness, about the mere fact of some past actions; to acquit, accuse or even torment us, about the goodness or evil of a past act; and to impel us or restrain us about some future act.¹ Conscience, then, is the judgement that an actual or potential action of mine is or was good or bad, obligatory, forbidden or optional. Finally, he notes that while the word denotes strictly speaking such acts of judgement, it is also, by a natural process, used to denote one of the internal causes from which these acts spring, namely, our habitual tendency to recognise certain basic goods, such as life and existence in society, as goods which are naturally suited to us.

After that brief account of what St Thomas means by the Latin word *conscientia*, I come now to consider two ways in which his teaching about conscience comes to be distorted, and to show how serious these distortions are for the Church today.

The first distortion of St Thomas's teaching is to say that he holds that my conscience is an authority, in the sense of something which authorises me to act. On this view, the mere fact that I judge that some possible action of mine would be good to perform



FR. CREAN

gives to me a right to perform it, and gives to other people a duty to allow me to do so. This distorted view was, I am sorry to say, recently expressed in very strong terms by an American archbishop speaking at a university in England. Referring to 'married couples and families', he declared without qualification: "Their decisions of conscience represent God's personal guidance for the particularities of their lives." In the course of his talk, the same archbishop explicitly identified the voice of conscience with the voice of God for each person.²

Other people, without going quite so far as this archbishop, will say that my judgement about the goodness of some future act gives me a right to perform it, and other people a duty to allow me to perform it, provided that any error I may make in my judgement is not the result of my own negligence in seeking the truth.³

“

**Conscience ... is the judgement
that an actual or potential action
of mine is or was good or bad,
obligatory, forbidden or optional.**

”

This common view, that my judgement of conscience authorises action in accordance with it, and makes such action good, arises out of a misinterpretation of St Thomas's teaching that 'an erring reason binds'. To say that 'an erring reason binds' means that if I mistakenly perceive some action as good and obligatory on me, then I commit a sin by failing to perform it; and likewise, if I mistakenly perceive some action as evil and forbidden, then I commit a sin if I do perform it. For example, if I suppose, erroneously, that blood transfusions are against the law of God, then I commit a sin by choosing to have a blood transfusion. As St Thomas puts it:

“Since the object of the will is something which is proposed by the reason, therefore, from the very fact that a thing is proposed by the reason as evil, the will by tending towards it becomes evil.”⁴

In other words, if I choose what I believe to be evil, even if it is in fact good, then insofar as in me lies, I am consenting to evil and hence committing a sin. Again, if I erroneously suppose that it is obligatory on me to make a pilgrimage to Mecca, then I commit a sin if I choose not to go to Mecca in order to save money, since I am deliberately refusing what appears to me as an obligatory good action.

However, the fact that I commit a sin by acting contrary to my judgement about good and evil does not imply that I act well by following my judgement about good and evil, nor does it imply that anyone else has the duty to allow me to follow it. For example, if I suppose erroneously that blood transfusions are against the law of God, and so am ready to allow a child under my care to bleed to death, then I do not act virtuously; and the civil authority, by contrast, acts well by giving the child a blood transfusion against my will. My conscientious objection to blood transfusions, even if very intense, even if I am ready to go to prison to maintain it, does not make it virtuous or even morally permissible for me to refuse a transfusion for myself or for anyone else.

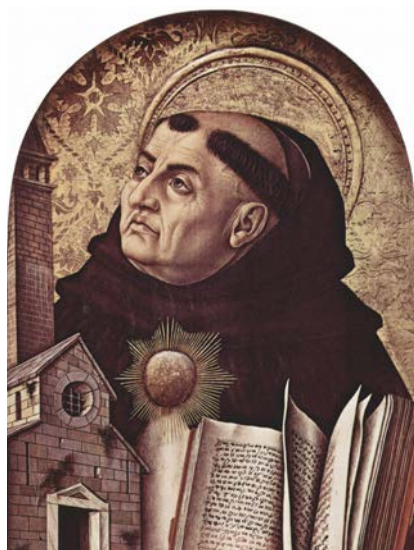
Thus, for St Thomas, the fact that my will is in conformity with my conscience, though a necessary condition for my will to be good, is not a sufficient condition. My judgement of conscience must also be true.

Two things, then, are necessary for an action of mine to be good: I must make a correct judgement of conscience, and I must act in accordance with it. The mere fact that an action is in accordance with my conscience does not authorise me to perform it: this is what I mean by denying that for St Thomas, conscience is of itself an authority. What has authority are

God, and the good; conscience only has authority to the extent that it adheres to God and to the good; that is to say, insofar as it judges truly.

This, then, is the first of the two distortions of Aquinas's teaching that I wished to mention. It is not difficult to see how devastating this distortion is for true authority, both ecclesiastical and civil. If an action were good from the mere fact of its being in conformity with conscience, with no requirement that the judgement of conscience should itself be true, what right would civil and ecclesiastical authority have to prohibit any kind of evil or harmful action, provided that those perpetrating them claimed to be acting in conscience? The suicide bomber who conscientiously carried out his mission would then be performing a good action, and what right has anyone to hinder another's good deed? Or within the Church, if someone were to feel bound in conscience to live in an adulterous or unnatural union, the pastors would have to allow him, and indeed to praise him, for doing so.

The second distortion of St Thomas's teaching lies in a misuse of something else which he says about the mistaken conscience. As we have just seen, he holds that no will which accords with a false judgement of conscience can be good. Nevertheless, he also holds that there are circumstances in which such a will may not be bad. It depends on what causes the person to be mistaken in the first place, and, in particular, on whether his ignorance is voluntary. For example, let us suppose that some bottle of medicine has been erroneously labelled by the manufacturer. The chemist who sells it therefore supposes that it contains drugs that will cure a



ST. THOMAS AQUINAS,
BY CARLO CRIVELLI

certain patient when in fact it contains drugs that will kill him. The chemist makes the erroneous judgement of conscience, 'It would be good to give this bottle to this patient', and acts accordingly.

St Thomas would say that the choice to give the bottle, and the giving of it, are not good; yet neither are they bad. They are the result of an ignorance which was not in any way voluntary on the chemist's part, and so they are not morally imputable to him either as good or as bad. Thus it is possible, on St Thomas's principles, erroneously to suppose a certain action to be good, in this case, giving to someone drugs that will kill him, and to perform this action without committing a sin.

On the other hand, if the chemist had known that the manufacturers had labelled bottles incorrectly in the past and did not attempt to verify the contents of the new bottle, then he might well be guilty of negligence, and in that case neither his ignorance about the faulty label nor his decision to hand over the wrong bottle would be free from fault. In general, Aquinas says, where the ignorance at the root of the

faulty conscience derives either from negligence in seeking the truth or even from a conscious decision not to seek it, then such ignorance is voluntary, and actions deriving from it are morally imputable to the agent.⁵ Where, by contrast, ignorance is involuntary, it is inculpable, and actions that derive from it are not morally imputable.

Now, some authors have suggested that inculpable ignorance can extend not only to knowledge of individual facts, as in the case of the mislabelled bottle, but also to the divine commandments themselves. For example, they argue, someone may judge, erroneously but inculpably, that adultery is not an intrinsic evil. Such a person, reflecting on some possible act of adultery, may thus make the erroneous judgement: 'This action is permitted to me'. Although, these authors say, any resulting act of adultery would not be good, yet nor would it be imputable to the agent as bad, since his decision that it was permissible resulted from his invincible ignorance about the intrinsic evil of adultery. It might therefore even be possible that he would remain in a state of grace while committing adultery.

In the rest of this talk, I want to consider four slightly different versions of this claim, made today by certain prelates and theologians, that it is possible in virtue of an invincibly ignorant conscience to violate the di-

vine commandments while remaining in a state of grace, and to see how St Thomas would have responded to them. To avoid complications that would otherwise arise, and in order to respond more closely to today's – shall we say? – ecclesial situation, I shall consider only the case of Catholics who violate divine commandments forbidding intrinsically evil acts.

The hypothesis in question appears to be put forward today in one simple form and in three more complex forms. I shall summarise them and then consider each in turn.

The simple form of the hypothesis claims that Catholics, while being in a state of grace, may be simply ignorant of a divine commandment; for example, that they may be ignorant that God has forbidden fornication, and hence may commit fornication while remaining in a state of sanctifying grace. Thus, a recent article in the worthy French theological journal *Revue Thomiste* suggests that Catholics today who co-habit outside marriage may be free of the guilt of mortal sin because their lack of religious instruction and the general corruption of the culture makes them unaware of the seriousness of their action.⁶

The second version of the hypothesis is simply a more extreme form of the first. It claims that Catholics, while being in a state of grace, can be ignorant that something is contrary to the

“

What has authority are God, and the good; conscience only has authority to the extent that it adheres to God and to the good; that is to say, insofar as it judges truly.

law of God even though they know that the Church teaches that it is thus contrary. For example, they may know that the Church teaches that adultery is contrary to the law of God, but they may be blamelessly unable to accept the truth of this teaching (they have a difficulty in grasping ‘the value of the rule’), and hence they may commit adultery while remaining in a state of grace.

The third version of the hypothesis claims that Catholics, while being in a state of grace can know something to be forbidden by the law of God but can be ignorant that this law is seriously binding upon them, rather than binding only under pain of venial sin; or else that they can think of the law as being only a kind of ideal or counsel of perfection. For example, they may know that adultery is contrary to the law of God, but may nonetheless be invincibly ignorant that they are seriously obliged to avoid adultery, and hence may commit this sin while remaining in a state of grace.

The fourth and final version of the hypothesis claims that Catholics may know that a divine commandment is seriously binding, yet may be free of the guilt of mortal sin if they break it, because the only alternatives seem to them to involve committing a worse sin. For example, a Catholic may know that adultery is contrary to the law of God, and know that this law is seriously binding, and yet may commit adultery while remaining in a state of grace because he supposes that his only alternative course is to do something contrary to an even more important divine command.

In what follows, I intend to describe how St Thomas would respond to these four hypotheses.

The first claim, then, was that Catholics in a state of grace may be

ignorant of a divine commandment and hence may remain in a state of grace while breaking it. As we have seen, the general principle that St Thomas puts forward about the effect of ignorance on the goodness or badness of an act is that the voluntariness or involuntariness of the ignorance causes the act that is performed in virtue of this ignorance to be itself either voluntary or involuntary, and hence to be either imputable to the agent or not. The question, therefore, is whether it is possible for a Catholic to be involuntarily ignorant of a divine commandment about intrinsically evil actions.

Now, so far from allowing this possibility to Catholics, St Thomas excludes it from mankind in general. In the *Summa Theologiae*, question 88, article 6 of the *Prima Secundae*, he asks whether a sin which is by nature mortal can become venial owing to some circumstance. He will argue that it cannot, but first he imagines an objector putting to him the following case:

“It may happen [the objector says] that a person in committing a sin which is of a mortal kind, loves a creature less than God; for instance, if someone who is ignorant that simple fornication is a mortal sin contrary to the love of God, commits the sin of fornication, yet so as to be ready, for the love of God, to refrain from that sin if he

knew that by committing it he was acting counter to the love of God. Therefore his will be a venial sin; and accordingly a mortal sin can become venial (obj. 2).”

St Thomas replies that in such a case the person committing fornication would still be guilty of a mortal sin, since he had been gravely negligent in ascertaining what the law of God was. He writes: “The ignorance itself is a sin, and contains within itself a lack of the love of God, in so far as the man neglects to learn those things whereby he can safeguard himself in the love of God.”

It is noteworthy that Aquinas gives the example of fornication. He was aware that the pagans in general had not considered this to be a grave matter;⁷ yet he does not think a person acting in accordance with such an error to be free from mortal sin. Hence, although the article from the *Revue Thomiste* from which I have quoted is correct to say that the pagan atmosphere of the modern world makes it more likely that Catholics will be ignorant of the divine laws that govern sexual behaviour, St Thomas holds that this ignorance is itself still mortally sinful. It contains within itself, he says, a lack of the love of God, since it means that a person has neglected to learn how to please Him. The bad example of the surrounding culture can certainly lessen the guilt, but it

“

It is not in fact necessary to know that something is a mortal sin in order to incur the guilt of mortal sin by committing it.

cannot, according to St Thomas, convert it from mortal to venial.

Similarly, and naturally, given that adultery is graver than fornication, he rejects the idea that ignorance of the divine law against adultery can ever be involuntary. So he writes:

“If an erring reason tells a man that he should go to another man’s wife, the will that abides by that erring reason is evil; since this error arises from ignorance of the divine law, which he is obliged to know.”⁸

We see here, it seems to me, a certain danger in the maxim, often repeated, that ‘full knowledge and consent’ are necessary conditions for mortal sin. It is not in fact necessary to know that something is a mortal sin in order to incur the guilt of mortal sin by committing it. St Thomas’s consistent position is that the only kind of lack of awareness of God’s commandments which can excuse from mortal sin someone who breaks them is a lack of awareness due to madness or mental handicap, things which in his opinion excuse even from venial sin.⁹ It is interesting to note that the modern Catechism of the Catholic Church, although it uses the maxim about ‘full knowledge and consent’ as necessary for mortal sin, goes on immediately to add that ‘feigned ignorance and hardness of heart’ do not excuse one, and also that “no one is deemed to be ignorant of the principles of the moral law”.¹⁰ Given these large qualifications, and given the importance of the question at stake, I wonder if it is wise to continue to use this maxim in preaching and catechesis.

The second of the four hypotheses to be considered was that Catholics, while living in grace, can be ignorant

“

A Catholic who refused to accept the Church’s infallible teaching about the divine law would by that fact be unable to possess the virtue of faith, and so could not be living in a state of grace.

that something is contrary to the law of God although they know that the Church teaches that it is; they inculpably fail to see the value of the rule. I don’t want to spend long on this hypothesis, since it is in fact excluded by the same arguments that excluded the first. If men in general are guilty for their ignorance when they do not know that that certain acts are intrinsically evil, then clearly Catholics are too. In fact, St Thomas would hold that such Catholics are not only guilty of culpable ignorance but also of the much graver sin of heresy.

“It is manifest [he writes] that he who adheres to the teaching of the Church, as to an infallible rule, assents to whatever the Church teaches; otherwise, 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.”¹¹

A Catholic who refused to accept the Church’s infallible teaching about the divine law would by that fact be unable to possess the virtue of faith, and so could not be living in a state of grace.

The third version of the hypothesis which I have distinguished suggests that Catholics in a state of grace who

know that something is forbidden by the law of God can be ignorant that this law binds them gravely, and can suppose that it binds only under pain of venial sin, or even that, like the rules, though not the vows, of religious orders, it does not bind under pain of sin at all, but presents them rather with a kind of ideal at which to aim.

Aquinas, I think, would simply say that this suggestion misunderstands what it is to know, as we are obliged under pain of gravely sinful negligence to know, that something belongs to divine law. To know that something belongs to divine law just is to know that there is a divine commandment about it, and that anyone who breaks this commandment sins mortally by preferring some created thing to God. Hence in the *De Veritate*, he writes that the very fact that someone has the will not to observe the law of God, means that he sins mortally.¹² In other words, part of knowing that something belongs to divine law is to know that it binds gravely. Someone who thinks that what he may still call ‘divine law’ is in fact only a kind of ideal is therefore in the position considered in the first hypothesis, i.e. such a person is simply ignorant of the divine law about intrinsically evil

acts, an ignorance which St Thomas holds to be gravely sinful.

The fourth and final hypothesis that needs to be considered is that a Catholic, while being in a state of grace, may know that a divine commandment is seriously binding on him, but may be free of the guilt of mortal sin if he breaks it, because the only alternative course seems to him to involve a worse sin.

This was already a classic question in the 13th century. Technically, such a person was said to be *perplexus*, ‘perplexed’. St Thomas’s consistent teaching here is that no one need remain in such a state, since it is caused only by some underlying bad choice which can always be revoked. Thus, he says, if someone likes to do what is right in order to be praised by others, such a person might seem to be perplexed, since whether he does the right thing in order to win praise or whether he omits to do it, he will be guilty, either of vainglory or of a sin of omission. Yet such a man, he goes on, is not truly perplexed, since he can always set aside his underlying intention of acquiring human praise and then do the right thing for the right reason.¹³ More generally, we can say that it is impossible for a person so to entangle his life that there is no longer any good course left for him to take, and that he must break God’s law in one way or another. To claim that this is possible is to say that God’s law will sometimes make incompatible demands on us, which would be to blaspheme against divine wisdom.

To conclude: as various authors have noted, St Thomas’s moral teaching is not a ‘morality of conscience’, in this sense that he does not hold that good action means action in conformity with conscience.¹⁴ Good action, rather, means action that attains God and the good, with our correct judgement of conscience being simply a necessary condition for this. Far from always being the voice of God, conscience can be the voice of the flesh, or even of the devil. While it is possible for men to be ignorant of divine law and the intrinsic evil of certain kinds of action, such ignorance does not excuse them from mortal sin, since even where bad education or a corrupt ambient culture exist as mitigating factors, their very ignorance is still itself a mortal sin: a negligence, St Thomas says, to learn those things whereby we can safeguard ourselves in the love of God. In this he is true to the teaching of the New Testament. Writing to the Ephesians, St Paul does not say that the ignorance of the divine law under which the Gentiles laboured excused them from guilt, but rather that it cut them off from God; they are, he says, alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them (Eph. 4:18). And the apostle of divine love assures us that it is not possible to combine the state of grace and intrinsically evil actions. Little children, let no one deceive you; he that doth justice is just. . . Whosoever is born of God, committeth not sin: for his seed abideth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 Jn. 3: 7, 9).

Fr Crean is a friar of the English province of the Order of Preachers. He was ordained in 2001, and holds a degree in philosophy and theology from Oxford University and a licence in theology from the Catholic Institute of Toulouse. He was awarded his doctorate in Sacred Theology from the International Theological Institute in the archdiocese of Vienna. He is currently teaching at Newman College Ireland, a new Catholic liberal arts college in the north of Ireland.

ENDNOTES:

1. The modern Catechism uses the word in a slightly more limited way: ‘Conscience is a judgement [...] whereby the human person recognises the moral quality of a given act that he is going to perform, is in the process of performing or has already completed’ (CCC 1778).
2. Cardinal Blaise Cupich, speaking on 9th February at St Edmund’s College, University of Cambridge. Full text available here: <http://www.lastampa.it/2018/02/09/vaticaninsider/eng/documents/pope-francis-revolution-of-mercy-amoris-laetitia-as-a-new-paradigm-of-catholicity-skMox0lKtoX5szfKH6QgrL/pagina.html>
3. E.g. E. D’Arcy, *Conscience and Its Right to Freedom*, London, Sheed & Ward, 1961, quoted in J. Lamont, ‘Conscience, Freedom, Rights: Idols of the Enlightenment Religion’, *The Thomist*, 73 (2009), 182.
4. *Summa Theologiae* 1a 2ae, 19, 5.
5. *Ibid.*
6. T. Michelet, ‘La Communion des divorcés remariés’, *Revue Thomiste* 116, octobre-décembre 2016, t. 4, 633: « Ils vivent dans des conditions culturelles telles qu’ils peuvent fort bien ne pas avoir de péchés graves sur la conscience en ce domaine, dans la mesure où ils n’en voient plus la gravité, aidés en cela par la société, si ce n’est par leurs éducateurs. »
7. Cf. 1a 2ae 103, 4 ad 3: “With regard to fornication a special prohibition was made, because the Gentiles did not hold it to be sinful.” He is speaking about the Council of Jerusalem, described in Acts 15.
8. 1a 2ae, 19, 6.
9. Quodlibetal Questions, III, 12, 2 ad 2: “Ignorance of the law does not excuse one from sin, unless it be invincible ignorance, such as us found in lunatics and imbeciles (furiosis et amentibus), which entirely excuses from sin.”
10. CCC 1859-60.
11. 2a 2ae 5, 3.
12. Cf. *De Veritate*, 17, 4: “Non videtur autem possibile quod aliquis peccatum evadat, si conscientia, quantumcumque errans, dicitur aliquid esse praeceptum Dei sive sit indifferens sive etiam per se malum; si contrarium, tali conscientia manente, agere disponat. Quantum enim in se est, ex hoc ipso habet voluntatem legem Dei non observandi; unde mortaliter peccat.”
13. 1a 2ae, 19, 6 ad 3.
14. See J. Lamont’s discussion of the phrase ‘moralities of conscience’ in ‘Conscience, Freedom, Rights’, especially pp. 177-94.

