

THE UNANSWERED CONCERNS ABOUT *AMORIS LAETITIA*

Why the Apostolic Exhortation
remains a danger to souls



Compiled by Voice of the Family
on the fifth anniversary of the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation

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FOREWORD

The release of *Amoris Laetitia* on 8 April 2016 marked the end of the synodal process that was launched in October 2013 when it was announced that two synods would be held to discuss the pastoral challenges facing the family and the role of the family in the modern world. This synodal process was increasingly marked by controversy as it became clear that a powerful faction of cardinals and bishops was attempting to promote heretical doctrines under the guise of synodal and papal teaching, in order to obscure the teaching of the Catholic Church over a wide number of areas related to human life, marriage and the family.

It was because of these increasing concerns that the Voice of the Family coalition was founded in August 2014. A team from Voice of the Family was present in Rome at both the Extraordinary Synod in October 2014 and the Ordinary Synod in October 2015. These two assemblies witnessed serious divisions between synod fathers who upheld Catholic teaching on marriage and the family and those who wished to supplant it.

Voice of the Family's primary intention at both synods was to provide assistance to those synod fathers who were striving to defend and promote the Church's teaching. We also sought to report accurately what was taking place at the synods in order to assist the wider Catholic public make sense of events. To this end Voice of the Family produced in-depth analyses of the most important of the synodal documents from the perspective of pro-life and -family

advocates and distributed these to cardinals and bishops throughout the world.

Amoris Laetitia, the concluding document, encapsulates some of the most serious problems of the synodal process in its treatment of the teachings of the Church which are central to protecting life and the family:

- First, that marriage, the exclusive, life-long union of one man and one woman, is the foundation of a stable and flourishing society and 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 lies at the root of modern attacks on life and the family.
- Thirdly, that parents are the primary educators of their children and that the protection of this right is essential for the transmission of the Catholic faith and for building a new “culture of life”.

To mark the fifth anniversary of the release of *Amoris Laetitia* on 8 April 2016, we republish the concerns we raised at the time. Over the course of five years, sadly, they have deepened rather than been resolved. We have also gathered in this electronic edition the most significant existing criticisms of *Amoris Laetitia* in the order in which they were published and in their original form. We consider these criticisms, to date unanswered, to have raised concerns of fundamental importance for the eternal life of individuals and for the moral welfare of families, as well as for the life of the Church and the family of Christian faithful.

FOREWORD

Truth cannot co-exist on a par with error and it is out of the love for the Truth of Christ, enshrined in the perennial teaching of His Church, that we wish to raise our voice, once again, in order that this beacon of light will shine brightly for the greater glory of God and salvation of His children, who are often so confused today.

We pray that these pages will strengthen you, dear readers, in your love for the Truth and in your defence of marriage and the family.

Why is the teaching of *Amoris Laetitia* dangerous to Catholic families?

by Voice of the Family

Introduction

We, like many others, first became concerned about the synodal process as a result of the address given by Walter Cardinal Kasper to the consistory of Cardinals held on the 20 February 2014.

In this address Cardinal Kasper proposed the admission of divorced Catholics, living in invalid second unions, to the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion without true repentance and amendment of life.

This address, which was explicitly praised by Pope Francis, was the opening salvo in a concerted campaign to use the synodal process to promote false doctrine and to obscure the Church's teaching on this issue.

Indeed, upon the publication of *Amoris Laetitia* the first question that everyone seemed to ask was: "Has the Apostolic Exhortation changed Catholic teaching in this area?"

The first thing to say then is that it is of course impossible for there to be any change in Catholic teaching on this issue. No authority on earth can annul the words of Our Lord Himself, or the constant tradition of the Church, which teach that marriage is an indissoluble union and is brought to an end only by the death of one of the spouses. Nor can any authority on earth negate the words of St Paul on the

Eucharist, upheld by the constant Tradition of the Church, that “he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself” (1 Cor 11:29). It is on these unmovable foundations that the Church proclaims her immutable doctrine, that those obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion.

The question that we should be asking is not “Does *Amoris Laetitia* change Catholic teaching?” which it cannot do, but “Does *Amoris Laetitia* contain statements which contradict or undermine the Church’s unchangeable teachings?”

The answer to that question is a definitive “yes”. There are statements in *Amoris Laetitia* which directly contradict the authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church, and there are further statements that undermine it without directly contradicting it.

Before discussing these contradictions and ambiguities it is important to point out that if *Amoris Laetitia* was intended to teach what the Catholic Church has always taught, this could have been made perfectly clear by simply restating the Church’s traditional teaching in a clear and unambiguous manner. This could have been easily done by quoting from one of the many ecclesiastical documents which have already addressed this question.

With one simple unambiguous statement Pope Francis could have put an end to much of the confusion caused by the synodal process and brought clarity and peace to many troubled Catholics. However, he chose not to do this.

Because it would be impossible in this short summary to discuss all the different ways in which *Amoris Laetitia*, in its more than 250 pages, undermines Catholic doctrine on this and many other matters, we will go straight to the most

erroneous sections of the document, which are largely found in Chapter 8, a chapter entitled “Accompanying, Discerning and Integrating Weakness”.

Encouragement to adultery?

A particularly troubling subsection of Chapter 8 is entitled “The discernment of ‘irregular’ situations”.

In the first two paragraphs of this subsection, nos 296 and 297, we find two similar statements. In paragraph 296 Pope Francis writes:

“The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone forever.”

And in paragraph 297 he writes:

“No one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel! Here I am not speaking only of the divorced and remarried, but of everyone, in whatever situation they find themselves.”

However, in the gospels Our Lord Himself speaks many times about the possibility of men and women being condemned forever as a result of sin: “depart from me you cursed into the everlasting fire”. He represents Himself as saying on the day of judgment, “and these shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting” (Mt 25:41,46). And, the Church, while always desiring and working for the conversion of sinners, nonetheless, will refuse the sacraments indefinitely to those who fail to repent of grave sin.

The “logic of the gospel” and both the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church, respect the free will of

the individual, including when they choose to remain in grave sin.