OBEDIENCE AND RESISTANCE IN THE HISTORY AND DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH

BY PROF. ROBERTO DE MATTEI

To speak of resistance in Catholic history and doctrine by no means signifies an apologia for disobedience and rebellion. On the contrary, I will make an apologia for obedience. It is the virtue of obedience, not disobedience, that makes lawful Catholic resistance to familial, political and religious authorities, when they violate divine and natural law.

This is a necessary premise, because we must avoid the danger of adopting a psychological attitude of opposition to authority, which has nothing to do with Catholic faith and morality.

The moral virtue of obedience

When we speak of obedience, what generally comes to mind is the vow taken by religious, the most difficult to maintain and hence the most perfect of the three vows taken, because it sacrifices what is most important, namely one's own will. Yet, more importantly, obedience is a moral virtue. St Thomas defines obedience as a moral virtue which renders the will ready to carry out the orders of superiors¹. If we obey our lawful superiors, we obey God, because all power comes from Him (Rm 13:1). Therefore, like all virtues, obedience has a divine, not a human, foundation.

The moral virtue of obedience derives from the Decalogue. The Fourth Commandment tells us: honour your father and your mother. The family is the first place where a human being learns the value of obedience. The Fourth Commandment imposes a

duty to obey not only one's parents, but all authorities, as an expression of the Will of God which, as St Thomas explains, is the first rule of the order for all created wills.²

This commandment, which, being an expression of the natural law, imposes obedience to lawful authorities and lawful legislation, is universal and absolute, as is the Fifth Commandment, which tells us to not kill, and the Sixth, which tells us not to commit impure acts.

Yet obedience has an additional supernatural foundation and is the rule of the spiritual life of every Christian.

St Paul says Jesus Christ was "obedient unto death, death on the cross!" (Phil 2:8). Following the example of the Divine Master, and in accordance with divine law, the saints did not merely obey the authorities: they sought to obey the will of others, while renouncing their own. Blessed is he who never acts upon his own will, but simply and solely that of others, be they parents, superiors, husband or wife, even the neighbour we encounter and should love as ourselves, according to an order



PROF. DE MATTEI

of charity defined by St Thomas in the *Summa*.³

The opposite of obedience is disorderly affirmation of the "one", egoism, the search for oneself and one's own will, which leads us into sin. Sin is, always and above all, an act of disobedience. Therefore, St Paul tells us "by the one man's disobedience, the entire human race were made sinners" (Rm 5:19). Christian society is a society regulated by obedience and animated by love of God and one's neighbour.

A diabolical society is a society of disorder and disobedience. Juan Donoso Cortés observes:

“
It is the virtue of obedience, not disobedience, that makes lawful Catholic resistance to familial, political and religious authorities, when they violate divine and natural law.

“If sin is nothing more than disobedience and rebellion, and if disobedience and rebellion are nothing more than disorder, and disorder is evil, it follows that evil, disorder, rebellion, disobedience and sin are things in which reason perceives absolute identity, just as good, order, submission and obedience are things in which reason perceives full likeness. The conclusion is that subordination to the divine will constitutes the highest good, whilst sin is the pre-eminent evil.”⁴

Are subjects bound to obey their superiors in all things?

The principle that obedience is due to superiors because they represent the authority of God Himself has important consequences. In the familial, political and ecclesiastical order, our superiors represent the authority in which they themselves respect and ensure respect for the divine law. This law is not divine because imposed on us by our superior, but because its foundation is in itself, that is in God, who is its author. He who has authority, says St Paul, is “God’s minister working for your good (Rm 13:4)”. However, love for the will of God may lead us to refuse authorities and laws which refuse God and which, in refusing God, impair His glory and imperil souls.

Therefore, when St Thomas poses the question “Are subjects bound to obey their superiors in all things?” his answer is negative.⁵

As explained by *Doctor Angelicus*, the reasons why a subject cannot be bound to obey his superior in all things are twofold.

Firstly: because of a command from a higher authority, given that the hierarchy of authorities must be respected.

Secondly: if a superior commands a subject to do unlawful things. For example, when children are not bound to obey their parents in the matter of contracting a marriage, preserving virginity or similar matters.

St Thomas concludes:

“Man is subject to God absolutely, and in all things, internal and external: he is therefore bound to obey God in all things. However, subjects are not bound to obey their superiors in all things, but in certain things only. (...) Hence one can distinguish three types of obedience: the first, being sufficient for salvation, obeys in obligatory matters only; the second, being perfect, obeys in all lawful things; the third, being disordered, obeys in unlawful matters also”.

This means obedience is not blind or unconditional, but has limits. Where

there is sin, mortal or otherwise, we have not merely a right, but a duty to disobey. This also applies in circumstances where one is commanded to do something harmful to the spiritual life.

But who tells us that an order from our superiors is unlawful? We are told this by our conscience which, rather than a nebulous sentiment of the spirit, is the right judgement of reason on our actions, the ultimate judgement on what we should or should not do. Conscience has no inherent norm, but must be subject to the moral law, which is founded on the divine law. The greatest act of obedience we can perform is the obedience of our conscience to moral law.

Out of love for God, we must be ready for such acts of supreme obedience to His law and His will, which are severed from the ties of false human obedience. God requires us only to sanctify ourselves; when the law imperils our sanctification, we have the right to oppose it.

The martyrs did not obey the authorities of the state, who imposed on them a requirement to worship idols. Nor did they obey parents, children, husbands and wives, who asked them to escape martyrdom for the good of the family.

St Thomas More was a loyal servant of Henry VIII, but did not do what Henry wanted, nor even what his wife Alice asked in their final words to one another, when she pleaded: “Do you want to abandon us, myself and my unhappy family? Do you want to renounce this life of domestic bliss which, even a short time ago, pleased you so much?” But Thomas answered: “For how many years, my dear Alice, do you believe I could enjoy these earthly pleasures, which you depict with such persuasive eloquence? – Twenty years, at least, God willing. –

Obedience is not blind or unconditional, but has limits. Where there is sin, mortal or otherwise, we have not merely a right, but a duty to disobey. This also applies in circumstances where one is commanded to do something harmful to the spiritual life.

“

**Each positive law which runs counter
to natural and divine law is unjust
and the authority which claims to
impose it is abusing its power.**

But, darling wife, you are not a good negotiator: what is twenty years compared with a blessed eternity?”

Just and unjust law

The natural law, to which our conscience must submit, is an objective and immutable order of truths and moral values. Reason discovers this order above all in our own hearts, because this order is a law written “on the human heart by the very finger of the Creator” (Rm 2:14-15). The moral law is valid for each man, specifically because impressed on the conscience of each: this could not be so unless the moral law is rooted in our human nature.

Each positive law which runs counter to natural and divine law is unjust and the authority which claims to impose it is abusing its power.

The concepts of just and unjust law come to us not from the modern philosophy of natural law, but from mediaeval law and theology, which inherited them from Greek and Roman philosophy and developed them in greater depth and detail.

Professor Wolfgang Waldstein is the author of a celebrated study entitled *Written on the heart. Natural law as the foundation of a human society*, in which he demonstrates that natural law has been known and practised by men from ancient times.⁷ Waldstein recalls the famous quotation from Sophocles

(496-404 a. C.) in the tragedy *Antigone*, cited repeatedly by Aristotle: “I could not, through the arrogance of one man, bring upon myself punishment from the gods”.⁸ The Roman jurists, in particular Cicero, in his writings on the res publica (*De republica*), laws (*De legibus*) and duties (*De officiis*), developed the notions of Greek philosophy. Roman law was collected in the work *Digesta*, published by the Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian in 533 A.D. As a result of the rediscovery and study of this work in the Middle Ages, the first university in Europe, the University of Bologna was born, whose influence on mediaeval thought was decisive.

The teachers at Bologna included Gratian (1075/80-1145/1157), great codifier of the Church’s canon law: a system in which the authority of Holy Scripture, decrees promulgated by Popes and Councils and the tradition of the Church are added to the authority of natural law.

The Carlyle brothers, authors of a celebrated history of political doctrines, recall that mediaeval jurists drew a precise distinction between natural or divine law and the positive law formulated by man.⁹ Henri de Bracton (c. 1216-1268), in his *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, affirms that there is no king where the will is substituted for the law: “Non est enim rex, ubi dominatur voluntas et non lex”.¹⁰ This is not an isolated say-

ing—as emphasised by the Carlyles—but the synthetic enunciation of a principle which permeates the entire constitutional structure of mediaeval society.¹¹

The most important mediaeval political concept, as concluded by the Carlyle brothers, is the supremacy of the law, not as the expression of the will of the ruler, but rather in its two-fold aspects of natural law and customary law, born of the traditions of a community made up of the king, the nobility and the people.¹²

The principle of the “sovereign de legibus solutus” can be traced to the jurists of Philip the Fair and thereafter, in the XIV century, Marsilius of Padua and William of Ockham. It is this principle which has given rise to the mod-



THE TRIUMPH OF ST THOMAS AQUINAS,
BY BENOZZO GOZZOLI

“

However, when a state legislates against the laws of God and the Church, when it violates moral and natural law, when it persecutes and discriminates against the good, it is an iniquitous state which must be combated and condemned.

ern-day concept that the sovereignty of the lawgiver is not limited by a superior authority. However, according to the mediaeval notion, the sovereign, being the source of civil law, is subject to the natural and divine law which is binding on every human being. And where there is conflict between the human and the divine law, “it is proper to obey God rather than to obey man (Acts 5:29).”¹³

This concept of the law belongs to the Magisterium of the Church.

In his Encyclical *Quod nunquam* of 15 February 1875 to the Prussian episcopate, Pius IX affirms:

“It is proper to obey God rather than to obey man.’ (Ap. 2,3) In addition, let them know that each one of you is prepared to give tribute and homage to Caesar in those matters which are subject to civil authority and power (not as a result of threats, but according to the law of conscience).”

Leo XIII cites this in his Encyclical *Libertas*: in the “tyrannical Governments”, “where (...) the justifying reason for a command is in opposition to the eternal law of the divine Empire, then disobedience to men in order to obey God becomes a duty”.¹⁴

While in his Encyclical *Diuturnum* Leo XIII emphasises the sacred nature of authority and the duty of obedi-

ence, in the Encyclical *Sapientiae Christianae* on the duties of Christian citizens, he explains that, when laws promulgated by the State are in conflict with the divine law and the authority is serving injustice, “resistere officium est, parere scelus”, then “it is proper to resist and reprehensible to obey”.¹⁵ These concepts are reiterated in the letter *Officio sanctissimo* to the archbishops and bishops of Bavaria of 22 December 1887¹⁶, where he affirms that

“if the inevitable alternatives are posed, either to disobey the commands of God or to please men, he openly endorses the memorable and most worthy response of the apostles: ‘it is proper to obey God rather than to obey man’ (Acts 5:29).”¹⁷

John Paul II reiterates this in *Evangelium Vitae*: “From the early days of the Church, apostolic preaching has inculcated in Christians a duty to lawfully constituted authorities (Rm 13, 1-7; 1 Pt. 2, 13-14), while at the same time issuing a firm admonishment to obey God rather than to obey man (Acts 5:29).”¹⁸

Power is lawfully exercised when it respects life, freedom of education, the family, natural marriage, private ownership and religious and moral principles. However, when a state legislates against the laws of God and the

Church, when it violates moral and natural law, when it persecutes and discriminates against the good, it is an iniquitous state which must be combated and condemned. It is therefore possible to disobey through obedience, with the result that apparent disobedience is in fact a more perfect form of obedience.

The right of resistance

When faced with an unjust law or governance, Catholics have a right to act, even placing themselves outside the law.¹⁹ The uprising in the Vendée, the Neapolitan Santa Fede movement and the Cristero rebellion in Mexico provide us with a strong example of resistance by the Catholic people against an unlawful power. History offers us further examples of intervention by ecclesiastical authorities against laws and authorities. The defender of divine and natural law is in fact the Church, on which, in the final instance, it is incumbent to determine whether a law does or does not reflect the divine and natural order. This authority is the foundation of the right of excommunication and deposition exercised by the Pope, even against kings and emperors.²⁰

When Elizabeth I of the House of Tudor came to the throne, the Catholic Church was persecuted by Elizabeth, dubbed by contemporaries *filia sanguinis*. On 14 November 1569, Catholics in the north of England rebelled, raising the old flag with the Cross and five wounds of Christ which flew in 1536 under Henry VIII. On 27 February 1570, Pius V promulgated in Consistory the Bull *Regnans in excelsis*, in which he declared Queen Elizabeth I guilty of heresy and encouragement of heresy and therefore subject to excommunication, and declared that her claimed right to the English crown was forfeited: her subjects were no longer

bound by an oath of allegiance and were not permitted, under pain of excommunication, to pledge obedience to her.²¹ Pius V was criticised because this act led to a recrudescence of persecution. Possession and distribution of the Bull were considered acts of high treason. Of the many martyrs, we remember Blessed John Felton who, on 8 August 1570, was hung, drawn and quartered at St Paul's Cathedral for publicly displaying the Excommunication Bull issued by the Pope against the Queen. Had Pius V been required to follow the principles applied by John XXIII and Paul VI to their dealings with Communist regimes, he would have had to apply against Elizabeth I a policy which we might today define as *westpolitik*. Yet Pius V was a pope who governed the Church supernaturally, without seeking approval from the world, and wished to affirm the principle that it is proper to obey God rather than to obey man. Elizabeth's Neronian decrees were never applied to the letter and the persecutory legislation of the last Tudor did not achieve its objective, which was to root out the Catholic faith completely from English soil.²² The Catholics had no fear: between 1580 and 1585 a new wave of persecution spread throughout England and the first missionaries from the Society of Jesus, including St Edmund Campion, trained in English seminaries in Rome and Douai, landed incognito on British soil.

In his Encyclical *Firmissimam constantiam* of 28 March 1937, addressed to Catholic Mexicans, Pius XI recalls that obedience can never be a supreme value:

“It is therefore natural that, when the most elementary religious and civil freedoms are under threat, Catholic citizens should certainly not resign themselves to

a renunciation of those freedoms. However, the assertion of these rights and freedoms may also be more or less opportune and more or less energetic, according to the circumstances”.

If the constituted powers “rise up against justice and truth to the point of destruction of the very foundations of authority, it would be difficult to justify the condemnation of citizens who, through lawful and suitable means, join together to defend themselves and the Nation against persons who avail themselves of public power to bring about its ruin.”²³

Pius XI then recalls the general principles, always to be kept in mind, and no different from those of St Thomas, inviting Mexican Catholics to have

“the supernatural vision of life, the religious and moral education and ardent zeal to spread the kingdom of Christ which Catholic Action proposes to offer. In the face of a happy alliance of consciences which have no intention of renouncing the liberty claimed for them by Christ (Gal 4:31), what human force or power could yoke

them to sin? What dangers, what persecutions, what trials could separate souls so strengthened by the love of Christ (cf. Rm 8:35)?”²⁴

The Prussian example

Our examples have to date been taken from Catholic practice and doctrine. But I would like to recall an example of resistance to unjust laws which comes to us from a world not specifically Catholic. The Countess Marion Dönhoff (1909-1992), a well-known German writer and journalist from an old Prussian family, evoked in her memoirs the anti-Nazi plot of 20 July 1944.²⁵ Many of those in Germany who dared to challenge Hitler were Prussian, predominantly senior state officials, diplomats and the military, united not by an ideology, but by a tradition of honour, cultivated for centuries by families accustomed to serve their country in war and in peace.

These men had not studied St Thomas of Aquinas, but their consciences, awareness of good and evil, the just and the unjust, led them to perceive a need to rebel against Hitler. The supreme holocaust which these opponents of Hitler had to

“

In the face of a happy alliance of consciences which have no intention of renouncing the liberty claimed for them by Christ (Gal 4:31), what human force or power could yoke them to sin? What dangers, what persecutions, what trials could separate souls so strengthened by the love of Christ (cf. Rm 8:35)?”



STS. PETER AND PAUL, BY MASOLINO

“

If there is a danger to the faith, subjects are bound to rebuke their prelates, even publicly: ‘Therefore, due to the risk of scandal in the faith, Paul, who was in fact subject to Peter, rebuked him publicly’.

confront, even before the loss of their lives, was the principle of obedience which formed the keystone of their moral education. No tradition other than that of the Prussian military had cultivated with such strength and sincerity the principle of obedience to lawful authority. Yet the courage to disobey unjust orders, the *Libertas oboedientiae*, is also part of the Prussian tradition, whose history contains similar examples. The headstone in the Brandenburg Margraviate in memory of Johann Friedrich Adolf von der Marwitz, who refused to carry

out Frederick II’s order to sack the Castle of Hubertusburg, contains the following epitaph: “He lived through heroic times in the reign of Frederick and fought every war with him. He chose disfavour where obedience did not bring honour.”²⁶

Honour can be forfeited by putting blind obedience of one’s superiors or alignment with the mainstream trend before the interests of one’s own group or movement, religious institution, family and natural and divine law, in short, putting the interests of a human reality before the principle of justice,

born of conscience, the ultimate source of which is in divine law.

Are the faithful bound to obey the Pope in everything?

No greater sacrifice can be asked than rebellion by someone educated to obey and serve. To love one’s country and desire its defeat in the name of that love constitutes an extreme sacrifice. The fate of the conspirators on 20 July was in this sense bitter. They not only underwent trials followed by torture and barbaric death sentences, but were also misunderstood by many of their fellow countrymen, and their enemies, who cast doubt on their patriotism although many had proved their valour and sustained wounds on all fronts. Yet there is a crisis of conscience more acute than that encountered by the Prussian nobility in the face of Hitler. It is the crisis of conscience experienced by many Catholics in the face of unjust orders from ecclesiastical authorities, even the Pope.

Is it possible that a bishop, Episcopal conference, Council or Pope can fall into error or heresy, and expect to be followed on this path? What, in such circumstances, should the faithful do? Once again, we seek an answer from St Thomas.

In his various works, *Doctor Angelicus* teaches that, where the faith is at risk, it is lawful, even proper, to resist a papal decision publicly, as did St Paul to St Peter. Indeed “St Paul, who was subject to St Peter, publicly rebuked him because of an imminent risk of scandal in a matter of faith.” And St Augustine commented “even St Peter set an example so that those who governed, but on occasion strayed from the right path, should not refuse as improper a correction, even if originating from their subjects” (ad Gal 2:14).²⁷

St Paul’s resistance was manifested as a public correction of St Peter. St

Thomas devotes an entire question to fraternal correction in the *Summa*, explaining that it is an act of charity, superior to treatment of the sick in body or almsgiving, “Because, in it, we combat evil, which is sin, in a brother”.²⁸ Fraternal correction can also be directed by subjects to their superiors, and by the laity against prelates. “Since however a virtuous act needs to be moderated by due circumstances, it follows that when a subject corrects his superior, he ought to do so in a becoming manner, not with impudence and harshness, but with gentleness and respect”.²⁹ If there is a danger to the faith, subjects are bound to rebuke their prelates, even publicly: “Therefore, due to the risk of scandal in the faith, Paul, who was in fact subject to Peter, rebuked him publicly”.³⁰

If Peter, Prince of the Apostles, was rebuked, cannot a successor who strays from the faith be fraternally corrected? The response of St Thomas is positive,

as is that of Gratian, Prince of Canonists and author of a celebrated *Decretum* (1140), equivalent, in the field of law, to the contents of the *Summa*, in the field of theology.

The Pope, recalls Gratian, is bound by the laws of which he is custodian and cannot impose canons which run counter to the authority of the Gospels or the rulings of the Fathers. The axiom *Prima Sedes non iudicabitur a quocquam*, according to which no human authority is superior to the Pope, admits one exception: the sin of heresy.³¹ Reiterating an assertion ascribed to St Boniface, Bishop of Mainz, and quoted by Ivo of Chartres, Gratian affirms that the Pope *a nemine est iudicandus, nisi deprehendatur a fide devius*.^{32, 33}

The Roman Pontiff has full and immediate authority over all the faithful, and there is no authority on earth superior to him, but he cannot change the rule of the faith or the divine constitution of the Church; if this

happens, “disobedience” of an order which is inherently unjust may even lead to resistance against the Supreme Pontiff.³⁴ This is a rare, but possible, circumstance, which does not violate, but confirms, the rule of devotion and obedience of every Catholic to he who is called to confirm the faith of his brothers.

Resistance may be private, but also public, and assume the form of filial or fraternal correction. The *Dictionary of Catholic Theology* affirms that fraternal correction is a precept which is not optional, but obligatory, in particular for those in positions of responsibility in the Church, because it derives from natural law and divine positive law.³⁵

Spirit of resistance and love of the Church

The Vatican II Council and what followed in the Church has raised grave problems of conscience for many of the faithful. These are problems posed even today by the Pontificate of Pope Francis.

I recall two clear examples of resistance to the ecclesiastical authority which followed the Vatican II Council and preceded the Lefebvre case. I refer to the resistance of Father Calmel to Paul IV’s *Novus Ordo* and that of Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira to the Vatican’s *Ostpolitik* to the Communist regimes.³⁶

In both cases, the attitude was filial, respectful, yet firm and uncompromising, and retains its validity today. No priest can be compelled to celebrate the new Mass and no authority can prevent a priest from celebrating the traditional Mass. No authority can impose a policy of appeasement of a regime, such as the Communist regime, yesterday Russian and today Chinese, which openly violates natural law and brutally persecutes Christians. In both these cases, as in the case of the

“
No priest can be compelled to celebrate the new Mass and no authority can prevent a priest from celebrating the traditional Mass. No authority can impose a policy of appeasement of a regime, such as the Communist regime, yesterday Russian and today Chinese, which openly violates natural law and brutally persecutes Christians. In both these cases, as in the case of the post-Synod Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, resistance and fraternal correction are morally lawful and proper.”

“

A person who says the Pope should always be obeyed is frequently a person who is anarchical and disobedient in his spiritual life because he has the rule of life in himself, not in objective and absolute moral law.

”

post-Synod Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, resistance and fraternal correction are morally lawful and proper.

In his discourse on the *salus animarum* as the principle of the canonical order on 6 April 2000, Cardinal Julián Herranz, Chairman of the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, reiterated this as the supreme regulative principle of canonical legislation. Today a legal positivism prevails, aimed at reducing the law to a mere instrument in the hands of those who hold power, forgetting its metaphysical and moral foundation.³⁷ From this legalist standpoint, which now permeates the Church, that which the authority promulgates is always just. In reality, the *Ius divinum* is the foundation of every manifestation of the law. God is the living and eternal Law, the absolute principle of all rights.³⁸ It is for this reason that, where there is conflict between human law and divine law, “it is proper to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29).

Spiritual treatises teach us how to behave at times of normality, not in the exceptional times in which we are living. We recognise the supreme authority of the pope, and his universal governance, but we know that, in the exercise of his authority, the pope may commit abuses of authority, as has unfortunately occurred in history.

We wish to obey the pope: all popes, including the current pope, but if, in the teaching of any pope, we find an (at least apparent) contradiction, our rule of judgement is natural and divine law, expressed by the bimillenary tradition of the Church. Unfortunately, there is a spirit of rebellion in many in the Church, who rebel against its Tradition and immutable laws. They want a Church which is not that intended by Our Lord. For our part, we wish to consume our souls in an act of obedience and love for the Church and its Tradition.

Perfect Christian obedience aims to fulfil the will of God, perceived in the person of its superior. But where there is iniquitous and unjust exercise of power, explains a Passionist theologian, “the refusal of a command and prohibition is rightful disobedience, not rebellion against the person of the superior, but a protest against the latter’s ideas, intentions and directives”.³⁹

According to Father Zoffoli, the worst evils of the Church do not originate from the malice of the world, interference or persecution of the laity or other religions, but above all from the human elements which make up the Mystical Body: the laity and the clergy. “It is the disharmony produced by insubordination of the laity to the work of the clergy and of the clergy to the will of Christ”.⁴⁰

We could add that, in the insubordination of the Clergy to Christ, experienced many times in history, there is one example rarely acknowledged by history, but certainly the most serious: rebellion against the will of Christ by the Supreme Pastor of the Church, because there is no other act which so leads to disorientation, corruption of the faith and apostasy of the faithful.

What to do therefore? To seek the answer in a spirit of true obedience. A person who says the Pope should always be obeyed is frequently a person who is anarchical and disobedient in his spiritual life because he has the rule of life in himself, not in objective and absolute moral law.

We must however explain that there is a true and a false obedience. True obedience is the obedience of a person who, in obeying, is able to rise to and unite his will with that of God.

False obedience is that of a person who divinizes man, who represents authority, and accepts unlawful orders from the latter.

We must explain that obedience has a foundation, has a purpose, has conditions, has limits. Only God has no limits: He is immense, infinite, eternal. Every creature is limited and that limit defines his essence. Therefore, neither unlimited authority, nor unlimited obedience, exists on earth. Authority is defined by its limits, and obedience is also defined by its limits. Awareness of these limits leads to perfection in the exercise of authority and perfection in the exercise of obedience. The insuperable limit of authority is respect for the divine law and respect for the divine law is also the insuperable limit of obedience. We must be aware of the limits of obedience and respect them, in particular when these



limits are not respected by the authority concerned.

To the authority which exceeds these limits, we must mount firm resistance, which may become public. This is the heroism of our time, the gravest path to sanctity today. To become saints means doing the will of God, doing the will of God means obeying His law always, in particular when this is difficult, in particular when this places us in conflict with the law of man.

Many, in the course of history, have manifested heroic behaviour, resisting the unjust laws of the political authority. Greater still is the heroism of those who have resisted the imposition by ecclesiastical authority of doctrines which diverge from the Tradition of the Church. Filial, devout, respectful resistance, which does not lead to departure from the Church, but multiplies love for the Church, for God, for His law, because God is the foundation of every authority and every act of obedience.

Fundamentally, everything is reduced to two words: GOD ALONE

*Translated from Italian
by Mary Latham*

Roberto de Mattei is a former professor of Modern History and History of Christianity at the European University of Rome. He founded, and oversees, the Lepanto Foundation, which operates in Washington and in Rome. He directs the magazine Radici Cristiane and the Corrispondenza Romana News Agency. He is the author of numerous books and publications, which have been translated into various languages. Among his recent publications is a history of the Second Vatican Council, which is translated into English as The Second Vatican Council - An Unwritten Story.

ENDNOTES:

1. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, II-IIae, q. 104, a. 1, ad 3.
2. *Ibid*, ad 2.
3. *Ibid*, q. 26.
4. Juan Donoso Cortés, *Essay on Catholicism, Liberalism and Socialism*, in *Complete Works*, edited by Carlos Valverde, BAC, Madrid 1970, p581.
5. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-IIae, q. 104, a. 5.
6. *Ibid*, ad 3.
7. Wolfgang Waldstein, *Written on the heart. Natural law as the foundation of a human society*, Giappichelli, Turin 2014. By the same author, cfr. *General theory of law*, Pontificia Università Lateranense, Rome 2001.
8. Sophocles, *Antigone*, v. 458.
9. Robert W. & Alexander J. Carlyle, *Mediaeval political thought*, tr. it. Laterza, Bari-Rome 1956-1968 (1903-1936), vol. I, pp. 150-151.
10. H. De Bracton, *De legibus et consuetudinibus Angliae*, Kraus Reprint, Vaduz 1964, Chapter I, 8, 5 (fol. 5b).
11. R.W. & A.J. Carlyle, *op. cit.*, vol. II, page 83.
12. *Ibid*, vol. IV, page 5.
13. Roberto de Mattei, *Necessary sovereignty, Reflections on the deconstruction of the State and its consequences for society*, François-Xavier de Guibert, Paris 2000, page 38 e seq.
14. Leo XIII, Enc. *Libertas*, of 20 June 1888, in *Enchiridion on Encyclicals* (= EE), EDB, Bologna 1995, page 449 (pp. 433-477).
15. Leo XIII, Enc. *Sapientiae christiana*e of 10 January 1890, in EE, page 541 (pp. 531-575).
16. Leo XIII, Letter *Officio sanctissimo* to the archbishops and bishops of Bavaria of 22 December 1887, in EE, pp. 1416-1449.
17. *Ivi*, p. 1435.
18. John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium vitae* of 25 March 1995, nos. 73-74, in *Teachings*, XVII, 1 (1995), Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Rome 1997, page 809.
19. Cfr. Reginaldo Pizzorni O.P., *The philosophy of war according to St Thomas of Aquinas*, Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2003, pp. 721-768.
20. Alfons M. Stickler, *Priesthood and kingdom in new research in the XII and XIIIth centuries on decrees and decretalists leading to the decretals of Gregory IX*, in *Priesthood and kingdom from Gregory VII to Boniface VIII*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome 1954, page 15 (pp. 1-26).
21. *Bullarium Romanum*, S. Franco, H. Fory and H. Dalmazzo editoribus, AugustaeTaurinorum 1857-1872, vol. VII, 810 et seq.; Ludwig von Pastor, *History of the Popes from the late Middle Ages*, Desclée, Rome 1942, vol. VIII, pp. 413 et seq. Joannes B. Lo Grasso, *Ecclesia et Status. Fontes selecti iuris publici ecclesiastici*, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Rome 1952, pp. 250-254.
22. Louis Antheunis, *Persecutory catholic legislation in the reign of Elizabeth I of England*, in "Review of Ecclesiastical History", 4 (1955), pp. 908-909 (pp. 900-909).
23. Pius XI, Encyclical *Firmissimam constantiam* of 28 March 1937, in EE, V, page 1225 (pp. 1206-1233).
24. *Ivi*, page 1227.
25. Marion Dönhoff, *For honour*, Il Minotauro, Rome 2002.
26. In *This was Prussia. Testimonies of Prussianism*, edited by Hans-Joachim Schoeps, Volpe, Rome 1965, p. p. 130.
27. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 33, a. 4, ad 2.
28. *Ibid*, a. 1.
29. *Ibid*, a. 4, ad 3. Cfr. Anche *In 4 Sententiarum*, Dist. 19, q. 2, a. 2
30. *Ibid*.
31. Gratian, *Decretum*, Dist. XXI, c. 7, *Nunc autem*.
32. Ivo of Chartres, *Decretales*, ParsV, cap. 23.
33. Gratian, *Decretum*, Pars I, Dist. XL, c. 6.
34. Arnaldo Xavier Da Silveira, *Public resistance to decisions of the ecclesiastical authority*, in "Christianity", 13 (September-October 1975), pp. 6-9.
35. *Dictionary of Catholic Theology*, vol. III, col. 1908.
36. <https://www.corrispondenzaromana.it/spirito-resistenza-amore-alla-chiesa/>
37. Cfr. Don Arturo Cattaneo, *Ecclesiological foundations of Canon Law*, Marcianum Press, Venice 2011.
38. Cfr. *Ius divinum*, edited by Juan Ignacio Arrieta, Marcianum Press, Venice 2010.
39. Fr Enrico Zoffoli, *Power and obedience in the Church*, Maurizio Minchella editore, Milan 1996, page 67.
40. *Ivi*, page 68.



CHRIST GLORIFIED IN THE COURT OF HEAVEN, BY FRA ANGELICO

A TRUE UNDERSTANDING OF CONSCIENCE: the necessity for heroic witness on the part of the pro-life and pro-family movement

BY JOHN SMEATON

Editor's note: In this talk, which was delivered one week before the Irish electorate voted, on 25 May, to strip unborn children of legal protection and open the way to the legalisation of abortion in Ireland, John Smeaton exposed the pro-abortion position adopted by many Catholic bishops in Ireland during the referendum campaigns of 1992 and 2002, which contributed to the disastrous result.

As far as abortion is concerned, the world's attention is currently focused on Ireland and on their abortion referendum next week, on 25th May, concerning the Eighth Amendment of the Irish constitution. The outcome of that referendum will result in countless lives being saved or in countless lives being destroyed not only in Ireland, but all around the world, so great is the cultural influence of this small nation of 4.8 million citizens.

How individual consciences have been formed in Ireland is going to make a difference to the lives of ordinary people in countries throughout the world. If the Irish vote to defend the lives of unborn children, it will strengthen the pro-life movement worldwide. If the Irish on the other hand vote to destroy the lives of unborn children, the holocaust of abortion, which already dwarfs the total number of people killed in all human conflicts in the history of the world, will enter a new and more frightening era.

Ireland's cultural influence worldwide is rooted in the blood of the Irish martyrs, in the sweat and sacrifices of Irish missionaries, in the ancient Catholic faith of Ireland, and in Ireland's tragic social history leading to Irish emigrants enriching so many nations throughout the world with their faith. Above all, Ireland's reputation is founded on its history as a Catholic nation which has spread the one true Catholic faith throughout the world

If Ireland says "Yes" to abortion, the media, the political establishment, academia, and people of faith and of no faith throughout the world will say: "The Catholic Church has raised the white flag on abortion." They will not be right of course. But that is what will be said and it will have a devastating impact on the pro-life cause.

If we do nothing else after this conference, we must pray for a pro-life victory in Ireland next week.

In my presentation today on a true understanding of conscience and the need for heroic witness on the part of the pro-life and pro-family movement, I want to focus on two earlier abortion referendums in Ireland in 1992 and in 2002.

The Eighth Amendment of the Irish constitution, approved by referendum on 7th September 1983 and signed into law on 7th October 1983, famously declares:

The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and,



JOHN SMEATON

with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.

In 1992, the family of a 14-year old victim of rape sought an abortion for their daughter. The case was ultimately decided by the Irish Supreme Court. It's known as the "X" case. The Eighth Amendment of the Irish constitution was a measure intended to prevent the introduction of abortion by making the right to life of an unborn child equal with that of his mother. In a complete distortion of logic, the Supreme Court judges ruled that the Eighth Amendment had, in fact, legitimised abortion when a woman's life was threatened by her pregnancy, even if, as in the "X" case, the threat was one of suicide.

In response to the Supreme Court's ruling, the Irish government decided to hold a referendum on abortion

which sought to remove the threat of suicide as justification for an abortion. However, at the same time, the Irish government was seeking, on the basis of the referendum, to legalise abortion when there was a real and substantial risk to a woman's life, including a psychological risk. In pursuit of their objective to destroy protection for unborn children, the Irish government threatened that if Irish citizens did not agree to their deadly referendum text, the Government would introduce abortion legislation in line with the Supreme Court judgement.

In a tragic development, the Irish Catholic authorities declared that Catholics were free to vote in accordance with their consciences on this measure.

Catholics must of course always vote according to their consciences – or at least not against their consciences. However, our consciences must be conformed to the divine law, and the Church has the obligation to direct Catholics according to divine law on such questions, and to make clear the eternal and temporal consequences of acting otherwise.

The people of Ireland, in 1992, were being invited by their bishops to vote in favour of an intrinsically unjust law which would permit abortion when there was a real and substantial risk to a woman's life, including a psychological risk.

The people of Ireland, in 1992, were being invited by their bishops to consider voting in favour of a law which would introduce in a statutory form an unjust permission for abortion when there was a risk to a woman's life, including a psychological risk.

How was it possible for the Irish Catholic authorities to invite Catholic voters to consider voting for a measure

“

The people of Ireland, in 1992, were being invited by their bishops to vote in favour of an intrinsically unjust law which would permit abortion when there was a real and substantial risk to a woman's life, including a psychological risk.

which would have introduced, for the first time, a statute legalizing abortion in Ireland, albeit after a permissive court judgement and under the threat of the Government introducing worse legislation?

At that time, in 1992, I spoke to a world-famous Catholic legal philosopher who told me that he had told the Irish bishops that they were justified giving such advice on the grounds that even more lives might be lost if the government carried out its threat to legislate on the basis of the Supreme Court judgement, in the event of Irish voters rejecting the proposed constitutional amendment.

I thought at the time, and I still think, that in the context of the intrinsically unjust law which Irish voters were being invited to support in 1992, it was equivalent to the Irish government handing an Irish citizen a gun, asking him to shoot a certain number of citizens on the basis that, unless he agrees to do so, the government will shoot, perhaps, even more citizens.

Shortly before the referendum, however, by the grace of God, five Bishops publicly declared their desire for a No vote. The Amendment was eventually rejected by 65.35 per cent to 34.65. With such a substantial

defeat the government withdrew its threat to introduce liberalising legislation.

The position of the majority of the Catholic bishops in Ireland in 1992, saying that Irish citizens could consider voting either “yes” or “no” to proposals relating to the killing of unborn children, undoubtedly dealt a tragic blow to the formation of consciences on abortion in Ireland.

In October 2001 the Irish Government, once again, published the terms of certain proposed amendments to the Irish Constitution. There was to be a referendum in March 2002 when the Irish people would be asked to vote to accept or reject new provisions to Article 40.3 of the Constitution whereby “the life of the unborn in the womb shall be protected in accordance with the provisions of the Protection of Human Life in Pregnancy Act 2002”.

The referendum and proposals arose from the Irish Supreme Court's decision in the “X” case which, as I explained earlier, seemed, perversely, to indicate that, if a pregnant woman threatened suicide, an abortion carried out upon her would be considered legal under Irish law. The declared intention of those who supported the Government's proposals was to close this “loophole” but in fact the

proposed constitutional change and legislation contained much more than that simple provision, as I will explain.

On 22nd November 2001, Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, president of the Pontifical Council for the Family, said that it was expected that the bishops of Ireland would oppose the wording of the Irish constitutional amendment bill on abortion. Addressing a conference in Rome to mark the 20th anniversary of the apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, Cardinal Trujillo said: “The situation is delicate in Ireland but we expect that the bishops will react against this project.”

Three weeks later, the Irish Catholic bishops did the opposite of what His Eminence Cardinal Lopez Trujillo said was expected. On 12th December 2001, the bishops came out in support of the government’s proposals which they indicated would offer “more secure protection ... to the unborn” and, totally misleadingly, they added, that the proposals included “a clear legal prohibition on procured abortion”.

The Irish bishops said:

“In dealing with what appears to be a limited or imperfect measure, we believe that, in the context of *The Gospel of Life*, number 73, Catholic voters should feel free in conscience to support this measure, even if it is viewed as less than desired. We are of the view that a clear legal prohibition on procured abortion, as set out in this proposal, represents an important step towards ensuring adequate protection for the life of the unborn ...”

The Irish Catholic bishops were disastrously mistaken in how they interpreted the government’s proposal.

Contrary to the Catholic Bishops of Ireland’s advice, the law would

have allowed abortion to be carried out by doctors where “in the reasonable opinion of the practitioner [it is] necessary to prevent a real and substantial risk of loss of the woman’s life other than by self destruction.”¹ It was established in English law as long ago as 1939² that saving a woman’s life was (in the context of abortion) interpreted by the Courts to mean preventing her from becoming “a physical or mental wreck”, in other words a much wider interpretation than simply preventing her death. There is every reason to suspect that a similar interpretation would be given in Ireland.

The new law would have repealed the Offences Against the Person Act 1861³, which was the underlying law (subject to the Irish Constitution) which prohibited abortion in Ireland. The same 1861 Act applied also in Northern Ireland where the Abortion Act 1967 does not apply. The British Abortion Act 1967 has largely undermined the 1861 Act in Britain but the Act does not apply in Northern Ireland. Pro-lifers in Northern Ireland were rightly concerned at proposals to repeal the Act in the Irish Republic. The repeal of the Act would have had repercussions in the whole of the U.K. and indeed in many parts of the former British Empire where laws based upon the 1861 Act still apply.

At that time, there was no more loyal servant of the Catholic Church than Mr. Justice Rory O’Hanlon, a former Irish High Court judge and a very well-known and experienced pro-lifer in Ireland, who died in the spring of 2002. He was reported⁴ as having said that he “would not support a measure which was contrary to the moral teachings of the Catholic Church.” When he saw the referen-

dum proposal he described it as, “the most serious attack yet witnessed on the integrity of our Constitution” which he argued would “definitely liberalise Irish abortion law greatly so as to increase abortions in Ireland.” He said, “The proposal is intrinsically evil.”