It is in this context that Pope Francis begins explicit discussion of the question of the “divorced and remarried”. He explains that “divorced and remarried” Catholics find themselves in a variety of different situations and draws attention to one case in particular:

“a second union consolidated over time, with new children, *proven fidelity, generous self giving, Christian commitment*, a consciousness of its irregularity and of the great difficulty of going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new sins.”
[emphasis added]

Let us remember that what is being discussed here is an adulterous union, a union which directly violates the sixth commandment and the words of Our Lord recorded in the gospels. *Amoris Laetitia* is suggesting here that a union which violates the fidelity owed to the marriage vows can itself display “proven fidelity”, that a union contrary to the command of Christ can display “Christian commitment” and that an adulterous union can be the place for “generous self-giving”.

Pope Francis’s reference to “the great difficulty of going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new sins” is a reference to the conviction an individual might have that abandoning a new union would cause harm to children that have come from that union, or to the other party. The Church has acknowledged that in certain cases parents might continue to live in the same home for the sake of children, but only “as brother and sister” in complete

continence. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis here inserts a footnote suggesting that “complete continence” might, in some cases, not in fact be possible or even desirable.

The footnote, no 329, reads:

“In such situations, many people, knowing and accepting the possibility of living ‘as brothers and sisters’ which the Church offers them, point out that if certain expressions of intimacy are lacking, ‘it often happens that faithfulness is endangered and the good of the children suffers’.”

This extraordinary claim of course is in contradiction with the Church’s teaching, because:

- First, all sexual acts outside of a valid marriage are intrinsically evil and it is never justifiable to commit an intrinsically evil act, even in order to achieve a good end.
- Secondly, because one cannot speak of “faithfulness” when referring to a union which itself violates the fidelity due to the original marriage. By using the word “faithfulness” *Amoris Laetitia* is again conferring a degree of legitimacy on adultery.
- Thirdly, to imply that children might suffer because their parents live chastely is clearly to suggest that it can sometimes be beneficial to children that their parents continue to commit adultery. The implication of this is that it might sometimes be appropriate to tolerate, or even, perhaps, as would be the logical consequence, to encourage, adultery.

We should also note that the final part of the note, the words “it often happens that faithfulness is endangered and the good of the children suffers”, is taken from the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes*.

This section of *Gaudium et Spes*, understood in its own context, is already problematic. But Pope Francis exacerbates the problem by taking words originally written about married couples and applying them to those living in adultery.

We cannot therefore avoid the conclusion that in paragraph 297, and its accompanying footnote 329, *Amoris Laetitia* not only seems to suggest tolerating adultery but actually suggests that adulterous acts might in some cases be necessary for the good of children.

Paragraphs 301 & 303

The idea that sin can sometimes be beneficial or appropriate is not restricted to paragraph 297. In paragraph 301 of *Amoris Laetitia* we read that it:

“can no longer simply be said that all those in any ‘irregular’ situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace. More is involved here than mere ignorance of the rule. A subject may know full well the rule, yet have great difficulty in understanding ‘its inherent values’, or be in a concrete situation which does not allow him or her to act differently and decide otherwise without further sin.”

In other words, there are certain concrete situations in which a person cannot do other than commit sin.

And in paragraph 303 *Amoris Laetitia* states:

“...that individual conscience needs to be better incorporated into the Church’s praxis in certain situations which do not objectively embody our understanding of marriage.”

And it goes on to say:

“Conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal.”

In other words, there can be cases, according to *Amoris Laetitia*, where in “certain situations” that are “objectively” contrary to “our understanding of marriage” that is, the Church’s understanding, there can be acts that do not “correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel”, which can yet be recognized as “what God himself is asking”. That is, it would seem that the document is suggesting that there are cases when God can be asking a person in a particular situation to do something that is objectively wrong.

These few sentences raise a number of questions especially in light of other passages in the document. We wish to consider some of these very briefly under the following

headings: “situation ethics”, “fundamental option”, “gradualism” and the “natural law”.

Situation ethics

The Church teaches that conscience refers to the judgement of the practical intellect by which men apply the principles of the natural law “written in their hearts” (Rom 2:15) to concrete situations to determine what should be done or left undone.

As philosopher Romano Amerio explains:

“The knowledge of universal rules is only one half of morals. The other half, that goes to make up a complete moral judgement, consists in relating particular circumstances to the demands expressed in law.”¹

So-called “situation ethics” adopts a contrary approach. As Pope Pius XII taught:

“The distinctive mark of this morality is that it is in fact in no way based on universal moral laws, for instance, on the Ten Commandments, but on the real and concrete conditions or circumstances in which one must act, and according to which the individual conscience has to judge and choose. This state of things is unique and valid but once for each human action. This is why the supporters of this ethics affirm that the decision of one’s conscience cannot be commanded by universal ideas, principles, and laws...”²

In the paragraphs of *Amoris Laetitia* mentioned above we see conscience presented as reaching the conclusion that a particular action, that is not in conformity with the objective law, can not only be tolerated, but can even be what God desires. The paragraph thus reflects the approach of situation ethics which rejects universal and binding moral norms and denies that there are certain acts which are intrinsically evil and can never be committed in any situation.

Fundamental option

Closely related to situation ethics is the theory of “fundamental option” which separates individual moral acts from a person’s overall moral orientation. It holds that a person can commit specific gravely immoral acts while remaining fundamentally oriented to God. That is, a person could remain in a state of friendship with God while committing acts that fulfil the traditional criteria for mortal sin. On the contrary, each and every mortal sin extinguishes the life of charity in the soul. The Council of Trent defined:

“In opposition also to the subtle wits of certain men, who, by pleasing speeches and good words, seduce the hearts of the innocent, it is to be maintained, that the received grace of Justification is lost, not only by infidelity whereby even faith itself is lost, but also by any other mortal sin whatever, though faith be not lost; thus defending the doctrine of the divine law, which excludes from the kingdom of God not only the unbelieving, but the faithful also (who are) fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, liars with mankind, thieves, covetous, drunkards, railers, extortioners, and all others who commit deadly sins;

from which, with the help of divine grace, they can refrain, and on account of which they are separated from the grace of Christ.”³

And St Thomas Aquinas teaches:

“Now every mortal sin is contrary to charity by its very nature, which consists in man’s loving God above all things, and subjecting himself to Him entirely, by referring all that is his to God. It is therefore essential to charity that man should so love God as to wish to submit to Him in all things, and always to follow the rule of His commandments; since whatever is contrary to His commandments is manifestly contrary to charity, and therefore by its very nature is capable of destroying charity.