Secondly, the new legislation would have introduced into Irish law a definition of abortion as the intentional killing of unborn children “after implantation”⁵. As a purely factual definition, this is untrue. No one should be asked to vote for an untruth.

One of the most important aspects of the whole abortion debate is the question of what the woman is carrying in her body. Is the woman gestating an actual human being? When does the life of an individual human being begin? Today, from a scientific point of view, the question of when a new human life begins is relatively uncontroversial. Birth is an important stage in a baby’s life, but that life begins many months earlier, at fertilisation. Any search will quickly yield authoritative statements by human embryologists which confirm this.

Peter Singer, a contemporary philosopher and public supporter of abortion, also acknowledges that: “there is no doubt that from the first moments of its existence an embryo conceived from human sperm and eggs is a human being.”⁶

The false definition of abortion to exclude from its meaning deliberate attacks on a preimplantation human embryo was preceded in the Bill by the words “In this Act”⁷ and it was claimed, therefore, including by the Catholic bishops of Ireland, that this definition was limited to be used within the narrow confines of this particular law alone. In practice, however,

what this law would have done, had it been approved in the referendum, would have been to enshrine this false definition of abortion at the heart of the Irish Constitution.

It is clearly no coincidence that in September and October 2001, just as the referendum proposals were being published, the Irish Medicines Board was considering an application to license the morning-after pill in Ireland. Approval was given to the morning-after pill on the mendacious ground that the morning-after pill was solely a contraceptive, not an abortifacient. In connection with the application the Medical Director of the Irish Medicines Board advised the Board that, “The proposed referendum on abortion helps to clarify the issue in that it proposes to define an abortion as occurring after implantation of a fertilised egg”⁸. There is no acknowledgement here that this definition was intended only to be applied to that specific law. And yet, this statement was made on 24th October 2001, only weeks after the draft law was published, months before the referendum was due to take place, and long before the law might come into force.

On the day the Irish Catholic bishops issued their statement supporting the Government’s proposals, SPUC issued a statement in which I was quoted as follows:

“The action of the Bishops in supporting the wording of this referendum is deplorable. They are giving credence to a proposal that suggests early abortion [that is, the abortion of pre-implantation embryos] can be discounted ... This is not purely an Irish domestic matter. As an issue of human rights, abortion always transcends national boundaries

... The wording of the amendment is designed to facilitate the promotion of early abortion by such means as the morning after pill and the intra-uterine device. Legislators and judges around the world could pick up on the re-definition of abortion in this proposal and use it to undermine the status of the early embryo in other countries ...”

SPUC’s statement went on to explain other serious flaws in the Irish Government’s 2002 proposal pointing out that Clause 1(2) exempts from the definition of abortion medical procedures carried out “at an approved place” which involve the death of the unborn child where there is a “real and substantial” risk to the mother’s life ... “this is legitimising intentional killing of unborn children”.

As Richard Gordon, a leading human rights lawyer employed by SPUC, wrote at the time: “The second most important vice of the new regime is that it appears to permit the direct killing of even a post-implanted embryo.” This was because, he explained, clause 1(2) of the Bill not only allows the ending of life of the protected embryo “as a result” of the carrying out of a medical procedure

but also “in the course of which” medical procedure life is ended.

Richard Gordon also argued that the wording of the proposals paved the way for wider and more intensive research into *in vitro* techniques since, if life *in vivo* is unprotected by law so, too, must life *in vitro* be unprotected; and that they also paved the way for the introduction into the Irish Republic of the licensing and distribution of post coital preparations commonly known as the morning after pill which, *inter alia*, destroy the pre-implanted embryo.

On 1st December 2001, I wrote to His Eminence Cardinal Lopez Trujillo, who was president of the Pontifical Council for the Family. My letter began: “I felt I should write to you immediately to let you know that SPUC has issued a press statement describing the action of the Irish bishops in supporting the government’s wording of the referendum on abortion as deplorable” and I went on to explain why.

The next paragraph in my letter to his Eminence stated:

“In addition, SPUC has been told something which, frankly, we do not believe. It is being said in Ireland that His Eminence Cardinal Ratzinger gave his support to the government’s

“

In *Evangelium Vitae*, number 72, Pope John Paul II reminded the faithful that a law which permits the killing of certain unborn children is not a law at all. It’s an unjust law which, in the words of St Thomas Aquinas ‘ceases to be a law and becomes instead an act of violence’.

wording of the abortion referendum in October. In the circumstances”, I wrote “would it be possible for the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith to make a clear statement regarding the Irish government’s disastrous wording for the abortion referendum, to which the Irish bishops have tragically given their support?”

I received no direct reply from His Eminence Cardinal Trujillo who never spoke publicly about Ireland’s 2002 abortion referendum after his statement of 22nd November to which I referred earlier – except for an enigmatic handwritten note from the cardinal posted to me from the Vatican on 27th December 2012 in which he said: “Con i mili conciali salutii. Non ho dato risposta. Sono persone molto fideli e influentii ...”

By the grace of God, the Government’s 2002 proposals were narrowly rejected in the referendum held on 6 March 2002, with 49.6 per cent in favour. The voting was 629,041 No and 618,485 Yes. The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children was bitterly attacked by the Irish Catholic bishops’ conference for our involvement in the campaign, and by certain pro-life groups in Ireland who supported the bishops’ position; and Dana, a singing star, former Member of the European Parliament, and former presidential candidate in Ireland, who led the pro-life campaign against the Government’s proposal to legalise abortion, suffered intense and prolonged attack from the same sources. The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales also attacked SPUC.

Following the defeat of the 2002 referendum, on 13th March 2002, the Irish bishops issued a statement which included the following paragraph:

“We vigorously refute the analysis of our Statement of 12 December 2001 implying that the bishops of Ireland have somehow compromised Church teaching on the sacredness of human life in the interests of political expediency. Our Statement clearly indicated that the proposed amendment would strengthen legal protection for the unborn only after implantation in the womb. However, we were satisfied that the proposal did not in itself deny or devalue the worth and dignity of the human embryo prior to implantation. Our position, therefore, is absolutely consistent with the universal teaching of the Catholic Church, and we confirm that our Statement of 12 December was fully endorsed by the Church authorities in Rome.”

In April 2002, His Eminence Cardinal Trujillo was installed as Cardinal Bishop of Frascati and I had the honour of receiving his personal invitation to attend the ceremony and his congratulations to the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children for the role it had played in the 2002 referendum.

Whilst I was in Rome, he invited me into his office to express his dismay concerning the position adopted by the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference. He told me that he had been present at a meeting which including Cardinal Connell, the Archbishop of Dublin, Cardinal Ratzinger, himself and others. He said that the meeting had clearly reached a conclusion opposing the Irish Government’s proposals. Referring to all that had happened, including the Irish bishops’ claim that they had the support of Rome, Cardinal Lopez Trujillo said to me: “What could I do? There would have been a split on the right of the Church”.

In fairness to the Irish bishops, both before the publication of Pope John Paul II’s *Evangelium Vitae*, in 1995, and since then, there has been a more or less universal policy pursued by pro-life groups of campaigning for laws which expressly permit the killing of certain unborn children. This is based on a mistaken interpretation of *Evangelium Vitae*, number 73.

In *Evangelium Vitae*, number 72, Pope John Paul II reminded the faithful that a law which permits the killing of certain unborn children is not a law at all. It’s an unjust law which, in the words of St Thomas Aquinas “ceases to be a law and becomes instead an act of violence”⁹. Pope John Paul II, in this connection, cites the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and its 1974 Declaration on Procured Abortion which states: “In the case of an intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is therefore never licit to obey it, or to ‘take part in a propaganda campaign in favour of such a law, or vote for it’”¹⁰.

Many have justified their campaigns in support of unjust laws by quoting the very next paragraph of *Evangelium Vitae*, number 73, where Pope John Paul II famously wrote: “A particular problem of conscience can arise in cases where a legislative vote would be decisive for the passage of a more restrictive law, aimed at limiting the number of authorized abortions, in place of a more permissive law already passed or ready to be voted on ... In a case like the one just mentioned, when it is not possible to overturn or completely abrogate a pro-abortion law, an elected official, whose absolute personal opposition to procured abortion was well known, could licitly support proposals aimed

“

Our pro-abortion enemies will not stop and we must not stop working and imploring God and His Blessed Mother to protect the unborn in Ireland and throughout the world.

at limiting the harm done by such a law and at lessening its negative consequences at the level of general opinion and public morality. This does not in fact represent an illicit cooperation with an unjust law, but rather a legitimate and proper attempt to limit its evil aspects.”

For over two decades perhaps the majority of pro-life and church leaders have interpreted this paragraph as meaning that politicians may vote for, and campaigners may campaign for laws which of themselves expressly permit abortions such as was clearly the case in Ireland’s 2002 abortion referendum. But this is contrary to reason. In the paragraph immediately preceding this one, Pope John Paul II wrote: “In the case of an intrinsically unjust law, such as a law permitting abortion or euthanasia, it is ... never licit to obey it, or to ‘take part in a propaganda campaign in favour of such a law, or vote for it’”.

Frequently in our pro-life and pro-family work, Catholic lay people in the pro-life and pro-life family movements must speak up, take a lead,

and, if necessary, unequivocally contradict the advice of Catholic pastors who misdirect the faithful on matters of life and death, and on matters relating to the family, not least to parents as the primary educators of their children. There are numerous other examples I would love to explore in this talk – from Britain, from the Vatican and from other parts of the world, concerning the bishops. I will happily provide anyone interested with articles and blogposts I have written on this topic.

In the meantime, our top priority must be to pray for Ireland – as the Irish bishops are rightly urging – and for what’s at stake in the abortion referendum next week.

As Anthony Murphy, the editor of Ireland’s Catholic Voice has said: “If Ireland removes constitutional protection for unborn children, we will be responsible for the slaughter of innocent children not only in Ireland but throughout the world. “If in 2018 Ireland defies God’s law ‘Thou shalt not kill’ and votes to allow the killing of unborn children, I have little doubt

that the dam will burst in country after country the world over.”

When the Eighth Amendment was passed by the people of Ireland in 1983, a battle in which the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children played a leading role, rosary crusades preceded it, and the victory was won on Our Lady’s Birthday and constitutional change protecting the unborn came into effect on the Feast of the Holy Rosary. There’s an urgent need to pray the rosary now, and after the vote next week, whatever the result of the Referendum might be. Our pro-abortion enemies will not stop and we must not stop working and imploring God and His Blessed Mother to protect the unborn in Ireland and throughout the world.

John Smeaton is the Chief Executive of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC). He became involved with SPUC, the first pro-life group to be established anywhere in the world, after graduating from the University of Oxford and has served as its national director since 1996. SPUC has been at the forefront of campaigns not only against abortion but also euthanasia and same-sex “marriage”. John Smeaton is the vice-president of International Right to Life Federation and a co-founder of Voice of the Family.

ENDNOTES:

1. Clause 1(2) of the Bill.
2. R v. Bourne [1939] 1K.B. 687.
3. Clause 6 of the Bill.
4. *The Catholic Times*, 14th April 2002.
5. Clause 1(1) of the Bill.
6. Singer, P. (1993). *Practical Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
7. Clause 1(1) of the Bill.
8. Note dated 24th October 2001 to the Irish Medicines Board from the Medical Director prior to Board meeting of 31st October 2001.
9. *Summa Theologiae* I-II, q. 93, a. 3, ad 2um.
10. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Procured Abortion* (18 November 1974), No. 22: AAS 66 (1974), 744.



ROME LIFE FORUM 2018

Highlights

“Catholics must consciously place themselves under the ‘Kingship of Christ’ in the face of enemies of the Church today attempting to ‘infiltrate the life of the Church herself’ and to corrupt the Bride of Christ by an apostasy from the Apostolic Faith.”

“...in Christ is realized the right order of all things, the union of heaven and earth, as God the Father intended from the beginning.”

“The Kingship of Christ is, by nature, universal, that is, it extends to all men, to the whole world. It is not a kingship over only the faithful or over only the things of the Church, but over all men and all of their affairs.”

“‘Freedom of religion’ does not mean the freedom to practice a religion which is false or a religion which contradicts the law of God. A religion which would permit the killing of infants or which would allow any other kind of intrinsic evil is why the reality of the Kingship of Christ is so important.”

“The Kingship of Christ in the home frees the members of the family and the family as a society to enjoy those rights and fulfil those duties, in accord with the will of God. The universality of the Kingship of Christ is reflected by the practice of enthroning the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the home, and in the other places of our human endeavour.”

—Raymond Cardinal Burke,
To Restore All Things in Christ:
The Reign of Christ the King
through His Glorious Pierced Heart

“Sexual morality and life issues have been privatised as though we were dealing with trivial matters. People invoke conscience instead of admitting the grave obligation both to form the conscience, and to admonish those who do harm through errors that are present in their conscience.”

“Conscience always obligates in the name of truth. When it expresses a true judgement it obligates in itself. When it expresses an erroneous judgement it obligates per accidens, that is, it obligates only inasmuch as the subject erroneously believes that it is the truth.

“In this sense, the value of actions carried out with a true (well formed) conscience, and the value of actions carried out with an erroneous conscience is not the same,

because the actions carried out with a true conscience are good actions. The actions carried out with an erroneous conscience are evil actions but not imputable as evil to the subject. And that is why the first duty of the moral agent is to form his conscience in truth. And so it can happen that an erroneous conscience is guilty in the cause of its error, because it didn't commit itself to really forming itself in the truth. And so a conscience that neglects its own formation, that is, a conscience that is not continually seeking the truth, or which is not

docile to the instruments that divine providence has offered to man to form his conscience in truth, is a conscience that bears the guilt of its error.”

“...the question of access to **Communion for the divorced and remarried cannot be reduced** to an issue of conscience because it is a problem of the truth about the sacraments: about the Sacrament of the Eucharist, about the Sacrament of Penance, and about the Sacrament of Marriage. First of all, there is a

problem of conformity with the form of Christian life that the Eucharist demands and it cannot be reduced to a problem of subjective mitigating circumstances, of the possible guilt one would incur through a second co-habitation after a valid marriage. Even though I find it very difficult to imagine a case of people who can live in a second non-marital union without knowing that they are involved in an adulterous union.”

—Msgr. Livio Melina,
Conscience with reference to the legacy of late Cardinal Caffarra



Olivier Figueras



Olivier Figueras



don Elvir Tabaković, Can. Reg.



Gustavo Brinholi



Gustavo Brinholi



don Elvir Tabaković, Can. Reg.

THE TEACHING OF BL. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN ON CONSCIENCE AND OBEDIENCE

BY MATTHEW MCCUSKER

“I shall drink—to the Pope, if you please, —still, to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards.”¹

These are among the best known, and most discussed words of Blessed John Henry Newman. Some have found in them an argument for setting up individual conscience against the teaching authority of the Church, others, accepting their orthodoxy, have nonetheless felt uncomfortable with words that seem so dissonant with much of the “tone” of nineteenth and twentieth century Catholicism. Yet they get to the heart of one of the crucial issues that Catholics have been forced to confront since the Second Vatican Council, and with new urgency during the current pontificate – the question of how a Catholic is to respond to a conflict between their conscience and the commands of a pope.

In this presentation I intend to discuss the teaching of Blessed John

Henry Newman on the nature of conscience, with particular reference to the relationship between conscience and obedience towards ecclesiastical authority.

But first I would like to suggest a few reasons why it is particularly valuable to explore this subject through the writings of Newman.

First, Newman was already grappling, in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the dangers posed by exaggerated understandings of papal authority. For much of the nineteenth century the spiritual authority and temporal power of the papacy had been under sustained attack and orthodox churchmen, theologians and writers were understandably concerned with defending and vindicating its claims. Newman, while fully sharing this desire, was nonetheless also concerned about what the consequences might be if a false understanding of the papacy, which exaggerated its role and powers, were to take root in the Church.

Secondly, Newman had a remarkable capacity for exploring the same truth from multiple angles, considering its different dimensions and seeing aspects of a problem that others had missed. He never took a narrow or one-sided view of any question, and was not willing to abandon his own insights and convictions in order to bring his positions into conformity with those of any group or faction.

This means that he often has new or challenging things to say.

Thirdly, Newman’s views, both during his lifetime and ever since, have often been misrepresented and distorted in order to promote positions diametrically opposed to those which he actually held. For example, his careful analysis of the relationship between individual conscience and the obedience due to the papacy has often been presented as if it justified dissent from the authoritative teachings of the Church, just as his theory of the development of doctrine has been presented as a means of excusing radical departures from the Church’s received tradition.

For this reason, I will give as much space as possible to Newman’s own words during this presentation, so that his authentic teaching can be heard.

The role of conscience in the moral and spiritual life of man is one of the central themes of Newman’s writings and preaching, and his teaching could be explored from a variety of valuable perspectives. In this presentation I want to restrict our attention specifically to the relationship between conscience and obedience, and that means focusing largely, though not exclusively, on Newman’s 1875 work *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone’s Recent Expostulation*. We must begin by putting this work in context.

On 18 July 1870 the First Vatican Council defined that “when, in



MATTHEW MCCUSKER



BL. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

the exercise of his office as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he [the Pope] defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church, he possesses, by the divine assistance promised to him in blessed Peter, that infallibility which the divine Redeemer willed his Church to enjoy in defining doctrine concerning faith or morals. Therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are of themselves, and not by the consent of the Church, irreformable.”²

The same decree also defined that the pope possessed “full”, “immediate” and “ordinary” jurisdiction over the universal Church.

These definitions were accompanied by storms of controversy. The definition of papal infallibility was opposed by a significant minority of bishops who considered it “inopportune” and it also provoked hostile responses from many quarters outside the Church, perhaps most seriously in the newly united Germany. In Britain there was also widespread hostility this found expression in a pamphlet published in 1874 by Britain’s leading Liberal statesman, William Gladstone, who had been Prime Minister from 1868 until early in 1874, and

who would go on to serve another three terms. In this pamphlet, entitled *Vatican Decrees in Their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: A Political Expostulation*, Gladstone argued that the definitions of the Council cast doubt on the capacity of Catholics to demonstrate full loyalty to both Church and state and left them little, if any, room for independent thought or action. “Rome” Gladstone asserted “requires a convert who now joins her, to forfeit his moral and mental freedom, and to place his loyalty and civil duty at the mercy of another.”³

It fell to Newman to defend English Catholics from these charges in his *Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone’s Recent Expostulation*. The significance of the title is that the Duke of Norfolk, as hereditary Earl Marshal and head of the premier family of the peerage of England, was a living example of the capacity of English Catholics to be loyal to both Church and State. In this work Newman sought to place the definitions of 1870 in their proper context, to accurately explain their meaning, and to vindicate both the teaching of the Church and the loyalty of English Catholics.

Yet he also had another end in view. During the decade prior to the First Vatican Council, he had become increasingly concerned by the promotion of erroneous, exaggerated, views of papal infallibility. He himself had held the doctrine, as a probable theological opinion, for as long as he had been Catholic, but he rejected the views that were being aggressively promoted by such figures as, in England, William Ward, editor of the *Dublin Review*, and others in the circle of Henry Edward Manning, Archbishop of Westminster from 1865. Ward, for example, extended the

pope’s infallibility far beyond that which the Council eventually defined, to include encyclicals and other official communications of the pope, in and of themselves. He also was quick to accuse those who rejected his views of heresy and disloyalty to the papacy.

In Newman’s view, the definition of the doctrine in such terms as would admit the interpretation of writers like Ward, would have catastrophic consequences for the Church’s mission and be a cause of scandal to many inside and outside the Church.

In the event he was greatly relieved by the moderation and precision of the definition adopted by the Council, which in fact excluded many such views. However, despite the clarity of the definitions such exaggerations continued to circulate and influence many Catholics, as they still do today.

In writing his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* then Newman had in his sights not only those like Gladstone who rejected the pope’s infallibility, but also those who extended it beyond its proper bounds. And it is this precise delimitation of papal powers which makes Newman’s *Letter* so important for us today.

At the heart of the *Letter* is Newman’s elucidation of the role that individual conscience must play in questions of obedience and he begins his discussion by giving a clear definition of the term.

God, Newman writes: “implanted [the] Law which is Himself, in the intelligence of all His rational creatures. The Divine Law, then, is the rule of ethical truth, the standard of right and wrong, a sovereign, irreversible, absolute authority in the presence of men and Angels. ‘The eternal law,’ says St. Augustine, ‘is the Divine Reason or Will of God, commanding the observance, forbidding the distur-

bance, of the natural order of things.’ ‘The natural law,’ says St. Thomas, ‘is an impression of the Divine Light in us, a participation of the eternal law in the rational creature.’ This law, as apprehended in the minds of individual men, is called ‘conscience;’ and though it may suffer refraction in passing into the intellectual medium of each, it is not therefore so affected as to lose its character of being the Divine Law, but still has, as such, the prerogative of commanding obedience. ‘The Divine Law, says Cardinal Gousset, ‘is the supreme rule of actions; our thoughts, desires, words, acts, all that man is, is subject to the domain of the law of God; this law is the rule of our conduct by means of our conscience.’”⁴

Conscience is “the voice of God in the nature and heart of man, as distinct from the voice of Revelation.”⁵ It is “a constituent element of the mind, as our perception of other ideas may be, as our powers of reasoning, as our sense of order and the beautiful, and our other intellectual endowments.”⁶ It is “a dictate”, it conveys the notions of “responsibility”, of “duty”, of “threat and promise”, with a “vividness” which discriminates it “from all other constituents of our nature.”⁷

Conscience is a judgement, but “not a judgement upon speculative truth, [or] any abstract doctrine, but [it] bears immediately on conduct, on something to be done or not done. ‘Conscience’ says St Thomas ‘is the practical judgement or dictate of reason, by which we judge what here and now is to be done as being good, or to be avoided as evil.’”⁸

Conscience must be obeyed: “He who acts against his conscience loses his soul.”⁹ Yet though conscience is a “principle planted within us, before

we have had any training... such training and experience is necessary for its strength, growth and due formation”.¹⁰ Our consciences can become darkened and fail to judge according to truth.

“The sense of right and wrong”, Newman explains, “is so delicate, so fitful, so easily puzzled, obscured, perverted, so subtle in its argumentative methods, so impressible by education, so biased by pride and passion, so unsteady in its course, that, in the struggle for existence amid the various exercises and triumphs of the human intellect, this sense is at once the highest of all teachers, yet the least luminous; and the Church, the Pope, the Hierarchy are, in the Divine purpose, the supply of an urgent demand.”¹¹

This urgent demand the Church supplies by infallibly preserving and authoritatively proclaiming the moral law; the same moral law to which conscience itself gives witness.

“Conscience” writes Newman “is a messenger from Him, who, both in nature and in grace, speaks to us behind a veil, and teaches and rules us by His representatives. Conscience is the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas, and, even though the eternal priesthood throughout the Church could cease to be, in it the sacerdotal principle would remain and would have a sway.”¹²

Far from setting up a contradiction between conscience and the Church, as many of his “misinterpreters” would have it, Newman here explains that both our conscience and the Church, which both have their origin in God, give witness to the one divine law, and consequently *both* have a claim on our obedience. Indeed,

the very success of the Church in preaching the gospel, is dependent on God having implanted His Divine Law into the hearts of men, which are thus already ordered to receive her teaching.

Newman explains, with reference to the papacy: “On the law of conscience and its sacredness are founded both his authority in theory and his power in fact... Thus viewing his position, we shall find that it is by the universal sense of right and wrong, the consciousness of transgression, the pangs of guilt, and the dread of retribution, as first principles deeply lodged in the hearts of men, it is thus and only thus, that he has gained his footing in the world and achieved his success. It is his claim to come from the Divine Lawgiver, in order to elicit, protect, and enforce those truths which the Lawgiver has sown in our very nature... The championship of the Moral Law and of conscience is his *raison d’être*. The fact of his mission is the answer to the complaints of those who feel the insufficiency of the natural light; and the insufficiency of that light is the justification of his mission.”¹³

Yet, in Newman’s day, as in our own, this authentic view of conscience, and of ecclesiastical authority, no longer found widespread acceptance.

“All through my day” Newman wrote: “there has been a resolute warfare, I had almost said conspiracy against the rights of conscience, as I have described it. Literature and science have been embodied in great institutions in order to put it down. Noble buildings have been reared as fortresses against that spiritual, invisible influence which is too subtle for science and too profound for

literature. Chairs in universities have been made the seats of an antagonist tradition. Public writers, day after day, have indoctrinated the minds of innumerable readers with theories subversive of its claims.”¹⁴

In the “popular mind”, he continues, “no more than in the intellectual world, does ‘conscience’ retain the old, true, Catholic meaning of the word. There too the idea, the presence of a Moral Governor is far away from the use of it, frequent and emphatic as that use of it is. When men advocate the rights of conscience, they in no sense mean the rights of the Creator, nor the duty to Him, in thought and deed, of the creature; but the right of thinking, speaking, writing, and acting, according to their judgment or their humour, without any thought of God at all. They do not even pretend to go by any moral rule, but they demand, what they think is a [man’s] prerogative, for each to be his own master in all things, and to profess what he pleases, asking no one’s leave, and accounting priest or preacher, speaker or writer, unutterably impertinent, who dares to say a word against his going to perdition, if he like it, in his own way.”

He continues: “Conscience has rights because it has duties; but in this age, with a large portion of the public, it is the very right and freedom of conscience to dispense with conscience, to ignore a Lawgiver and Judge, to be independent of unseen obligations... Conscience is a stern monitor, but in this century it has been superseded by a counterfeit, which the eighteen centuries prior to it never heard of, and could not have mistaken for it, if they had. It is the right of self-will.”¹⁵

“

Conscience has rights because it has duties; but in this age, with a large portion of the public, it is the very right and freedom of conscience to dispense with conscience, to ignore a Lawgiver and Judge, to be independent of unseen obligations... Conscience is a stern monitor, but in this century it has been superseded by a counterfeit, which the eighteen centuries prior to it never heard of, and could not have mistaken for it, if they had. It is the right of self-will.

And Newman clearly foresaw what the end results of this “counterfeit” conscience would be. He writes: “The present Pope in his Encyclical of 1864, *Quantá curá*, speaks against ‘liberty of conscience,’ and he refers to his predecessor, Gregory XVI., who, in his *Mirari vos*, calls it a ‘*deliramentum*.’”¹⁶

“Liberty of conscience”, in the sense proclaimed by modern man, and condemned by *Quantá curá*, is, says Newman, not true freedom of conscience at all but rather the “the liberty of self-will”, “a universal liberty to say out whatever doctrines [man] may hold by preaching, or by the press, uncurbed by church or civil power.” And what are the ultimate consequences of such a doctrine? “What if” Newman asks “a man’s conscience embraces the duty of regicide? Or infanticide? Or free love?”¹⁷

“It seems” he concludes “a light epithet for the Pope to use, when he

calls such a doctrine of conscience *deliramentum*: of all conceivable absurdities it is the wildest and most stupid.”

Yet absurd, wild and stupid as it may be, this is now the dominant view of conscience in the west.

If conscience, is bound to the truth, so too is the papacy. Newman writes: “did the Pope speak against Conscience in the true sense of the word, he would commit a suicidal act. He would be cutting the ground from under his feet. His very mission is to proclaim the moral law, and to protect and strengthen that ‘Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.’”¹⁸

But what if a pope does not proclaim the moral law or the true understanding of conscience? Are Catholics, as Gladstone would have it, “mental and moral” slaves, bound to follow the pope in all things?

In the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* Newman sets out the precise limita-

tions of papal power in detail that we cannot go into here, but I would like to draw attention to some of the most important points.

First, we must acknowledge that despite the precision of the definition of the First Vatican Council there is now, as in the later nineteenth century, a surprising amount of confusion as to how far the infallibility of the pope extends. We will all have come across Catholics who strongly resist in practice any suggestion that the teaching of a particular pope may contain error, even when there is a theoretical acceptance that infallibility has limits. So it is important to be clear on this question. Newman explains:

“[The Pope] speaks... infallibly, when he speaks, first, as the Universal Teacher; secondly, in the name and with the authority of the Apostles; thirdly, on a point of faith or morals; fourthly, with the purpose of binding every member of the Church to accept and believe his decision.”¹⁹

The pope is “not infallible” says Newman, quoting the Secretary General of the Council, Bishop Fessler, “as a man, or a theologian, or a priest, or a bishop, or a temporal prince, or a judge, or a legislator, or in his political views, or even in his government of the Church’... because on these various occasions of speaking his mind, he is not in the chair of the universal doctor.”²⁰

The infallibility of the pope is restricted to matters of faith and morals. Newman writes:

“Infallibility cannot act outside of a definite circle of thought, and it must in all its [definitions]... profess to be keeping within it. The great truths of the moral law, of natural religion, and of Apostolical faith, are both its boundary and its foundation.

It must not go beyond them, and it must ever appeal to them. Both its subject-matter, and its articles in that subject-matter, are fixed. And it must ever profess to be guided by Scripture and by tradition... Nothing, then, can be presented to me, in time to come, as part of the faith, but what I ought already to have received, and hitherto have been kept from receiving, (if so,) merely because it has not been brought home to me. Nothing can be imposed upon me different in kind from what I hold already—much less contrary to it.”²¹

And of definitions in the area of morals Newman makes clear: “a precept of morals, if it is to be accepted as from an infallible voice, must be drawn from the Moral law, that primary revelation to us from God. That is, in the first place, it must relate to things themselves good or evil.”

He continues: “If the pope prescribes lying or revenge,” or, we may add here, any immoral act, “his command would simply go for nothing, as if he had not issued it, because he has no power over the moral law.”²²

As the pope has no authority over the moral law, so he has no authority over the deposit of faith; he may only pass on what he has received from the Apostles. Vatican I defined that: “the Holy Spirit was promised to the successors of Peter not so that they might, by his revelation, make known some new doctrine, but that, by his assistance, they might religiously guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith transmitted by the apostles.”²³

Six years earlier, in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*, Newman had enunciated the same truth:

“It is one of the reproaches urged against the Church of Rome, that it

has originated nothing, and has only served as a sort of *remora* or break in the development of doctrine. And it is an objection which I embrace as a truth; for such I conceive to be the main purpose of its extraordinary gift.”²⁴

The “extraordinary gift” of papal infallibility is a safeguard which enables the papacy to faithfully transmit, whole and entire, the one unchanging deposit of faith. It is not a promise that the pope will be given infallible inspirations in his guidance of the Church, much less the revelation of new truths or changes in the doctrine of the faith.

Newman writes: “In order to secure this fidelity [to the deposit of faith], no inward gift of infallibility is needed... no direct suggestion of divine truth, but simply an external guardianship, keeping them off from error... a guardianship, saving them, as far as their ultimate decisions are concerned, from the effects of their inherent infirmities, from any chance of extravagance, of confusion of thought, of collision with former decisions or with Scripture, which in seasons of excitement might reasonably be feared.”²⁵

“Never, have Catholics taught that the gift of infallibility is given by God to the Church after the manner of inspiration.”²⁶

At certain times and moments in history the papacy may well have the central role to play in elucidating and expounding the faith, or in providing intellectual leadership, in other times, perhaps most other times, it will not. Newman notes: “It is said, and truly, that the Church of Rome possessed no great mind in the whole period of persecution. Afterwards for a long while, it has not a single doctor

to show; St. Leo, its first, is the teacher of one point of doctrine; St. Gregory, who stands at the very extremity of the first age of the Church, has no place in dogma or philosophy. The great luminary of the western world is, as we know, St. Augustine; he, no infallible teacher, has formed the intellect of Christian Europe; indeed to the African Church generally we must look for the best early exposition of Latin ideas.”²⁷

This is, of course, not to downplay the central role that the papacy plays in Church, but to place it in its proper context. Newman defended as forcefully as anybody the fullness of papal authority over the Church, the special safeguards offered to its teaching, the privileges it enjoyed, but, he understood that this could not be at the expense of other elements of the Church carrying out their own proper functions – the bishop in his diocese, the priest in his parish, the father in his family – all have their own legitimate roles to play. The principle of subsidiarity applies also to the Church, not just the state.

An excessive focus on the thoughts and actions of the current pope has, as a particularly dangerous consequence, the neglect of tradition – a neglect of the teaching of sacred scripture, of the fathers and doctors of the church, of previous popes and councils, of the witness of the Church’s liturgical and sacramental rites.

It is interesting to note that William Gladstone was aware of this danger and reproached the Church for it in his pamphlet: “in days within my memory the constant, favourite, and imposing argument of Roman controversialists was the unbroken and absolute identity in belief of the

“

Did the Pope speak against Conscience in the true sense of the word, he would commit a suicidal act. He would be cutting the ground from under his feet. His very mission is to proclaim the moral law, and to protect and strengthen that ‘Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world.’”

”

Roman Church from the days of our Saviour until now. No one, who has at all followed the course of this literature during the last forty years, can fail to be sensible of the change in its present tenour. More and more have the assertions of continuous uniformity of doctrine receded into scarcely penetrable shadow. More and more have another series of assertions, of a living authority, ever ready to open, adopt, and shape Christian doctrine according to the times, taken their place.”²⁸

Here at least Gladstone recognised, and more than a century ago, a real threat to the integrity of Christian doctrine – the elevation of the “living authority” of the present pope above the Tradition which it is his duty to transmit.

Newman, however, forcefully asserted the very real limitations placed on the pope’s teaching authority: “It in no way depends upon the caprice of the Pope, or upon his good pleasure, to make such and such a doctrine, the object of a dogmatic definition. He is tied up and limited to the divine revelation, and to the truths which that revelation contains. He is tied up and limited by the Creeds, already in existence, and by the pre-

ceding definitions of the Church. He is tied up and limited by the divine law, and by the constitution of the Church.”²⁹

If a pope steps beyond these limitations, and teaches error, he will come into conflict with those who remain true to the “faith once delivered to the saints.” Lacking infallibility outside of certain narrowly defined conditions, he can fall into error in his doctrine and in his judgements. And, never possessing impeccability, he can both commit and command sin.

Conscience, as we observed earlier, is a judgement not “on abstract doctrine”, but rather “bears immediately on conduct, on something to be done or not done.” “Hence”, Newman explains, “conscience being a practical dictate, a collision is possible between it and the Pope’s authority only when the Pope legislates, or gives particular orders, and the like. But, he continues “a pope is not infallible in his laws, nor in his commands, nor in his acts of state, nor in his administration, nor in his public policy”.³⁰

It is therefore possible for individual conscience to find itself in conflict with the pope.

“But, of course”, writes Newman: “when I speak of Conscience, I mean

conscience truly so called. When it has the right of opposing the supreme, though not infallible Authority of the Pope, it must be something more than that miserable counterfeit which, as I have said above, now goes by the name. If in a particular case it is to be taken as a sacred and sovereign monitor, its dictate, in order to prevail against the voice of the Pope, must follow upon serious thought, prayer, and all available means of arriving at a right judgment on the matter in question. And further, obedience to the Pope is what is called ‘in possession,’ that is, the *onus probandi* of establishing a case against him lies, as in all cases of exception, on the side of conscience.”³¹

Newman gives a number of examples where resistance to papal commands might prove permissible but the most important question raised is the duty of conscience when faced with a pope whose commands are directly opposed to the doctrine of the faith. In answer to this question Newman cites a number of authorities, from which I will quote the following:

“Cardinal Turrecremata says... ‘it clearly follows from the circumstance that the Pope can err at times, and command things which must not be done... To know in what cases he is to be obeyed and in what not ... it is said in the Acts of the Apostles, “One ought to obey God rather than man”’: therefore, were the Pope to command anything against Holy Scripture, or the articles of faith, or the truth of the Sacraments, or the commands of the

natural or divine law, he ought not to be obeyed, but in such commands is to be passed over.’

“[St Robert] Bellarmine, speaking of resisting the Pope, says, ‘In order to resist and defend oneself no authority is required ... Therefore, as it is lawful to resist the Pope, if he assaulted a man’s person, so it is lawful to resist him, if he assaulted souls, or troubled the state, and much more if he strove to destroy the Church. It is lawful, I say, to resist him, by not doing what he commands, and hindering the execution of his will.’

“Archbishop Kenrick says: ‘His power was given for edification, not for destruction. If he uses it from the love of domination scarcely will he meet with obedient populations.’”³²

We may summarise the above with Newman’s words: “there are extreme cases in which conscience may come into collision with the word of a Pope, and is to be followed in spite of that word.”³³

To conclude: we could say that in the *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk* Newman is warning us against two forms of idolatry. First, that which raises man’s self-will, masquerading as conscience, above that divine law to which all judgements of conscience must conform. And secondly an idolatry of the papacy, which treats the pope as the master, not the servant of divine truth. The First Vatican Council reminds us that the pope is the *visible* head of the *Church militant*. The Head of the Church is Our Lord Jesus Christ, to whose divine law and

revelation both the teaching and acts of the pope must conform.

“I shall drink—to the Pope, if you please, —still, to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards.”

Matthew McCusker is the Deputy International Director for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children and a writer and researcher for Voice of the Family. He studied history at the University of York, specialising in ecclesiastical history. He has been part of the core team involved in the Voice of the Family project. He was present in Rome during the two synods on the family and is responsible for drafting many of Voice of the Family’s publications, both online and in print.

ENDNOTES:

1. John Henry Newman, “A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone’s Recent Expostulation”, published in *Newman and Gladstone: The Vatican Decrees*, (Notre Dame, 1962), p138.
2. First Vatican Council, *Pastor Aeternus*.
3. William Gladstone, “The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: A Political Expostulation”, published in *Newman and Gladstone: The Vatican Decrees*, (Notre Dame, 1962), p6.
4. Newman, “Letter”, p127.
5. Newman, “Letter”, p128.
6. Newman, “Letter”, p128.
7. Newman, “Letter”, p128.
8. Newman, “Letter”, p134.
9. Newman, “Letter”, p136-38.
10. Newman, “Letter”, p128.
11. Newman, “Letter”, p132.
12. Newman, “Letter”, p129.
13. Newman, “Letter”, p132.
14. Newman, “Letter”, p129.
15. Newman, “Letter”, p130.
16. Newman, “Letter”, p130.
17. Newman, “Letter”, p130.
18. Newman, “Letter”, p132.
19. Newman, “Letter”, p137.
20. Quoting a pastoral letter of the Swiss bishops, “Letter”, p187.
21. John Henry Newman, *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1845), (ed. I Ker, 1994), p226.
22. Newman, “Letter”, p191.
23. *Pastor Aeternus*.
24. Newman, *Apologia*, p235.
25. Newman, “Letter”, p189.
26. Quote from Perrone, “Letter”, p189.
27. Newman, *Apologia*, p236.
28. Gladstone, *Expostulation*, p13.
29. Newman, “Letter”, p197.
30. Newman, “Letter”, p134.
31. Newman, “Letter”, p135-136.
32. Newman, “Letter”, p138.
33. Newman, “Letter”, p127.

Interview with Dr Stéphane Mercier

STANDING FOR THE TRUTH (IN A WORLD THAT DOES NOT)

Stéphane Mercier earned his PhD in philosophy from the Catholic University of Louvain (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium) in 2010. He worked in the same university for thirteen years as an assistant, a research fellow, and eventually a lecturer before he was suspended for voicing his pro-life views in 2017. He specialised in ancient Roman philosophy (Cicero, Seneca), and currently focuses on comparative studies (Stoicism and Confucianism) and applied ethics. He has authored nearly thirty books and research papers in ancient, medieval and modern philosophy, the history of ideas, Latin literature, and comparative philosophy.



Gustavo Brinholi

Calx Mariae: You have become known for your brave stand on abortion. Can you share your story?