...

“Now it is evident that through every mortal sin which is contrary to God’s commandments, an obstacle is placed to the outpouring of charity, since from the very fact that a man chooses to prefer sin to God’s friendship, which requires that we should obey His will, it follows that the habit of charity is lost at once through one mortal sin. Hence Augustine says (Gen. ad lit. viii, 12) that ‘man is enlightened by God’s presence, but he is darkened at once by God’s absence, because distance from Him is effected not by change of place but by aversion of the will.’”⁴

Gradualism

A third approach evident in *Amoris Laetitia* is that of the “law of gradualness” which, according to the most common usage of the term, maintains that the obligation of obedience to the moral law only imposes itself gradually as a person matures and develops and becomes capable of observing the law. This would mean that an individual is not in fact obliged to live according to the fullness of the moral law at certain points in his or her lifetime.

As Romano Amerio has written, gradualism is the “synthesis of the errors of both systems” described above.

Amerio continues:

“In fact, the moral law is an absolute that demands total obedience, even though the wills that have to conform to it may be weak and may often tend towards a conformity to the law without being strong enough to reach it. To assert a graduality in the moral imperative itself, would be to compromise the ideal and unchanging moral order of things; a graduality in one’s responding to the law’s requirements is, on the other hand, a simple psychological fact stemming from the changeableness of human wills.”⁵

However, throughout the synodal process the “law of gradualness” was frequently invoked by those pursuing ideas in opposition to Catholic teaching. In the interim report of the 2014 Extraordinary Synod the “law of gradualness” was explicitly used to justify the admission to Holy Communion of the “divorced and remarried”. However, due to

opposition from synod fathers all direct references to it were removed in the Extraordinary Synod's final report and only one indirect reference can be found in the final report of the Ordinary Synod.

Amoris Laetitia on the other hand includes a subsection, in Chapter 8, entitled "Gradualness in pastoral care". This section, and indeed the whole document, is pervaded by the implication that the Church's teaching on marriage presents an ideal that is to be aimed at rather than a reality that is binding on all.

Natural law

This reduction of the moral life to the level of an ideal leads us to consideration of the document's approach to the natural law. Time and time again *Amoris Laetitia* speaks of marriage as a gospel ideal without seeming to acknowledge that it is also a reality in the natural order.

Throughout the synodal process we observed efforts to eliminate reference to the natural law and the use of language which conflates the natural and supernatural orders.

In *Amoris Laetitia* Pope Francis proposes a flawed understanding of the natural law. In paragraph 305 he states that the natural law cannot be presented as:

“an already established set of rules that impose themselves *a priori* on the moral subject; rather, it is a source of objective inspiration for the deeply personal process of making decisions”.

However, the contrary is true. The natural law is the eternal law of God as imprinted on rational creatures to direct us to our final end. It is real and objective not merely a source

of “inspiration” for a “deeply personal process of making decisions”.

In all our analyses of the synodal documents Voice of the Family warned that the abolition of the concept of an immutable natural law was at the heart of the radical agenda pursued over the previous two years. *Amoris Laetitia* confirmed the worst of our fears.

“Mitigating Factors in Pastoral Discernment”

It is in the context of this denial of the natural law that the most direct contradiction of Catholic teaching regarding the reception of the sacraments by “divorced and remarried” Catholics is to be found. In the subsection of Chapter 8 entitled “Mitigating Factors in Pastoral Discernment” the document correctly notes that it is possible for a person to commit an objectively grave sin while not being subjectively culpable of mortal sin. It goes on to state that a person in this state can:

“be living in God’s grace, can love and can also grow in the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church’s help to this end”.

What help then should the Church offer to those who are living in a state of objective grave sin? One would imagine that she ought to share the teachings of the Church with clarity and charity because it is those teachings that ultimately lead to happiness, in this world and the next.

But what kind of help does Pope Francis foresee? In footnote 351, which refers directly to the quote above, he states of those living in objective grave sin with no present intention to amend their lives, that:

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

Pope Francis is stating here that individuals who are living in public grave sin can, in certain cases, be admitted to both the sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion while remaining in their sinful lifestyle if it is determined that their sin is inculpable.

This statement is incompatible with the teaching and discipline of the Catholic Church which requires that all those living in an objective state of public grave sin be denied Holy Communion.

This remains true if an individual is not subjectively guilty of mortal sin. It is the objective reality that takes precedence in determining whether an individual is to be admitted to Holy Communion.

Furthermore, the scandal caused by the reception of the Eucharist by the “divorced and remarried” is not removed simply because a priest has come to the conclusion that a particular individual has no subjective guilt. What the rest of the flock see is simply a person obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin being admitted to Holy Communion.

It is also extremely difficult to conceive of an appreciable number of cases where a person will remain without cul-

pability for mortal sin after engaging in a proper process of discernment with a faithful priest. Clearly the duty of any priest in dealing with a “divorced and remarried” person is to share with them the truth of the Church’s teaching.

The moral law, after all, is an intrinsic part of the order established by God. If a person is living in permanent grave sin they are doing something which is harmful to themselves and to the common good even if they have not been culpable of sin up to that point. It would be a serious failing of both justice and charity for any priest to abandon a person to a life of objective sin and that is exactly what would be done if the priest left a person in ignorance as to the nature of their sin or confirmed them in it.

It is quite clear then that *Amoris Laetitia* directly contradicts the teaching and practice of the Catholic Church on the question of the admission of “divorced and remarried Catholics” to Holy Communion.

The “culture of death”

After our short consideration of marriage in *Amoris Laetitia*, let us now look at another key principle in the Church’s perennial teaching on life and the family: namely, that the separation of the procreative and unitive ends of the conjugal act, which is intrinsic to the use of contraception, lies at the root of modern attacks on life and the family and has acted as a major catalyst of the “culture of death”.

We can deal with this point much more briefly than the first because, unfortunately, over the last fifty years the Church’s teaching on contraception has been undermined by the same erroneous approaches that we have outlined above: situation ethics, fundamental option, gradualism and the denial of the natural law.

Amoris Laetitia makes no direct reference to contraception, despite the devastating consequences of the use of contraceptives in many areas of human life not least the killing of unborn children by abortifacient methods. The consistency of this omission, which can be seen throughout the synodal documents, and also in *Laudato Si* would seem to reflect the approach adopted by Pope Francis in his 2013 interview with Antonio Spadaro in which he said, “We cannot insist only on issues related to abortion, gay marriage and the use of contraceptive methods. This is not possible.”

Amoris Laetitia certainly fails to grapple with the scale of the threat to unborn children by abortion (nor to the elderly and the disabled by the threat of euthanasia). Estimates indicate that over two billion unborn lives have been destroyed by abortion over the last century. Yet in a document addressing challenges to the family, which is more than 250 pages long, there are only a small number of passing references to abortion. There is no mention at all of the destruction caused by artificial methods of reproduction, which have also resulted in the loss of millions of human lives.

There is no reference to the authentic teaching of the Catholic Church on contraception found in the encyclical letter *Casti Connubii* of Pope Pius XI. *Humanae Vitae* is mentioned in the context of “responsible parenthood” and the exercise of conscience by spouses in this area. For example, paragraph 82 states that *Humanae Vitae* “highlights the need to respect the dignity of the person in morally assessing methods of regulating birth”; paragraph 222 states that “decisions involving responsible parenthood presupposes the formation of conscience” and that “parents themselves and no one else should ultimately make this judgment in the

sight of God”. Such statements, which in another context might not be troubling, do give cause for concern given the false approaches to moral theology adopted in the document and the failure to clearly restate what the Church actually teaches about contraception.

As far as same-sex unions are concerned *Amoris Laetitia* states, in paragraph 52, that:

“We need to acknowledge the great variety of family situations that can offer a *certain stability*, but *de facto* or same-sex unions, *may not simply* be equated with marriage.” [emphasis added]

This implies:

1. that “same-sex unions” are one of the “great variety of family situations”
2. that “same-sex unions” offer a “certain stability” and
3. that “same-sex unions” can be “equated” with marriage on some level, if not “simply”.

This approach reflects that adopted in the interim report of the Extraordinary Synod as well as the *Instrumentum Laboris* of the Ordinary Synod which was rejected twice by the synod fathers. It was adopted nonetheless in *Amoris Laetitia* notwithstanding its reference in paragraph 251 to a document of the contemporary Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith which states that there are “no grounds for considering homosexual unions to be in any way similar or even remotely analogous to God’s plan for marriage and the family”.

Sex Education

In the final section of this overview we will discuss *Amoris Laetitia* in the light of the rights of parents as the primary educators of their children, especially with regard to sex education.

First, we must note that *Amoris Laetitia* does make reference to the fundamental right and duty of parents to act as the primary educators of their children. In paragraph 84 the document speaks of the Church's role in supporting families in the raising of children and goes on to state that:

“At the same time I feel it important to reiterate that the overall education of children is a ‘most serious duty’ and at the same time a ‘primary right’ of parents. This is not just a task or a burden, but an essential and inalienable right that parents are called to defend and of which no one may claim to deprive them.”

The problem is that this assertion of parental rights is found in Chapter 1 of the document and not in the chapter actually entitled “Towards a Better Education of Children”. In this chapter, no 7, which is twenty-two pages long there is no mention of the rights of parents. Even more problematic is that there is a subsection of Chapter 7, entitled “The Need for Sex Education”. This subsection on “The Need for Sex Education” makes no reference to the role of parents at all, though it *does* make reference to “educational institutions”. Indeed, the clear implication of this subsection seems to be, in complete contradiction to the teaching of the Church, that sex education is something to be carried out by educational institutions and not by parents.

Given that a whole chapter is dedicated to the education of children, it does seem extraordinary that the only reference to parental rights is in a completely different chapter, in which they are not particularly relevant. Indeed, given the gravity of the threat to parental rights, especially in the area of sex education, it is a matter of serious concern that this reference, brief enough already, has been separated from its proper context and placed in a completely different part of the document, more than one hundred pages earlier.

There is in fact an urgent need to reassert the authentic teaching of the Church on sex education:

“Another very grave danger is that naturalism which nowadays invades the field of education in that most delicate matter of purity of morals. Far too common is the error of those who with dangerous assurance and under an ugly term propagate a so-called sex-education, falsely imagining they can forearm youths against the dangers of sensuality by means purely natural, such as a foolhardy initiation and precautionary instruction for all indiscriminately, even in public; and, worse still, by exposing them at an early age to the occasions, in order to accustom them, so it is argued, and as it were to harden them against such dangers.

...

“In this extremely delicate matter, if, all things considered, some private instruction is found necessary and opportune, from those who hold from God the commission to teach and who have the grace of

state, every precaution must be taken. Such precautions are well known in traditional Christian education, and are adequately described by Antoniano cited above, when he says: ‘Such is our misery and inclination to sin, that often in the very things considered to be remedies against sin, we find occasions for and inducements to sin itself. Hence it is of the highest importance that a good father, while discussing with his son a matter so delicate, should be well on his guard and not descend to details... Speaking generally, during the period of childhood it suffices to employ those remedies which produce the double effect of opening the door to the virtue of purity and closing the door upon vice.’”⁶

Yet in *Amoris Laetitia*, in a section explicitly intended to argue for “The Need for Sex Education” parents are not mentioned at all, but “educational institutions” are.

To see the reality of sex education in today’s world we need look no further than the World Health Organisation’s “Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe” published in 2010. These guidelines suggest that children aged 0-4 years should discover “enjoyment and pleasure when touching one’s own body” and the “right to explore gender identities”; that children aged 4-6 years should learn about “same-sex relationships” and “respect for different norms regarding sexuality”; that children aged 9-12 years should know “differences between gender identity and biological sex” and “sexual rights” as “defined by IPPF [International Planned Parenthood Federation]”; and that children aged 15 years and older should be informed about “acceptance and cele-

bration of sexual differences”, “violation of sexual rights” and the “right to abortion”.

We are not suggesting that *Amoris Laetitia* directly proposes this kind of sex education. Yet it is certainly the case that the document fails to come even close to discussing the real threat facing children including in Catholic schools throughout the world. We read, for example, that today the “language of sexuality” is “sadly impoverished”, and that “sexuality” is “trivialised”. Such criticisms of modern sex education are grossly insufficient, considering that the purpose of this subsection is to discuss the need for sex education.