Stéphane Mercier: I used to be an invited lecturer at the Catholic University of Louvain. I gave lectures in philosophy to students from various backgrounds, including applied sciences and economy. In one lecture I chose to illustrate the application of philosophy applied to present-day concerns by giving a lecture on abortion. As I told them, the message is all too usually conveyed nowadays that abortion is “acceptable.” But this is all about slogans really, and, as young and responsible citizens, they should learn to avoid thinking in catchphrases. A good judge, says Cicero in his treatise *On Obligations* (bk. II, chap. 8 & 51), is one who hears both parties first, and

then takes a decision knowingly. I told my students I wanted them to hear what the other side had to say. I laid my cards on the table, and made no mystery that I think it is obvious that abortion is utterly wrong in all cases. But I insisted nonetheless: my expectation as a lecturer in philosophy was not that they would parrot my words and feel compelled to agree with me simply because I was the one in charge of the lecture; as I said, my goal is that everyone would think by himself and reflect on the basis of sound reason and the voice of conscience, because I believe in the power of truth. Thus they were free to disagree with me, but it was compulsory that they pondered the whole issue for real, without just discarding it as if it were a trifle.

CM: What was the response to your lecture?

SM: My students were somewhat taken aback, as it was an unexpected topic, but the vast majority understood the challenge pretty well. I continued my lectures on various topics over the next few weeks without any problem. Over a month later, some small LGBTQI pressure group alerted the media and sounded the alarm, so to say. The media went crazy, as expected. More unexpected was the equally insane reaction from the authorities of the Catholic University itself, which immediately summoned me, while a spokesperson went to the media. She addressed the journalists to assure them that my arguments against abortion “in no way reflected the official stand of the University.”

CM: What was your reaction to this?

SM: That this is both surreal and malevolent. Remember, it's a Catholic university, and then you have that lady speaking on behalf of the University and standing for the so-called right to abortion, that she says is "enshrined in the Belgian constitution." Which is a lie, by the way: we tolerate an awful lot in Belgium as far as abortion is concerned, but there's (still) no formal right to it for all that. The University chose to endorse her views rather than mine, and to suspend me without any further delay from all teaching activity.

CM: What could have been the motive for treating you in this manner?

SM: The gender agenda being pushed forward by the lady I just mentioned, and now heavily promoted within the Academy, might be the main yet untold reason behind my removal from position. Indeed, the whole thing might have more to do with gender mainstreaming than what meets the eye. There's the gender-equality policy, there's a brand new "gender studies" Department in the Faculty of Philosophy, and teachings about gender have reached the (Modernist) Faculty of Theology. My suspension from lecturing came a few weeks after I spoke against abortion, but just a few days after I exposed the malevolent gender mainstreaming currently taking over the Academy: I spoke against the Judith Butler delusion, and openly exposed the gender agenda as promoting a pseudo-science no more legitimate than astrology, a pseudo-science that represents, in the most lucid words of His Excellency Bishop Schneider, "a depravity, a final form of Marxism" (interview with Adelante la Fe, Jan 2017). And as we all know, Marxism is the very epitome of the Revolution. I was silenced, officially, because of what

I said against abortion. They didn't say anything about gender studies, for there are still some people out there, even atheists, with enough common sense to acknowledge the ideological lunacy of it all. On the contrary, they knew pretty well I'd find almost no allies on the subject of abortion.

CM: How did they go about removing you from your position? Was this legal?

SM: First they wanted to have me sacked and dismissed altogether, but this was illegal. They nonetheless suspended me while they devised something else. Appeal was made to an external commission, which ruled that I had been "exploiting" my teaching position on behalf of "radical activism" at the expense of a "mostly deprived audience." If the whole thing didn't revolve around grave matters, it would be laughable. "Exploiting" my teaching position: well, in a philosophy class I presented philosophical arguments showing that taking the life of an innocent unborn child amounts to murder. "Radical activism:" I explicitly told my students that as a lecturer in philosophy, I didn't expect them to agree with me, but to reflect on what I'd said, ponder arguments and think by themselves so that they reach their own conclusion based not on mainstream catchphrases, but on sound thinking. As for the "mostly deprived audience," I'm sure the students are flattered at the commission's patronizing tone and its objection to my treating these young citizens as intelligent adults.

The authorities refrained from illegally sacking me out of fear that I'd bring the case to the court. They nonetheless maintained the ban on all my teaching activities until my contract was due for renewal a few months later—my status was such that my con-



DR MERCIER

tract was renewed on a yearly basis, and it wasn't illegal to choose not to employ me anymore at the end of the year, even though I had been working there for thirteen years in various positions. My contract was of course not renewed, and is not likely to be renewed in any foreseeable future.

CM: Was there any reaction from the Belgian bishops?

SM: I'm afraid the bishops' reaction was appalling: one of them said I got what I deserved since he openly stated that I had infuriated the students, apparently unaware of the fact that I kept teaching for several weeks without an incident until the media coverage and the authorities' reaction triggered the whole show. One bishop who said that although abortion was something the Church didn't allow for, one had to show mercy and acknowledge the suffering of people rather than condemn and be judgmental. But I didn't condemn anyone, since as a philosopher I limited myself to defining what abortion is all about, period. I'm no judge in his court; I'm simply providing a definition of abortion, which is the deliberate murder of an innocent unborn child. I then met with the Archbishop in person, who said my predicament was quite unfortunate, but he insisted more on living together and being

nice to everyone in pluralistic society. Everyone except the endangered unborn children, it appears. And so he did nothing; and the priest acting as a spokesperson of the bishops openly said to the media that my labelling of abortion as murder was outrageous. Make sense of that if you can, for I cannot.

I'm not saying the bishops or those in charge and the colleagues are bad people. I don't know, God knows. They may be nice fellows, and kind, and well-meaning. But let's face it: they're dramatically in want of guts, they're spineless; and the agents of the Revolution, who do the Devil's work know that, and they take advantage of it.

CM: How should we respond to these attacks?

SM: It's absolutely critical to be firm and explicit, to revive the smouldering fire, and to try and awaken what's left in people today so that we all man up before it's too late. The people who promote everything that is evil and contrary to the will of God are very strong-willed, they're efficient and they do not bother to abide by the rules of fair-play. That's why it's not enough that we have nice people on the right side; nice people, who don't feel like biting back and would rather lower their voice, embolden enemies of Our Lord and His Church. And we've been warned about the fate of those lukewarm individuals, who are "neither cold, nor hot." (Apocalypse 3:16)

What are we afraid of? Flesh and blood, really? How can that be? Even the heathens knew that one should

stand for what's good even though it comes at a cost. As Christians, we know that such cost is ultimately minimal indeed, and contrasts with the *merces copiosa*, the "great reward" awaiting us in Heaven if we remain faithful. The sermon upon the mount in Matthew 5 says it all, and he who tries to please the world is working for the Prince of this world. We need to stand strong and firm; and for this purpose we feeble men and commoners from the pew, like me, need leaders, we need shepherds: adamant shepherds, firm and vocal in orthodoxy, aiming at re-establishing the social Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the solace of the traditional Mass, and the devotion to Our Lady Immaculate, who alone crushes the serpent's head.

P Philos
B Educational
Publications

50 years on, why is abortion still such an issue?

What is at the heart of the debate?

And why is staying neutral not an option?

Abortion Matters. Get the facts.

Abortion is back in the news. Five decades after the Abortion Act was passed in 1967, there are now moves to decriminalise abortion entirely, ban vigils outside abortion clinics and eviscerate rights of conscientious objection. Attempts to 'normalise' abortion have done little to make the fractious debate over the issue go away. *Abortion Matters* explains just why abortion is the issue it is and why we can't just 'agree to disagree'. It lays out carefully and accessibly what abortion involves, the history of its legalisation and the arguments made both in favour and against. If you think abortion matters, you will need to read this powerful book and become equipped for the debates ahead.

ISBN: 978-0-9563056-1-9 UK £9.99

ABORTION *matters*

EDITED BY ANTHONY MCCARTHY



AVAILABLE FROM: www.spuc.org.uk/shop & Amazon.co.uk · FOR MORE DETAILS, PLEASE CONTACT: INFORMATION@SPUC.ORG.UK

THE CHURCH MILITANT: a forgotten truth

BY H.E. BISHOP ATHANASIUŠ SCHNEIDER

When there is no battle, there is no Christendom. When there is no battle, there is no true Church of God, no true Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council teaches us: “The whole of man’s history has been the story of combat with the powers of evil, stretching, so our Lord tells us, from the very dawn of history until the last day. Finding himself in the midst of the battlefield man has to struggle to do what is right, and it is at great cost to himself, and aided by God’s grace, that he succeeds in achieving his own inner integrity” (*Gaudium et spes*, 37). This dramatic situation of “the whole world [which] is in the power of the evil one” (1 Jn 5:19; cf. 1 Pet 5:8) makes man’s life a battle (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 409).

The Word of God teaches us: “Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on eternal life whereunto thou art called” (1 Tim. 6:12). The Christian life is indeed a warfare. Saint Paul wrote that “we wrestle” against the powers of darkness. “Our battle is not with flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

St Thomas Aquinas explains the meaning of the biblical term “world” and “present evil age”: “Our Lord consoles the disciples by using himself as an example of one who has suffered the persecution of oppressors,

saying: “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you” (John 15: 18). And so our Lord foretells that they will be hated: “You will be hated by all nations” (Mt 24:9); “Blessed are you when men hate you” (Lk 6:22). This thought is a great consolation for the just so that they can courageously endure persecutions. According to Augustine, the members should not consider themselves greater than the Head, nor refuse to be part of his body by being unwilling to endure with their Head the hatred of the world. (*Tract. in Io.*, 87, 2). The world can have two meanings. First a good meaning, for those who lead a good life in the world: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor 5:19). Secondly, it can have an evil sense, meaning those who love the world: “The whole world is in the power of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). And so the whole world hates the whole world, because those who love the world, and they are spread throughout the whole world, hate the whole world, that is, the Church of the good, which has been established throughout the whole world. Now he mentions a second point for their consolation, and this is based on the reason for their being hated. First, Our Lord gives the reason why some are loved by the world; secondly, why the apostles are hated by the world. The reason why some are loved by the world is that they are like the world: “If you were of the world,



BISHOP SCHNEIDER

the world would love its own” (John 15:19). And thus the world, that is, those who love the world, love those who love the world. Accordingly, Our Lord says, “If you were of the world”, that is, followers of the world, “the world would love its own”, because you would be its own and like to it: “The world cannot hate you, but it hates me” (John 7:7). “They are of the world, therefore what they say is of the world, and the world listens to them” (I John 4:5). Now he gives the reason why the world hates the apostles, which is because they are unlike the world. He says, “but because you are not of the world, the world hates you” (John 15: 19). (*Expositio in evangelium beati Ioannis*, II pars, cap. 15, lectio 4).

The Baltimore Catechism teaches us: “We are called soldiers of Jesus Christ to indicate how we must resist the attacks of our spiritual enemies

and secure our victory over them by following and obeying Our Lord. We have good reason never to be ashamed of the Catholic Faith because it is the Old Faith established by Christ and taught by His Apostles; it is the Faith for which countless Holy Martyrs suffered and died; it is the Faith that has brought true civilization, with all its benefits, into the world, and it is the only Faith that can truly reform and preserve public and private morals. We should know the Chief Mysteries of Faith and the duties of a Christian..., because as one cannot be a good soldier without knowing the rules of the army to which he belongs and understanding the commands of his leader, so one cannot be a good Christian without knowing the laws of the Church and understanding the commands of Christ. By the expression “these evil days” we mean the present age or century in which we are living, surrounded on all sides by unbelief, false doctrines, bad books, bad example and temptation in every form.” (3 part, lesson 15).

In the time of the Fathers of the Church the Christians were aware of the need to be spiritual soldiers of Christ and to fight for the truth even at the risk of one’s life. Tertullian wrote: “We were called to the warfare of the living God, even then, when we made our answer according to the words of the Sacrament, i.e. the baptismal vow of obedience to Christ” (Mart., 3, 1) and St Cyril of Jerusalem told the catechumens: “You are to be enrolled in the army of the Great King” (Catech. 3, 3).

The Christian duty to fight against the sin, the errors and the temptations of the world, includes also the fight against the errors inside the Church,

i.e. the fight against heresy and ambiguity in doctrine.

St Ignatius of Loyola is one of the most eloquent teachers of the truth about the Church militant. He writes in his book of the Spiritual Exercises: “Consider the war that Jesus Christ came to bring from Heaven to earth.” People are used to the idea that Our Lord Jesus Christ came to bring peace. Yet St. Ignatius with all naturalness begins the meditation by saying “Consider that war that Jesus Christ came to bring from Heaven to earth.”

A true Catholic spiritual knight of the 20th century was Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira, a Brazilian layman who spent all his life in defending Holy Mother Church from the spiritual attacks and infiltration of the unchristian spirit of revolution, modernism and communism said: “Every man is born a soldier, although not every soldier will use his arms. Yes, all men are born soldiers because, as the Scripture states, *Militia est vita hominis super terram* [The life of man upon earth is a warfare] (Job 7:1). Our life is a fight, and this is how we must consider it first and foremost. A man is born a soldier at the first moment he sees the natural light. Then when he is baptized, he receives the light of grace and is born a second time, now to the supernatural life, becoming a soldier in its defence. Further, the Church has a special Sacrament that confirms a man as a soldier in the full sense of the word. It is the sacrament of Confirmation. Not every soldier uses his weapons on the battlefield, but whoever does so is privileged. Since the duty of the soldier is to fight, when he takes up arms to enter battle he becomes privileged. Imagine a painter who does not paint, a musician who

cannot make music, a singer who cannot sing, a professor who is unable to give classes, a diplomat prevented from engaging in politics.” (Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira).

“Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Catholic Church, comes asking us to join His Holy War inside the Church against progressivism, and inside the State, against communism. And He appeals to us to fight and not be soft or indifferent to this struggle, but to wage battle with all our soul.”

“Of course, St. Ignatius does not speak about progressivism. Since his meditation is destined for all times, he refers generically to the world, the devil and the flesh, which are the causes of all errors at all times, in which they simply change name. In his time, the error was Protestantism, supported by people who called themselves Catholics but who were, deep down, Protestants working for Protestantism inside the Catholic Church. In the civil sphere, those persons tended to eliminate all social and political inequalities. In other words, they were forerunners of the French Revolution.” (Plinio Corrêa de Oliveira).

We possess very apt and impressive affirmations of the popes of modern times about the essentially militant character of the Church. Pope Leo XIII taught: “The enemy forces, inspired by the evil spirit, ever wage war on the Christian name. They join forces in this endeavor with certain groups of men whose purpose is to subvert divinely revealed truths and to rend the very fabric of Christian society with disastrous dissent. Indeed, how much damage these cohorts, as it were, have inflicted on the Church is well-known. And yet, the spirit of all previous groups hostile to Catholic in-

stitutions has come to life again in that group called the Masonic sect, which, strong in manpower and resources, is the leader in a war against anything sacred.” (Leo XIII, Encyclical *Inimicus*, 8 December 1892).

“To refrain from doing battle for Jesus Christ amounts to fighting against Him; He Himself assures us ‘He will deny before His Father in heaven those who shall have refused to confess Him on earth’ (Luke 9:26)” (Leo XIII, Encyclical *Sapientiae christianae*, 43).

“The enemies of the Church have for their object – and they hesitate not to proclaim it, and many among them boast of it – to destroy outright, if possible, the Catholic religion, which alone is the true religion. With such a purpose they shrink from nothing, for they are fully conscious that the more faint-hearted those who withstand them become, the more easy will it be to work out their wicked will. Therefore, they who cherish the ‘prudence of the flesh’ and who pretend to be unaware that every Christian ought to be a valiant soldier of Christ, they who would obtain the rewards owing to conquerors, while they are leading the lives of cowards, untouched in the fight, are so far from thwarting the onward march of those evilly-disposed that, on the contrary, they even help it forward.” (ibid., 34).

St Pius X describes the real situation of the world at the beginning of the 20th century as being harshly hostile to Christ and His truth: “Such, in truth, is the audacity and the wrath employed everywhere in persecuting religion, in combating the dogmas of the faith, in brazen effort to uproot and destroy all relations between man and God! While, on the other hand, and this according to the same apostle is the distinguishing mark of

Antichrist, man has with infinite temerity put himself in the place of God, raising himself above all that is called God; in such wise that although he cannot utterly extinguish in himself all knowledge of God, he has condemned God’s majesty and, as it were, made of the universe a temple wherein he himself is to be adored. ‘He sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself as if he were God’ (II. Thess. ii., 2).” (Pius X, Encyclical *E supremo apostolatu*, 4 October 1903, 4-7). “We are of the opinion that the shining example of Christ’s soldiers has far greater value in the winning and sanctifying of souls than the words of profound treatises.” (Pius X, Encyclical *Editae saepe*, 26 May 1910, 4).

Pope Pius XI teaches us: “Unbelievers and enemies of the Catholic faith, blinded by presumption, may indeed constantly renew their violent attacks against the Christian name, but in wresting from the bosom of the militant Church those whom they put to death, they become the instruments of their martyrdom and of their heavenly glory. No less beautiful than true are the words of St. Leo the Great: ‘The religion of Christ, founded on the mystery of the Cross, cannot be destroyed by any sort of cruelty; persecutions do not weaken, they strengthen the Church. The field of the Lord is ever ripening with new harvests, while the grains shaken loose by the tempest take root and are multiplied.’” (Homily at the Canonization of John Fisher and Thomas More, 19 May 1935).

Cardinal Karol Wojtyla (the future Pope John Paul II) in an address during the Eucharistic Congress in 1976 in Philadelphia in the United States of America said: “We are now standing in the face of the greatest

historical confrontation humanity has ever experienced. I do not think that the wide circle of the American Society, or the whole wide circle of the Christian Community realize this fully. We are now facing the final confrontation between the Church and the anti-church, between the gospel and the anti-gospel, between Christ and the antichrist. The confrontation lies within the plans of Divine Providence. It is, therefore, in God’s Plan, and it must be a trial which the Church must take up, and face courageously”. Pope John Paul II indicated the spiritual root of this conflict: “This battle against the devil which characterizes the Archangel Michael is still going on, because the devil is still alive and at work in world. In fact, the evil that is in it, the disorder we see in society, the infidelity of man, the interior fragmentation of which he is a victim, are not merely the consequences of original sin, but also the effect of the dark and infesting activity of Satan, of this saboteur of man’s moral equilibrium.” (Address on May 24, 1987 at Monte Gargano).

Pope Benedict XVI spoke about the necessity of the battle with evil in our days: “Today the phrase *ecclesia militans* is somewhat out of fashion but in fact we can understand ever more so that it is true, that it contains within it the truth. We see how evil wishes to dominate in the world and that it is necessary to fight against evil. We see that it does so in so many ways: cruelty, through the different forms of violence, but even disguised as good and thereby undermining the moral foundations of society. St Augustine said that all history is a struggle between two loves: love of self to the point of despising God; and love of God to the point of despising oneself, in martyrdom. We are caught up in

this struggle.” (Speech to the Cardinals, 21 May 2012).

We possess an impressive text from the 3rd century, which makes an ardent appeal to remain always a good soldier of Christ: “Consider this fairly with me: When has Christ need of your aid? Now, when the wicked one has sworn war against His bride; or in the time to come, when He shall reign victorious, having no need of further help? Is it not evident to anyone who has even the least understanding, that it is now? Therefore, with all goodwill hasten in the time of the present necessity to do battle on the side of this good King, whose character it is to give great rewards after victory.” (*Epistola Clementis ad Iacobum* 4).

Our weapons are the weapons of justice, and these are the weapons in first place of prayer and of a saintly life, the weapons of the spiritual help of the Holy Angels, the weapons of the sacred science, of the sacred apologetics, the weapons of righteous and honest individual and collective protests against the de-christianisation and moral degradation of society.

We do urgently need a new *Enchiridion militiae christianae*, a handbook of the Christian spiritual battle, a book which the humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote at the beginning of the 16th century. We do need a new apology with the title: “The triumph of the Holy See and of the Church against the attacks of the innovators”, a book, which the future Pope Gregory XVI wrote in 1799 during the Masonic attacks of the French Revolution against the Church.

Already in 1946 Pope Pius XII made the following very apt and realistic analysis of the spiritual situation of the world and the Church in our times: “The subject, against which the adversary directs his assaults in



ARCHANGEL MICHAEL, BY GUIDO RENI

our days, openly or insidiously, is not anymore, as it was usually in the past, one or the other particular item of doctrine or discipline, but the whole of the faith and Christians morals up to its ultimate consequences. It’s a matter of a complete yes or of a complete no. In such real circumstances a true Catholic must remain all the more firmly and securely on the ground of his faith and demonstrate this with his deeds” (Discourse to the youth of the Italian Catholic Action, April 20, 1946).