It is important to note here that this is not the only time during this pontificate that the attitude of those in positions of authority in Rome towards parental rights have given us cause for concern.

We described in our analyses of both the *Instrumentum Laboris* and the final report of the Ordinary Synod how both of these documents denied parents their full rights over the education of their children by stating, quite explicitly, that the family “*cannot* be the only place for teaching sexuality”.

Moreover, few months after the promulgation of *Amoris Laetitia*, the Pontifical Council for the Family published a sex education programme called *The Meeting Point* at the World Youth Day in Poland in July 2016.

This programme, which is intended to be taught in schools, in mixed classrooms, adopts a secularised and secularising approach, and exposes children to obscene and pornographic images.

Furthermore, Pope Francis’ *Laudato Si* in its six paragraphs on “Educating for the Covenant Between Humanity and the Environment” (209-215), makes no reference at all

to parents, despite the work of education being primarily their responsibility. This is very troubling given the close associations between the environmental movement and the population control lobby. Who exactly will be carrying out this education in environmentalism? Is it not likely that it will be environmental charities that work for the reduction of human population through promoting access to contraception and abortion?

In this connection it is worth drawing attention to workshops held in the Vatican, under the auspices of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (PAS) in November 2015 to discuss how to use children as “agents of change” to implement environmentalism and “sustainable development”. The briefing document for this event said that schools would have to “absorb” the Sustainable Development Goals, the same UN Sustainable Development Goals that include calls for universal access to “reproductive health”, a term which is defined by UN bodies and powerful western governments as including access to abortion and contraception, including abortifacient forms. At this event Pope Francis’ representatives met with some of the world’s leading proponents of population control, such as Dr Jeffrey Sachs, special adviser to Ban Ki-moon, the then Secretary General of the UN, to discuss common action. The briefing warned against “parents” and “agencies” that, “basing themselves on religious principles, oppose scientific evidence to the detriment of children”.

Conclusion

If we were asked to recommend a document on marriage and family life, perhaps by somebody interested in the Catholic faith, or by a young person exploring the Church's teaching, would we be able to recommend *Amoris Laetitia*?

Would we say that this is an excellent document, except for the paragraphs in which it encourages reception of the Eucharist by individuals living in public adultery and suggests that adultery might be beneficial for children? Would we say that there was much to be learnt, except when it seems to propose situation ethics, fundamental option and gradualism and attacks the very foundations of natural law?

Clearly this is not possible. A document which contains doctrinal error cannot be considered an appropriate means for propagating Catholic truth. Therefore, it is of the most urgent necessity to warn all Catholics against the false doctrine of *Amoris Laetitia* and urge them to pray for the teachers who propagate it. It must be repudiated either by Pope Francis or by one of his successors. In the meantime, the grave errors contained within it cannot remain unchallenged.

ENDNOTES:

1. Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum*, pp. 455-56.
2. AAS, 1952, pp. 413-419.
3. Council of Trent, *Decree on Justification*.
4. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* II: II q.24 a.12.
5. Romano Amerio, *Iota Unum*, p. 469.
6. Pope Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*, No. 65-67.

Amoris Laetitia: CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF 45 THEOLOGICIANS

On 29 June 2016, forty-five theologians submitted an appeal to Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Dean of the College of Cardinals in Rome, requesting that the Cardinals and Eastern Catholic Patriarchs petition Pope Francis to repudiate a list of erroneous propositions that can be drawn from a natural reading of the post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

[To Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Dean of the College of Cardinals]

29th June 2016

Your Eminence,

As Catholic theologians and philosophers, church historians and pastors of souls, we are writing to you in your capacity as Dean of the College of Cardinals to request that the College of Cardinals and the Patriarchs of the Catholic Church take collective action to respond to the dangers to Catholic faith and morals posed by the apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia* issued by Pope Francis on March 19th 2016.

This apostolic exhortation contains a number of statements that can be understood in a sense that is contrary to Catholic faith and morals. We have specified the nature and degree of the errors that could be attributed to *Amoris laetitia* in the accompanying document.

We request that the Cardinals and Patriarchs petition the Holy Father to condemn the errors listed in the document in a definitive and final manner, and to authoritatively state that *Amoris laetitia* does not require any of them to be believed or considered as possibly true.

For the convenience of the Patriarchs and members of the College of Cardinals, we shall send each of them a copy of this letter and its accompanying document.

Requesting your blessing, we are
Yours faithfully,

[Signed by 45 theologians. To see the list of signatories, please visit: <https://onepeterfive.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/cardinal-letter2.pdf>]

Amoris Laetitia: critical analysis

The apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, issued by Pope Francis on March 19th 2016 and addressed to bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated persons, Christian married couples, and all the lay faithful, has caused grief and confusion to many Catholics on account of its apparent disagreement with a number of teachings of the Catholic Church on faith and morals. This situation poses a grave danger to souls. Since, as St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, inferiors are bound to correct their superiors publicly when there is an imminent danger to the faith (*Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae q. 33 a. 4 ad 2; a. 7 co.), and the Catholic faithful have the right and at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence, and position, to make known their views on matters which concern the good of the Church (Latin *Code of Canon Law*, Can. 212, §3), Catholic theologians have a strict duty to speak out against the apparent errors in the document. This statement on *Amoris laetitia* is intended to fulfil that duty, and to assist the hierarchy of the Church in addressing this situation.

The authority of *Amoris laetitia*

The official character of *Amoris laetitia* enables it to pose a grave danger to the faith and morals of Catholics. Although an apostolic exhortation pertains normally or principally to the purely pastoral governing power, nevertheless, on account of the inter-connection of the powers of teaching and of

government, it also pertains indirectly to the magisterial power. It can also contain directly magisterial passages, which are then clearly indicated as being such. This was the case for previous apostolic exhortations such as *Evangelii nuntiandi*, *Familiaris consortio*, and *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*.

There is no obstacle as such to the Pope's using an apostolic exhortation to teach infallibly on faith and morals, but no infallible teaching is contained in *Amoris laetitia*, since none of its statements satisfy the strict requirements for an infallible definition. It is thus a non-infallible exercise of the papal magisterium.