Blessed John Henry Newman made the following encouraging statement about the triumph of the Church in midst of the battle against evil and the world: “It is no new thing then with the Church, in a time of confusion or of anxiety, when offences abound, and the enemy is at

her gates, that her children, far from being dismayed, or rather glorying in the danger, as vigorous men exult in trials of their strength—it is no new thing, I say, that they should go forth to do her work, as though she were in the most palmy days of her prosperity. ... We have upon us the omens of success in the recollections of the past; we read upon our banners the names of many an old field of battle and of glory; we are strong in the strength of our fathers, and we mean to do, in our humble measure, what Saints have done before us. ... It needs no heroism in us to face such a time as this, and to make light of it; for we are Catholics. We have the experience of eighteen hundred years. ... It is not one or two or a dozen defeats, if we had them, which will reverse the majesty of the Catholic Name” (*Discourses*

to *Mixed Congregations*, Discourse 12. Prospects of the Catholic Missioner).

As soldiers of Christ, every Catholic should be always conscious of the fact that he belongs to the army of the winners, because “Christus vincit”, and as St John Chrysostom concisely formulated: “It is easier to delete the sun, than to destroy the Church” (Hom. In Is. 7). May the following exhortation of St John Chrysostom give us courage and new zeal in the holy battle for Our Lord and His Church in these dark and tempestuous times: “No man can part that which God has joined together. If, speaking of man and wife, He says: ‘On this account a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh; for that which God has joined together man shall not separate’ (Mt. 19: 6). If you cannot dissolve marriage, how much less shall you be able to break up the Church of God. You may fight her, you will not be able to harm the object of your attack. But whilst you make me more illustrious, you are undermining your own strength by fighting against me. It is hard for you to kick against a sharp goad. You do not take the edge off it, but you make your own feet bloody; and the waves do not break through the rock, but are dissolved in foam. There is nothing more powerful than the Church, man; give up fighting her, lest she overpower your strength. Wage not war against heaven. If you fight a man, you conquer or are conquered. But if you fight the Church, you cannot conquer. For God is stronger than all.

‘Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?’ (1 Cor. 10:22) Are we stronger than He? Who will venture to subvert the order which God has established? You know not His power. He looks down upon the earth and causes it to tremble. He commands, and that which was shaken becomes firm. If He can establish in peace a city torn by factions, how much more is He able to re-establish the Church! The Church is stronger than heaven. ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away’ (Mt 24:35). What words? ‘Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it’ (Mt. 16: 18). If you distrust words, believe in facts. How many tyrants have wished to get the better of the Church! How many frying-pans, and furnaces, and fangs of wild animals, and sharp swords have there not been! Yet they have not succeeded. Where are the oppressors? Silence and oblivion have passed over them. But where is the Church? It is more dazzling than the sun. Their deeds are no more, hers are immortal. Now, if being few they were not conquered, how will you get the better of them, now that the world is filled with the service of God? ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My word shall not pass’ (Mt. 24:35).” (*Homilia ante exilium*, 1-2)

In the holy Baptism according to the traditional rite of the Roman Church we have been signed with seven crosses in order to be always reminded that the Christian is inseparably united with the Cross of

Our Lord, in order to be spiritually protected and in order to lead a life of holy battle for the Lord with the invincible sign of His cross. We were signed on the forehead to accept the cross of the Lord; we were signed on the ears to listen the Divine precepts; we were signed on the eyes to see the clarity of God; we were signed on the nose to smell the sweetness of Christ; we were signed on the mouth to speak the words of life; we were signed on the chest to believe in God and we were signed on the shoulders to take upon us the yoke of the service of Christ.

The most powerful help in our personal life as soldiers of Christ and in the life of the entire militant Church is the Blessed Virgin Mary and Mother of God and She is the winner in all the battles of the Lord. To Her we turn ourselves praying:

“August Queen of Heaven, sovereign queen of Angels, you who at the beginning received from God the power and the mission to crush the head of Satan, we beseech you humbly, send your holy legions so that, on your orders and by your power, they will track down demons, fight them everywhere, curb their audacity and plunge them into the abyss. Who can be compared to God? Oh good and tender Mother, you will always be our love and our hope. Oh divine Mother, send the Holy Angels and Archangels to defend me and to keep the cruel enemy far from me. Holy Angels and Archangels defend us, protect us. Amen.”

CARDINAL SARAH: Ordaining married men would be a 'break' with Apostolic Tradition

BY DOROTHY CUMMINGS MCLEAN, LIFESITENEWS

Ordaining married men to the Catholic priesthood would be a break with apostolic tradition, a leading Catholic prelate has said.

Robert Cardinal Sarah, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, said that “serious consequences” would arise in the Church if she were to admit married men of sound reputation, or “*virii probati*” into the priesthood.

The Cardinal, who is 72, made these remarks in a homily he gave on Monday at the Mass celebrating the conclusion of the annual Pentecost pilgrimage from the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris to the Cathedral of Notre Dame de Chartres.

Addressing the priests in a massive crowd that spilled out into the cathedral’s forecourt, the Guinean prelate begged them to remember the meaning of their celibacy.

“Dear fellow priests, always keep this certainty: to be with Christ on the Cross is what priestly celibacy proclaims to the world,” he said.

“The plan, again advanced by some, to detach celibacy from the priesthood by conferring the sacrament of the Order on married men (“*virii probati*”) for, they say, ‘pastoral reasons or necessities,’ would have serious consequences, in fact, to definitively break with the Apostolic Tradition,” he added.

Sarah intimated that ordaining married men would not “perpetuate” the priesthood of Christ.

“We would manufacture a priesthood according to our human dimension, but without perpetuating, without extending the priesthood of Christ, obedient, poor and chaste,” he said.

“Indeed, the priest is not only an ‘*alter Christus*’, but he is truly ‘*ipse Christus*’, he is Christ himself,” the Cardinal stated. “And that is why, following Christ and the Church, the priest will always be a sign of contradiction!”

Although the Catholic Church has allowed married Anglican ministers who have become Catholic to be ordained as priests, this has been a pastoral concession not intended to set a precedent for the western Church. Even in the eastern Church, celibacy is considered a superior state for a priest, freeing him to serve his flock with a whole heart: married priests in the eastern Church are not, for example, chosen as bishops.

In the dearth of vocations following the Second Vatican Council, Pope Francis has stated that the church has to consider ordaining married men to the priesthood.

While dismissing the idea of voluntary celibacy in the priesthood, the pontiff was open to the option of a married priesthood in remote areas where the priest shortage is especially serious.

“We have to think about if the *virii probati* are a possibility,” Pope Francis told German newspaper *Die Zeit*. “Then we also have to discern which



CARDINAL SARAH

tasks they can take on, for example, in forlorn communities.”

“There is much talk about voluntary celibacy, especially there where the clergy is lacking,” the pope said. “But a voluntary celibacy is not a solution.”

It is believed that Francis may give the Brazilian bishops in particular permission to ordain married men.

In his Chartres homily, Cardinal Sarah entreated the crowds to distinguish between the world they must love — the world of people, especially the poor, to be served — and the world which they must not love — the world “as it became under the rule of Satan and sin.”

He warned in particular against “the world of ideologies that deny human nature and destroy the family.”

U.S. ARCHBISHOP: Using contraception is always ‘evil’

BY LISA BOURNE, LIFESITENEWS

Using contraception is an “intrinsic evil” in all circumstances because it “cuts off one of the goals of marriage which is an openness to life,” Kansas City Archbishop Joseph Naumann told LifeSiteNews.

Any question on this issue lies on the level of moral culpability for those who do use it, he added.

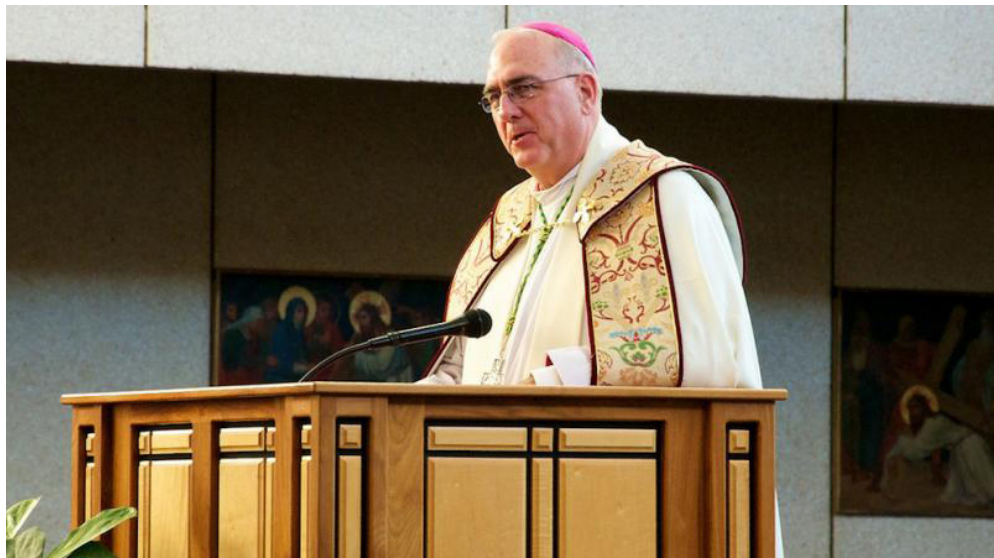
“Circumstances can affect the culpability, [but] it doesn’t affect the rightness or wrongness of the act,” he said.

Speaking exclusively with LifeSiteNews, the incoming chair for the U.S. Bishops’ pro-life committee said further that following the Church’s teaching on contraception is an attainable goal, and that people simply need good confessors to help them understand that fact.

“Good confessors can help and guide people through this, and, I think, help every individual realize that the good of the moral law’ is attainable for all of us.”

LifeSiteNews Editor-in-chief and co-founder John-Henry Westen had asked Archbishop Naumann in the context of this year’s 50th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* whether it was, in fact, the case — as some bishops suggesting at the time of the document’s release — that Catholic couples may still use contraception if they feel in conscience that they were justified, and if not, whether this would make them ineligible then to receive Holy Communion.

Archbishop Naumann confirmed the Church’s teaching on contracep-



ARCHBISHOP NAUMANN

tion as a moral evil, as well as Church teaching that each and every conjugal act must be open to life.

“I think objectively contraception, and we see this in the Catechism, it is clear about that, that there is an intrinsic evil to use it,” the archbishop said, “because it cuts off one of the goals of marriage, which is an openness to life.”

With contraception use typically conducted privately, the issue of a couple’s worthiness to receive Communion would be problematic to handle. But Archbishop Naumann said in cases where a person is publicly advocating for actions contrary to Church teaching, it is incumbent on the priest to address the situation with them.

“I think as a pastor we have an obligation to dialogue with an individual in that situation,” said Archbishop Naumann. “We have an obligation to talk to them, help to make sure that they understand what they’re doing

and why it’s wrong and the reason that it’s wrong.”

Archbishop Naumann reiterated the importance of withholding Communion from pro-abortion politicians in an interview last month.

He recalled having had a long dialogue years ago with then-Kansas Governor Kathleen Sebelius prior to directing her to not receive Communion, saying he had no alternative.

Sebelius had vociferously defended abortion as governor of Kansas, and she was also closely tied to the infamous late-term abortionist George Tiller. She would then go on as U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary to be one of the facilitators of the HHS Contraception Mandate.

Archbishop Naumann was elected Chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities last November. He will be installed this November.

OUR LADY OF REVELATION AT TRE FONTANE

BY FR LINUS CLOVIS

Between May and October 1917, Our Lady appeared six times to three children Lucia, Francisco and Jacinta in Fatima, Portugal. At each visit, She asked the children to pray the Rosary and to make sacrifices for sinners. In the July apparition, she entrusted the children with three secrets and promised to work a miracle in October so that all would believe. She warned that if people did not stop offending God, He would use Russia to punish the world “by means of war, hunger and, persecution of the Church and of the Holy Father”. She told the children that “to prevent this, I shall come to ask for the Consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart” and promised that, by this single public act, Russia would be converted and peace would be given to the world.

True to her word, Our Lady, appearing to Sister Lucy on 13 June, 1929 at Tuy, Spain, announced that “The moment has come in which God asks the Holy Father, in union with all the Bishops of the world, to make the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, promising to save it by this means.” The consecration of Russia was not to prevent the establishment of a Communist government, for that had already occurred in 1917 but, rather, to prevent Russia from spreading her errors – godlessness, in particular – throughout the world.

In October, Our Lady worked the promised miracle, which was witnessed by over seventy thousand people including “some of the most illustrious men of letters, in the arts and the sciences, and almost all were unbelievers coming out of curiosity,

led by the prediction of the seers. Even the Minister of Education of the Masonic government was there.”

The events, meticulously documented from the beginning, include eyewitness testimony from Avelino de Almeida, the Editor in Chief of *O Seculo*, a liberal, anti-clerical, and Masonic daily in Lisbon, who wrote of “a unique spectacle, [an] unbelievable spectacle for anyone who did not witness it. From the road ... one could see the immense multitude turn towards the sun, which appeared free from clouds and in its zenith. It resembles a dull silver disc, and it is possible to look at it without the least discomfort.” Dr. Garrett, a professor of the Faculty of Sciences at the University of Coimbra, however, testified, “I ...saw it [the sun] as a disc with a clean cut rim, luminous and shining, but which did not hurt the eyes. I do not agree with the comparison ... of a dull silver disc. It was a clearer, richer, brighter colour, having something of the lustre of a pearl ... I felt it to be a living body ... It looked like a glazed wheel made of mother of pearl ... It was a remarkable fact that one could fix one’s eyes on this brazier of light and heat without any pain in the eyes or blinding of the retina.”

De Almeida says concerning this “dance”: “The sun trembled, the sun made sudden incredible movements outside all cosmic laws — the sun ‘danced’ according to the typical expression of the people. It shook and trembled; it seemed like a wheel of fire.” Garrett adds, “The sun’s disc did not remain immobile. This was not the sparkling of a heavenly body for



FR. CLOVIS

it spun round upon itself, it made a whirl.” Also, “It spun like a firewheel, taking on all the colours of the rainbow ... It looked like a ball of snow, revolving upon itself.” According to Ti Marto, Jacinta and Francisco’s father, “At a certain moment the sun seemed to stop and then began to move and dance ... However, the sun stops, only to begin its strange dance all over again after a brief interruption, whirling upon itself, giving the impression of approaching or receding.... Then suddenly, one heard a clamour, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight. The sensation during these moments was terrible.”

The importance of the Fatima message is established by this unprecedented solar miracle foretold three months previously and witnessed by over seventy thousand people.

Bruno Cornacchiola was born in 1913, four years prior to Our Lady's apparitions in Fatima. His family was impoverished, his parents lukewarm Catholics, his upbringing brutal, his religious formation poor and he a non-practising Catholic.

In 1936 he married Iolanda Lo Gatto and, a few months later, left to fight in the Spanish Civil War. Falling under the influence of a German Protestant, he conceived such an intense hatred for Catholicism that he vowed to kill the Pope; even buying a dagger especially for this purpose. When, in 1939, he returned to Rome and to his wife, who remained a practicing Catholic, in addition to physically abusing her, he debarred her from bringing the children to church and from keeping religious objects in the house. He subsequently joined the Adventist church and badgered Iolanda to join him. She agreed on condition, that he first make the Nine First Friday's devotion and that, if afterwards, he was still determined to become a Protestant, she would join him. Iolanda trusted that God would somehow convert her husband but, at the end of the nine months, he joined the Adventists and she reluctantly followed suit.

Some thirty years after Our Lady's apparitions to three children at Fatima, on Easter Saturday, 12 April, 1947, the 34 year old Bruno went with his three children – Isola aged 10, Carlo, 7 and Gianfranco, 4, – to a eucalyptus park, at Tre Fontane, near the shrine of St. Paul's martyrdom. There, in a park, known for immorality, where the remains of an aborted child were found, Bruno pored over his Bible while his children played in the shade of the eucalyptus trees. He was preparing a rant against Our La-

dy's Assumption into heaven for delivery the next day. When the children lost their ball, they interrupted him and, putting aside his Bible and his notes, he joined in the search for the ball. It was at the entrance to a dark cave, however, that Bruno found his youngest child, Gianfranco, kneeling, hands folded in prayer, his eyes fixed on a certain point of the cave and, as if addressing a living person, repeating "Beautiful lady! Beautiful lady!" Bruno became dumbfounded when Isola and Carlo fell to their knees, transfixed, also repeating "Beautiful lady!"

Suddenly and momentarily blinded by an intense light, Bruno, regaining his sight, saw a woman of indescribable celestial beauty. Her head was suffused by a halo of brilliant golden light. She was wearing a radiant white dress gathered together by a rose-colored sash with a striking green mantle. At her bare feet lay a smashed crucifix on a black cloth. Her face, though at times clouded by sadness, carried an expression of motherly kindness. In her right hand she held a small grey book, resting on her breast. Her hands were crossed over her chest but she unfolded them, pointed to the broken crucifix, and rejoined them.

The Lady identified herself, firstly as "I am the one that is of the Divine Trinity", that is, the daughter of the Eternal Father, spouse of the Holy Spirit and mother of the Divine Son. And secondly "I am the Virgin of Revelation," which related to Bruno's study of the Apocalypse. Then, addressing Bruno she said, "You persecute me – stop it now! Enter into the true fold, God's Kingdom on earth. The Nine First Fridays of the Sacred Heart have saved you." After revealing to Bruno the sad condition of

his soul, he immediately understood that the only means of salvation was through the Catholic Church. The Virgin then said, "Pray much and recite the Rosary for the conversion of sinners, of unbelievers and of all Christians" before promising that "In this place of sin I shall perform wonderful miracles for the conversion of unbelievers."

The dirt from the park, known for immorality, has proven miraculous, as Our Lady promised. Like the miraculous waters at Lourdes, it continues to work wonders for the welfare of both body and soul. It is indisputable that the many bodily cures and conversions occurring at the park are through the intercession of the Virgin of Revelation.

As news of the apparition spread, however, Bruno's friends and associates thought him crazy, an attention seeker or an exploiter of a spiritual experience. This caused him much suffering. After police questioning and, along with his children, psychiatric examinations, the apparition was quickly approved since Pope Pius XII had foreknowledge of Our Lady's visit.

On 12 April 1937, ten years before the apparition to Bruno Cornacchiola, Luigina Sinapi had arranged a pilgrimage to the Abbey at Tre Fontane for her parish group. Whilst walking through the eucalyptus wood, she found the remains of an aborted child, which she reverently buried. Quite unexpectedly, the Virgin appeared to her and said "I will return to this place because I need the assistance of a man who persecutes the Church and wants to kill the Pope. Go to St Peter's and you will meet a lady dressed in black, who will take you to her brother who is a Cardinal. You will transmit what I have just told you to him

and, in addition, tell him that he will soon become the new Pope". Luigina went to St Peter's Basilica and met the woman, Elisabeth Pacelli, exactly as Our Lady had foretold. Elisabeth introduced Luigina to her brother, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli and delivered the Virgin's message. He listened with a certain detachment and then responded "if there are roses, they will bloom". Within two years, on 2 March 1939, Cardinal Pacelli ascended the papal throne as Pope Pius XII. Bruno would meet Pius XII on December 9, 1949. At that meeting, Bruno presented the dagger on which he had written "Death to the Pope" and, with which he had planned to kill him.

On 12 April, 1980, the 33rd anniversary of Our Lady's visit, 3,000 people, including some 25 priests, gathered at Tre Fontane for Mass and to hear Bruno's recount of the first apparition. Suddenly, strange images appeared in the sky above the Grotto, which interrupted the Mass. According to the Franciscan Friars' report "The sun seemed to move through the sky towards the Grotto and began to approach the earth. It could be seen with absolute ease, as a ball of fire rotating wildly, without hurting the eyes. Seemingly larger than normal, there appeared within its corona brilliant and diverse colours but mainly red, pink and black."