Some commentators have asserted that the document does not contain magisterial teaching as such, but only the personal reflections of the Pope on the subjects it addresses. This assertion if true would not remove the danger to faith and morals posed by the document. If the Supreme Pontiff expresses a personal opinion in a magisterial document, this expression of opinion implicitly presents the opinion in question as one that it is legitimate for Catholics to hold. As a result, many Catholics will come to believe that the opinion is indeed compatible with Catholic faith and morals. Some Catholics out of respect for a judgment expressed by the Supreme Pontiff will come to believe that the opinion is not only permissible but true. If the opinion in question is not in fact compatible with Catholic faith or morals, these Catholics will thus reject the faith and moral teaching of the Catholic Church as it applies to this opinion. If the opinion relates to questions of morals, the practical result for the actions of Catholics will be the same whether they come to hold that the opinion is legitimate or actually true. An opinion on moral questions that is in truth legitimate

for the Supreme Pontiff to hold is one that it is legitimate for Catholics to follow. Belief in the legitimacy of a moral position will thus lead Catholics to believe that it is legitimate to act as if it is true. If there is a strong motivation to act in this way, as there is with the questions being addressed here for the faithful to whose situations these questions are pertinent, most Catholics will act accordingly. This is an important factor in an evaluation of *Amoris laetitia*, because that document addresses concrete moral questions.

It is however not the case that *Amoris laetitia* is intended to do no more than express the personal views of the Pope. The document contains statements about the personal positions of the current Holy Father, but such statements are not incompatible with these positions being presented as teachings of the Church by the document. Much of the document consists of straightforward assertoric and imperative statements that make no reference to the personal views of the Holy Father, and that thus have the form of magisterial teachings. This form will cause Catholics to believe that these statements are not simply permissible, but are teachings of the authentic magisterium which call for religious submission of mind and will; teachings to which they must yield not a respectful silence accompanied by inner disagreement, but actual inner assent.¹

The dangers of *Amoris laetitia*

The following analysis does not deny or question the personal faith of Pope Francis. It is not justifiable or legitimate to deny the faith of any author on the basis of a single text, and this is especially true in the case of the Supreme Pontiff. There are further reasons why the text of *Amoris*

laetitia cannot be used as a sufficient reason for holding that the Pope has fallen into heresy. The document is extremely long, and it is probable that much of its original text was produced by an author or authors who are not Pope Francis, as is normal with papal documents. Those statements in it that on the face of them contradict the faith could be due to simple error on Pope Francis's part, rather than to a voluntary rejection of the faith.

When it comes to the document itself, however, there is no doubt that it constitutes a grave danger to Catholic faith and morals. It contains many statements whose vagueness or ambiguity permit interpretations that are contrary to faith or morals, or that suggest a claim that is contrary to faith and morals without actually stating it. It also contains statements whose natural meaning would seem to be contrary to faith or morals.

The statements made by *Amoris laetitia* are not expressed with scientific accuracy. This can be advantageous for the very small proportion of Catholics who have a scientific training in theology, because such Catholics will be able to discern that the assertions of *Amoris laetitia* do not demand their religious submission of mind and will, or even a respectful silence in regard to them. Accurate formulation and proper legal form are needed in order to make a magisterial utterance binding in this fashion, and these are for the most part lacking in the document. It is however harmful for the vast majority of Catholics who do not have a theological training and are not well informed about Catholic teachings on the topics that the apostolic exhortation discusses. The lack of precision in the document's statements makes it easier to interpret them as

contradicting the real teachings of the Catholic Church and of divine revelation, and as justifying or requiring the abandonment of these teachings by Catholics in theory and in practice. Some cardinals, bishops, and priests, betraying their duty to Jesus Christ and to the care of souls, are already offering interpretations of this sort.

The problem with *Amoris laetitia* is not that it has imposed legally binding rules that are intrinsically unjust or authoritatively taught binding teachings that are false. The document does not have the authority to promulgate unjust laws or to require assent to false teachings, because the Pope does not have the power to do these things. The problem with the document is that it can mislead Catholics into believing what is false and doing what is forbidden by divine law. The document is formulated in terms that are not legally or theologically exact, but this does not matter for the evaluation of its contents, because the most precise formulation cannot give legal and doctrinal status to decrees that are contrary to divine law and divine revelation. What is important about the document is the damaging effect it can have on the belief and moral life of Catholics. The character of this effect will be determined by the meaning that most Catholics will take it to have, not by its meaning when evaluated by precise theological criteria, and it is this meaning that will be addressed here. The propositions of *Amoris laetitia* that require censure must thus be condemned in the sense that the average reader is liable to attribute to their words. The average reader here is understood to be one who is not trying to twist the words of the document in any direction, but who will take the natural or the immediate impression of the meaning of the words to be correct.

It is acknowledged that some of the censured propositions are contradicted elsewhere in the document, and that *Amoris laetitia* contains many valuable teachings. Some of the passages of *Amoris laetitia* make an important contribution to the defence and preaching of the faith. The criticism of *Amoris laetitia* offered here permits these valuable elements to have their true effect, by distinguishing them from the problematic elements in the document and neutralising the threat to the faith posed by them.

For the sake of theological clarity and justice, this criticism of the harmful parts of *Amoris laetitia* will take the form of a theological censure of the individual passages that are deficient. These censures are to be understood in the sense traditionally held by the Church², and are applied to the passages *prout iacent*, as they lie. The propositions censured are so damaging that a complete listing of the censures that apply to them is not attempted. Most if not all of them fall under the censures of *aequivoca*, *ambigua*, *obscura*, *praesumptuosa*, *anxia*, *dubia*, *captiosa*, *male sonans*, *piarum aurium offensiva*, as well as the ones listed. The censures list i) the censures that bear upon the content of the statements censured, and ii) those that bear upon the damaging effects of the statements. The censures are not intended to be an exhaustive list of the errors that *Amoris laetitia* on a plausible reading contains; they seek to identify the worst threats to Catholic faith and morals in the document. The propositions censured are divided into those that are heretical and those that fall under a lesser censure. Heretical propositions, censured as '*haeretica*', are ones that contradict propositions that are contained in divine revelation and are defined with a solemn judgment as divinely revealed truths either by the Roman Pontiff when

he speaks ‘*ex cathedra*,’ or by the College of Bishops gathered in council, or infallibly proposed for belief by the ordinary and universal Magisterium. The propositions that fall under a lesser censure than heresy are included as posing an especially grave danger to faith and morals.

The censures of these propositions are not censures of administrative, legislative or doctrinal acts of the Supreme Pontiff, since the propositions censured do not and cannot constitute such acts. The censures are the subject of a filial request to the Supreme Pontiff, which asks him to make a definitive and final juridical and doctrinal act condemning the propositions censured.

Finally, some of the theologians who are signatories to this letter reserve the right to make minor adjustments to some of the censures attached to some of the propositions: their signatures should be taken as indicating their belief that all the propositions should be censured, and a general agreement with the censures here proposed.

Theological censures of propositions drawn from the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia*

A. Heretical propositions

1) **AL 83:** ‘The Church ... firmly rejects the death penalty.’

If understood as meaning that the death penalty is always and everywhere unjust in itself and therefore cannot ever be rightly inflicted by the state:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Perniciosa.*

Gen. 9:63:

“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for God made man in his own image.”

See also: Lev. 20-1; Deut. 13, 21-22; Matt. 15:4; Mk. 7:10; Jn. 19:11; Rom. 13:4; Heb. 10:28; Innocent I, *Letter to Exsuperius*, PL 120: 499A-B; Innocent III, *Profession of Faith prescribed for the Waldensians*, DH 7954; Pius V, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, commentary on the 5th commandment; Pope Pius XII, *Address to the First International Congress of Histopathology of the Nervous System*, AAS 44 (1952): 787; John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2267.

2) **AL 156**: ‘Every form of sexual submission must be clearly rejected.’

If understood not simply as denying that a wife owes servile obedience to her husband or that the husband has authority over his wife that is the same as parental authority, but as also denying that the husband has any form of authority over his wife, or as denying that the wife has any duty to obey the legitimate commands of her husband in virtue of his authority as husband:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Prava, perniciosa.*

Eph. 5:24:

“As the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things.”

See also: 1 Cor. 11:3; Col. 3:18; Tit. 2:3-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-5; Pius V, *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, commentary on the sacrament of matrimony; Leo XIII, *Arcanum*, *AAS* 12 (1879): 389; Pius XI, *Casti connubii*, *AAS* 22 (1930): 549 (*DH* 3708-09); John XXIII, *Ad Petri cathedram*, *AAS* 51 (1959): 509-10.

3) **AL 159**: ‘Saint Paul recommended virginity because he expected Jesus’ imminent return and he wanted everyone to concentrate only on spreading the Gospel: “the appointed time has grown very short” (1 Cor 7:29) ... Rather than speak absolutely of the superiority of virginity, it should be enough to point out that the different states of life complement one another, and consequently that some can be more perfect in one way and others in another.’

Understood as denying that a virginal state of life consecrated to Christ is superior considered in itself to the state of Christian marriage:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Perniciosa, suspensiva gravis resolutionis.*

Council of Trent, Session 24, *canon 10*:

“If anyone says that the married state surpasses that of virginity or celibacy, and that it is not better and more blessed to remain in virginity or celibacy than to be united in matrimony, let him be anathema” (*DH* 1810).

See also: Mt. 19: 12, 21; 1 Cor. 7:7-8, 38; 2 Thess. 2:1-2; Apoc. 14:4; Council of Florence, *Decree for the Jacobites*, *DH* 1353;

Pius X, *Response of the Biblical Commission*, DH 3629; Pius XII, *Sacra virginitas*, AAS 46 (1954): 174; 2nd Vatican Council, Decree *Optatam totius*, 10.

4) **AL 295**: ‘Saint John Paul II proposed the so-called “law of gradualness” in the knowledge that the human being “knows, loves and accomplishes moral good by different stages of growth”. This is not a “gradualness of law” but rather a gradualness in the prudential exercise of free acts on the part of subjects who are not in a position to understand, appreciate, or fully carry out the objective demands of the law.’

AL 301: ‘It is [sic] can no longer simply be said that all those in any “irregular” situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace. More is involved here than mere ignorance of the rule. A subject may know full well the rule, yet have great difficulty in understanding “its inherent values”, or be in a concrete situation which does not allow him or her to act differently and decide otherwise without further sin.’

Understood as meaning that a justified person has not the strength with God’s grace to carry out the objective demands of the divine law, as though any of the commandments of God are impossible for the justified; or as meaning that God’s grace, when it produces justification in an individual, does not invariably and of its nature produce conversion from all serious sin, or is not sufficient for conversion from all serious sin:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Impia, blasphema.*

Council of Trent, session 6, canon 18:

“If anyone says that the commandments of God are impossible to observe even for a man who is justified and established in grace, let him be anathema” (*DH* 1568).

See also: Gen. 4:7; Deut. 30:11-19; Ecclesiasticus 15: 11-22; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26; Heb. 10:26-29; 1 Jn. 5:17; Zosimus, 15th (or 16v) Synod of Carthage, canon 3 on grace, *DH* 225; Felix III, 2nd Synod of Orange, *DH* 397; Council of Trent, Session 5, canon 5; Session 6, canons 18-20, 22, 27 and 29; Pius V, Bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*, On the errors of Michael du Bay, 54, (*DH* 1954); Innocent X, Constitution *Cum occasione*, On the errors of Cornelius Jansen, 1 (*DH* 2001); Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus*, On the errors of Pasquier Quesnel, 71 (*DH* 2471); John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et poenitentia* 17: *AAS* 77 (1985): 222; *Veritatis splendor* 65-70: *AAS* 85 (1993): 1185-89 (*DH* 4964-67).

5) **AL 297**: ‘No one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel!’

If understood as meaning that no human being can or will be condemned to eternal punishment in hell:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Scandalosa, perniciosa.*

Matt. 25: 46:

“These shall go into everlasting punishment: but the just, into life everlasting.”