It was also described as incandescent magma, moving rapidly as if boiling, and forming diverse figurations, which eyewitnesses identified as: a cross; an "M"; a heart surrounded with stars, or dripping with blood; Christ's monogram "IHS"; hands joined in prayer; the Virgin of Revelation; etc. Some also saw the solar crown divide into three circles of various colours and reconnect. Others

noted that despite the obstruction of numerous trees, the sun bounced in clear sight with warm vivid light, almost like fire and illuminated the chapel, the trees and the faces and the clothing of the people. The phenomenon lasted about thirty minutes and the Mass resumed with a visibly emotional congregation. Many lapsed Catholics subsequently returned to the Faith and, after extensive research, a medical centre confirmed that some cures were miraculous and beyond any medical or scientific explanation.

On the anniversary date, 12 April, the solar phenomenon reoccurred in 1982, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988 and 1989 with people looking directly at the sun without damaging their eyes. An interesting difference between the solar miracles of 1980 and 1982 is that the testimonies of the former were given by laypeople, whereas the clergy testified to the latter. Incidentally, Our Lady had a fourfold message for priests: they were to have a deeper conviction for the revealed truths of the Faith, greater obedience to the Teaching Authority of the Church, a vigilant prudence in interacting with laypeople, and a pure and dignified lifestyle. The 1986 phenomenon was filmed and broadcast over Italian television. The repeated solar miracles on the anniversary date authenticate Our Lady's message to Bruno as the October 1917 "dance of the sun" was a heavenly confirmation of the Fatima message. In fact, Bruno recorded in his diary on June 1948 that "the Virgin made me understand the message of Fatima continues at Tre Fontane."

The Tre Fontane apparition, as with other Marian apparitions, is highly symbolic and more so due to its repetition in the 1980s. The three colours red, pink and black, are im-

bued with scriptural and liturgical symbolism. Red is a sign of God's love and also symbolises the shedding of blood; hence, liturgically it is used at Pentecost, at votive Masses of the Lord's Passion and of the Holy Spirit and for martyrs. Pink, or rose, is the colour signifying joy and, being used on Gaudete Sunday, reminds us to prepare for the Lord's imminent arrival. Black symbolises mourning, death and judgment and is the colour for All Souls' Day and for Requiems. Scripturally, black is associated with the threatening presence of God, with the divine judgement on sin and evil, and with the Day of the Lord, which the prophet Joel (2:2) described as "a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness".

The appearance of various configurations, such as the IHS, the Cross, the hearts, the M, etc. symbolise the importance of the corresponding devotions, as well as a warning against ignoring, or worse, despising them, especially as Our Lady told Bruno "Do not forget the Rosary, which cooperates much with your salvation. The Hail Marys said with love are golden arrows to reach the Heart of Jesus". Her appearance within the solar crown reveals her as the Virgin of Revelation who gives warning of the spiritual dangers we currently face.

The sun illuminating the people's faces and clothing recalls the same phenomenon at Fatima and, as Our Lady explained to St Catherine Labouré at Rue du Bac, a symbol of the graces and virtues obtained through Her intercession. Conversely, that the people were not reflecting that light with lives of faith and charity is symbolised by their being able to look at the sun with ease. According to Cornelius a Lapide's Scripture

commentary “Sun, moon and stars are dimmed when leaders of the Church or world depart from justice and holiness to embrace depravity and wickedness.” In light of this, the repeated solar phenomenon in a Roman shrine strongly suggests that religious, rather than secular, leaders have departed from justice and holiness. In fact, Our Lady had told Bruno “many of my Son’s priests have lost the dignity of the order, no longer live in honesty, in love, no longer catechise souls ... they have no faith and do not believe.”

In regard to the people, the dimming of the heavenly bodies in the Old Testament signified that the people, having violated their covenant relationship with God, are being judged. Where the dimming occurs indicated the precise covenant obligation that was collectively violated. Prostitutes used the cave at Tre Fontane until the first apparition and this was alluded to by Our Lady when she said she would work miracles with the sinful soil. Tre Fontane symbolises sins against the marriage covenant: prostitution, contraception, adultery, perversions and abortion. Further, since Bruno was composing his rant against the Virgin there, it also symbolises heresy and blasphemy. By the 1980s, when the solar miracle recommenced, these sins were widespread throughout much of the Church and the world. Vincent Ferrer would regard the repetition of the miracle as a warning “Heaven puts a warning in the sky when a great and heavy affliction is about to come upon the world so people may either avert the punishment through their prayers

and penances or may prepare themselves to suffer affliction.”

Throughout Scripture, the cosmic order of nature and the course of the heavenly bodies are seen as essential for the ongoing welfare of the world’s existence. When men violate the spiritual and moral order, which ought to regulate the course of their lives, the cosmic order is disturbed. That is, God shows, through the disruption of the orderly movements of heavenly bodies, that mankind is being judged. He alters the fixed patterns of the celestial bodies to indicate judgment on those who alter moral patterns, especially through idolatry, which is essentially to replace the Creator with a creature. In the modern world, the new idol is self, where each is a law unto himself.

Whilst the celestial sign caused wonder, Tre Fontane’s greater miracle was Bruno Cornacchiola himself. This man, a Communist, a spy, a vociferous enemy of the church, a blaspheming heretic, an adulterer and wife-beater, a potential papal assassin, who deliberately and wholeheartedly subscribed to the errors of Russia and lived a vicious lifestyle was saved through the Nine First Fridays devotion. That Our Lady can convert someone from the depths of sin and depravity to the heights of Catholic fervour and charity, and in an instant, is a sign and a promise of what she could and would do with a whole nation of people dominated by those same errors and vicious lifestyle, if only mankind and the pope would heed her request. It was a sign that, even at the height of the Cold War, Russia could have

become a fervent and flame-bearing Catholic nation ready to spread the Gospel throughout the world, had the Church hierarchy obediently complied with Heaven’s request as did Bruno to his wife’s request.

Whilst Fatima and Tre Fontane are classed as private revelation, the solar miracles are public historical events serving as light for the current perilous times. A Jewish commentary on the story of Noah states “the generation of the Flood was not wiped out until they wrote marriage documents for the union of a man with a man or to an animal.” Our Lord compared the days of the Son of man with Noah’s days and Bruno was told “You have the example of Sodom and Gomorrah. They did not repent, or do penance, or pray and you know what justice was done to them.”

Today, few know the Truth; many have their own truth. With priests and bishops not only opposing God’s moral law and blatantly denying divine justice, but also, ignoring Fatima with its easily verifiable historical events, backed up by great crowds of eyewitnesses, Our Lady found it necessary to come to Rome that we might believe, repent, consecrate ourselves and, living the Gospel message today, fulfil the salvific designs of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

Fr Clovis acquired his PhD in Mathematics, following which he started studies for the priesthood at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome. He was ordained by Pope St. John Paul II in 1983. Fr. Clovis has now dedicated his life to promoting the Gospel of Life and is currently the Director of the Secretariat for Family and Life in St. Lucia as well as the Spiritual Director and Chairman of Family Life International and of the Caribbean Centre for Family and Human Rights (CARIFAM).



Every First Saturday is an opportunity to fulfil Our Lady's requests

Our Lady has asked us to offer the five First Saturdays in reparation for offences against her Immaculate Heart and in order to bring about the deliverance of mankind from the errors of Russia.

The five First Saturdays are observed by:

- ✠ Going to Confession
- ✠ Receiving Holy Communion
- ✠ Praying the Holy Rosary
- ✠ Meditating for fifteen minutes on one or more mysteries of the Rosary

All of the above must be done with the intention of making reparation for offences against the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

On 29 May 1930 Our Lord provided Sr Lucy with the reason why the devotion was to be carried out on five consecutive Saturdays:

“My daughter, the reason is simple. There are five types of offences and blasphemies committed against the Immaculate Heart of Mary:

1. Blasphemies against the Immaculate Conception
2. Blasphemies against her virginity
3. Blasphemies against her divine maternity, in refusing at the same time to recognise her as the Mother of men
4. Blasphemies of those who publicly seek to sow in the hearts of children, indifference or scorn or even hatred of this Immaculate Mother
5. Offences of those who outrage her directly in her holy images.

Here, my daughter, is the reason why the Immaculate Heart of Mary inspired Me to ask for this little act of reparation and by means of it, moves My mercy to forgive those souls who had the misfortune of offending her. As for you, try without ceasing, with all your prayers and sacrifices, to move Me to mercy toward those poor souls.”

ALMOST 500 BRITISH PRIESTS AFFIRM *HUMANAE VITAE*

Voice of the Family warmly welcomes the publication of a letter, signed by almost 500 priests in England, Wales and Scotland, which strongly affirms the teaching enshrined in Humanae Vitae as we approach the 50th anniversary of the publication of the encyclical letter.

Theologians, philosophers, canon lawyers, well-known educators and evangelists are among the priests who have signed this appeal. Their letter urges us to discover anew the message of Humanae Vitae, ‘not only in fidelity to the Gospel, but as a key to the healing and true development of our society’.

The letter can be read in full below:

In 1968 Pope Paul VI issued a re-affirmation of central aspects of the Church’s traditional teaching on human sexuality. The encyclical *Humanae Vitae* affirmed, in harmony with

the Church’s traditional teaching, the purity and beauty of the spousal act, always open to procreation and always unitive.

Humanae Vitae predicted that if artificial contraception became widespread and commonly accepted by society then we would lose our proper understanding of marriage, the family, the dignity of the child and of women and even a proper appreciation of our bodies and the gift of male and female. The Holy Father warned that governments would begin to utilise coercive methods to control what is most private and intimate.

At the time of the publication of *Humanae Vitae* many rejected its message and its warnings. Many found the teaching that the use of contraception was in all cases ‘absolutely excluded’

and ‘intrinsically wrong’ difficult to accept and challenging to proclaim. Fifty years later so much has unfolded in our society that has been to the detriment of human life and love. Many have come to appreciate again the wisdom of the Church’s teaching.

As priests we desire to affirm on this 50th anniversary of *Humanae Vitae* the noble vision of procreative love as the Catholic Church has always taught and understood it. We believe a proper ‘human ecology’, a rediscovery of the way of nature and respect for human dignity is essential for the future of our people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. We propose discovering anew the message of *Humanae Vitae*, not only in fidelity to the Gospel, but as a key to the healing and true development of our society.

CATHOLIC MOTHER OF 8: Large families are called to be a visible ‘sign of contradiction’

Mrs Sarah Ward gave the following testimony at the 21 May Conference “Human Life, the Family, and the Splendour of Truth: Gifts of God” organised by the newly formed John Paul II Academy for Human Life and the Family in Rome.

I’m married to Tom and we have eight children alive, and two in heaven.

I’d like to tell you about the first time I heard of *Humanae Vitae* and how it changed my life. It was six weeks after the birth of my second baby. I had been to the doctors for my postpartum check-up, and the doctor asked me what I was intending to do about

contraception. I didn’t know, so that evening I raised the subject with my husband. It’s a conversation that I can recall vividly.

Speaking very softly, and with great gentleness, my husband dropped a bombshell. He told me about the Church’s position on family planning, and he explained some of the ethical problems with the various forms of contraception.

This was news to me, because I had no idea, and I was extremely shocked.

Just to illustrate how shocked I was, I actually in my naivety wrote a letter to our bishop to ask him how come I had never heard any of this, despite being

educated at Catholic schools and going through the preparation courses for all the sacraments, including Catholic marriage preparation.

The bishop sent me a three-page reply which acknowledged that contraception is a subject that doesn’t get spoken of very often, and that was all the letter said, really, in its three pages.

So my husband went on to tell me about *Humanae Vitae* and shortly afterwards I read it for myself. This was the first papal document I had ever read. It was very short and simple, and what I read in it was very surprising.

For the first time in my life, I saw logic. And it was beautiful. It totally

made sense to me, like something written on my heart.

With hindsight, I can see that this was a moment of sacramental grace in our marriage. My husband spoke with all the right words, and I had the ears to listen to him.

But it was also a turning point in my life – the moment when the scales fell from my eyes. I now had a hunger to learn more about the Catholic faith, and to follow the trail of beautiful divine logic that I had seen in *Humanae Vitae*.

I then discovered that this logic was the backbone of the teachings of the Church.

My husband also gave me a copy of the catechism at that point to have a look at, and again, it was something I had never heard of.

I could not believe there was actually a manual for how to be a Catholic.

From here on, I fully embraced the Catholic faith, and also my vocation to marriage and motherhood. Prior to this, I had been adamant that I did not want to be a stay at home mother. [...]

But *Humanae Vitae* gave me a new understanding of living in accordance with God's will, and a new vocabulary with which to express myself.

I now had a heightened sense of my own God given dignity, as a unique individual, as a woman, and as a mother. And in our marriage I could say we were free and responsible collaborators with God the Creator; that we could be open to new life, and open to God's plan for marriage and for our family.

We were living away from our families at this time, but immediately God placed people in my path that would help me understand more about the Church's teachings on marriage and family. These included a group of Billings teachers, members of the pro-life



THOMAS AND SARAH WARD WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

movement, and a young Catholic family with five children.

This was the first large and average family I had ever encountered, and their joie de vivre was contagious.

I'm certain that it was no coincidence that about this time I discovered the traditional Latin Mass and the rosary, which were essential nourishment for my vocation.

As each beautiful new child arrived, I learned in a very real way that our love was not further divided, but it was multiplied, like God's love for us.

Then in our sixth year of marriage, we learned that being open to new life and open to God's plan also means being open to suffering and to death; being open to all the full drama of human life.

Our fifth baby miscarried at fourteen weeks, and we were both devastated. But we found God in our suffering, and our young children were moved to ask us questions about where the baby had gone, which led to unexpected opportunities to transmit the faith to them and to pray together.

Sadly we went on to lose another baby in 2014, with near fatal consequences for me.

As our family has grown, so too have the sacrifices required of us. Life is very busy, and often physically tiring, and I'm sure the practical realities and difficulties of having a large family

will be known to many of you. And modern life is expensive, especially for a single income family in an economy that is geared toward smaller families with two household incomes.

My dream of having a sporty little car is a distant dream of a different woman. Our ten-seater minibus, on the other hand, is a very physical sign of contradiction in our current culture.

Being a visible sign of contradiction is probably the most obvious way in which we witness to *Humanae Vitae*.

We obviously look different to other people, to other families. This often causes looks, and sometimes, comments. On the whole, these comments are positive and born out of curiosity. I often find that women are very quick to tell me that they would've liked to have had more children but didn't. [...]

In the U.K. we have a very vibrant online Catholic mothers' group that I'm part of. I'm very pleased to say, that through it, I've encountered many young Catholic women who are just starting out on their journey in motherhood and they display a new vigour and a real determination to really practice the faith in accordance with the Church's teachings, and to rebuild a civilization of love. They are a great sign of hope for the future.

Well that is my testimony, and with the help and example of Mary our heavenly mother, I will keep on going.

ST THOMAS MORE

BY MATTHEW MCCUSKER

St Thomas More stands as a powerful witness to the Church's teaching in two areas that are subject to serious challenges today: conscience and marriage.

On 6 July 1535 Thomas More was executed for high treason at the Tower of London, following his refusal to acknowledge that King Henry VIII was supreme head of the Church in England. Henry VIII had had himself declared supreme head in order that his marriage to his wife, Catherine of Aragon, could be declared null. St Thomas refused to accept the validity of this illicit annulment and consequently refused to acknowledge the validity of the subsequent "marriage" between the king and his mistress Anne Boleyn.

St Thomas's defence of the Church's teaching on the indissolubility of marriage was founded on the dictates of his conscience. Conscience is the judgement by the intellect as to whether a given action is, or is not, in accordance with the divine law written on our hearts (cf Rom 2:15). It must be formed and safeguarded through the practice of virtue, education in truth, and adherence to the unchanging teachings of the Catholic Church.

St Thomas More knew well the teachings of the Church on marriage, and the nature of papal authority, and his conscience judged that he could not make a profession that was contrary to either. He knew that every man is responsible for his own actions, and cannot always rely on the judgements of others, even those in the most exalted positions. "I never intend," he once wrote "God being my good Lord, to pin my soul to another man's back, not even the best man that I know



SIR THOMAS MORE'S FAREWELL TO HIS DAUGHTER, BY EDWARD MATTHEW WARD

this day living: for I know not where he may hap to carry it." He preferred death to violating his conscience. A month before his martyrdom he told his daughter:

"My case was such in this matter through the clearness of my own conscience that thought I might have pain I could not have harm, for a man may in such a case lose his head and not have harm."

At his trial Thomas More expressed his determination to remain faithful to his conscience.

"If the number of bishops and universities should be so material as your lordship seems to think, then I see little cause, my lord, why that should make any change in my conscience. For I have no doubt that, though not in this realm, but of all those well learned bishops and virtuous men that are yet alive throughout Christendom, they are not fewer who are of my mind therein. But if I should speak of those who are already dead, of whom many are now holy saints in heaven, I am very sure it is the far greater part of them who, all the while they lived, thought in this

case the way that I think now. And therefore am I not bound, my lord, to conform my conscience to the council of one realm against the General Council of Christendom."

This adherence to his conscience gave him joy in the midst of trials:

"The clearness of my conscience has made my heart hop for joy."

His son-in-law, William Roper, recalled:

"Thus being so well and quietly settled in conscience, the security and uprightness of the same so eased and diminished all the griefs and pains of his imprisonment and all his other adversity, that no token or signification of lamenting or sorrow appeared in him, but that in his communication with his daughter, with the Lieutenant and others, he held on his old merry, pleasant talk whosoever occasion served."

Let us imitate St Thomas More in his adherence to the divine law in all things, and may God grant us in return the same peace of conscience that he enjoyed.

St Thomas More, pray for us!

FEEDBACK FORM

Dear reader of *Calx Mariae*,

Thank you for your interest in our new magazine. Here is your opportunity to help us share the truth of Christ and love for our Catholic Faith. By filling in this form you will help us to decide how best to develop this work.

Calx Mariae is a quarterly magazine with the second issue being available in September/October 2018. If you are interested in receiving *Calx Mariae* in the future, please fill in your contact details below, and return the form to us in the envelope provided. Please write in **BLOCK CAPITALS**.

Title: _____

Postcode: _____

First name: _____

Email: _____

Surname: _____

Telephone: _____

Address: _____

By filling in this form I consent to Voice of the Family storing the personal details shared above for the purpose of keeping me informed about our pro-life and pro-family work, including Calx Mariae.*

I wish to order _____ [number] copies of this issue of *Calx Mariae* for the special price of £3/copy.

I wish to receive a free copy of the next issue of *Calx Mariae* in autumn 2018.

I wish to order _____ [number] copies of *Calx Mariae* in autumn 2018 for £4.50/copy.

I enclose a donation of £_____ to help Voice of the Family spread and defend the Catholic Faith and the truth about human life and the family.

Comments: _____

*Voice of the Family is a coalition of pro-life and pro-family organisations managed by the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (UK). SPUC will never sell or swap your details and you can ask to be removed from our contact lists at any time.

If you are making a payment or donation please enclose a cheque or cash or provide your credit/debit card details below.

Card number (16 digits): _____

Expiry date: ____ / ____ / ____

Name on card: _____



The Holy Rosary

“The Most Holy Virgin, in these last times in which we live,
has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Rosary.
She has given this efficacy to such an extent that there is no problem,
no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all spiritual,
in the personal life of each one of us, of our families, of the families
of the world or of the religious communities, or even of the life of
peoples and nations, that cannot be solved by the Rosary.
There is no problem I tell you, no matter how difficult it is,
that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary.
With the Holy Rosary we will save ourselves. We will sanctify ourselves.
We will console Our Lord and obtain the salvation of many souls.”

Sister Lucy of Fatima



ROME LIFE FORUM 2019

16 AND 17 MAY, ROME

CITY OF MAN VS CITY OF GOD

Global One World Order vs Christendom

FOLLOWED BY THE ITALIAN MARCH FOR LIFE ON 18 MAY

*Texts and videos from Rome Life Forum 2018 are available at:
www.voiceofthefamily.com | www.lifesitenews.com*

S A V E T H E D A T E



“...she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt
lie in wait for her heel” (Gen 3:15)