See also: Mt. 7:22-23; Lk. 16: 26; Jn. 17:12; Apoc. 20:10; 16th Synod of Toledo (*DH* 574); 4th Lateran Council, *DH* 801; Benedict XII, Constitution *Benedictus Deus*, *DH* 1002; Council of Florence, decree *Laetentur caeli*, *DH* 1306; John Paul II, Letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Recentiores episcoporum*, *AAS* 71 (1979): 941; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1033-37.

6) **AL 299:** ‘I am in agreement with the many Synod Fathers who observed that “the baptized who are divorced and civilly remarried need to be more fully integrated into Christian communities in the variety of ways possible, while avoiding any occasion of scandal. The logic of integration is the key to their pastoral care, a care which would allow them not only to realize that they belong to the Church as the body of Christ, but also to know that they can have a joyful and fruitful experience in it. They are baptized; they are brothers and sisters; the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts gifts and talents for the good of all. ... Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members, able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always, who takes care of them with affection and encourages them along the path of life and the Gospel”.’

If understood as meaning that the divorced and civilly remarried who choose their situation with full knowledge and full consent of the will are not

in a state of serious sin, and that they can receive sanctifying grace and grow in charity:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Scandalosa, prava, perversa.*

Mk. 10:11-12:

“Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.”

See also: Ex. 20:14; Mt. 5:32, 19:9; Lk. 16:18; 1 Cor. 7: 10-11; Heb. 10:26-29; Council of Trent, Session 6, canons 19-21, 27 (*DH* 1569-71, 1577); Session 24, canons 5 and 7 (*DH* 1805, 1807); Innocent XI, Condemned propositions of the ‘Laxists’, 62-63 (*DH* 2162-63); Alexander VIII, Decree of the Holy Office on ‘Philosophical Sin’, *DH* 2291; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 65-70: *AAS* 85 (1993): 1185-89 (*DH* 4964-67).

7) **AL 301:** ‘It is [sic] can no longer simply be said that all those in any “irregular” situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace. More is involved here than mere ignorance of the rule. A subject may know full well the rule, yet have great difficulty in understanding “its inherent values”, or be in a concrete situation which does not allow him or her to act differently and decide otherwise without further sin.’

Understood as meaning that a Catholic believer can have full knowledge of a divine law and voluntarily

choose to break it in a serious matter, but not be in a state of mortal sin as a result of this action:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Prava, perversa.*

Council of Trent, session 6, canon 20:

“If anyone says that a justified man, however perfect he may be, is not bound to observe the commandments of God and of the Church but is bound only to believe, as if the Gospel were merely an absolute promise of eternal life without the condition that the commandments be observed, let him be anathema” (*DH* 1570).

See also: Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26; Heb. 10:26-29; 1 Jn. 5:17; Council of Trent, session 6, canons 19 and 27; Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus*, On the errors of Pasquier Quesnel, 71 (*DH* 2471); John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et poenitentia* 17: *AAS* 77 (1985): 222; *Veritatis splendor*, 65-70: *AAS* 85 (1993): 1185-89 (*DH* 4964-67).

8) **AL 301**: ‘It is [sic] can no longer simply be said that all those in any “irregular” situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace. More is involved here than mere ignorance of the rule. A subject may know full well the rule, yet have great difficulty in understanding its inherent values, or be in a concrete situation which does not allow him or her to act differently and decide otherwise without further sin.’

Understood as saying that a person with full knowledge of a divine law can sin by choosing to obey that law:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Prava, perversa.*

Ps. 18:8:

“The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls.”

See also: Ecclesiasticus 15:21; Council of Trent, session 6, canon 20; Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus*, On the errors of Pasquier Quesnel, 71 (*DH* 2471); Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum*, *AAS* 20 (1887-88): 598 (*DH* 3248); John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 40: *AAS* 85 (1993): 1165 (*DH* 4953).

9) **AL 303:** ‘Conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal.’

Understood as meaning that conscience can truly judge that actions condemned by the Gospel, and in particular, sexual acts between Catholics who have civilly remarried following divorce, can sometimes be morally right or requested or commanded by God:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Scandalosa, prava, perversa, perniciosa, impia, blasphema.*

Council of Trent, session 6, canon 21:

“If anyone says that Jesus Christ was given by God to men as a redeemer in whom they are to trust but not also as a lawgiver whom they are bound to obey, let him be anathema” (*DH* 1571).

Council of Trent, session 24, canon 2:

“If anyone says that it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time, and that this is not forbidden by any divine law, let him be anathema” (*DH* 1802).

Council of Trent, session 24, canon 5:

“If anyone says that the marriage bond can be dissolved because of heresy or difficulties in cohabitation or because of the wilful absence of one of the spouses, let him be anathema” (*DH* 1805).

Council of Trent, session 24, canon 7:

“If anyone says that the Church is in error for having taught and for still teaching that in accordance with the evangelical and apostolic doctrine, the marriage bond cannot be dissolved because of adultery on the part of one of the spouses and that neither of the two, not even the innocent one who has given no cause for infidelity, can contract another marriage during the lifetime of the other, and that the hus-

band who dismisses an adulterous wife and marries again and the wife who dismisses and adulterous husband and married again are both guilty of adultery, let him be anathema” (DH 1807).

See also: Ps. 5:5; Ps. 18:8-9; Ecclesiasticus 15:21; Heb. 10:26-29; Jas. 1:13; 1 Jn. 3:7; Innocent XI, Condemned propositions of the ‘Laxists’, 62-63 (DH 2162-63); Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus*, On the errors of Pasquier Quesnel, 71 (DH2471); Leo XIII, encyclical letter *Libertas praestantissimum*, ASS 20 (1887-88): 598 (DH 3248); Pius XII, Decree of the Holy Office on situation ethics, DH 3918; 2nd Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 16; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 54: AAS 85 (1993): 1177; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1786-87.

10) **AL 304**: ‘I earnestly ask that we always recall a teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas and learn to incorporate it in our pastoral discernment: “Although there is necessity in the general principles, the more we descend to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter defects... In matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all, as to matters of detail, but only as to the general principles; and where there is the same rectitude in matters of detail, it is not equally known to all... The principle will be found to fail, according as we descend further into detail”. It is true that general rules set forth a good which can never be disregarded or neglected, but in their formulation they cannot provide absolutely for all particular situations.’

Understood as meaning that moral principles and moral truths contained in divine revelation and in

the natural law do not include negative prohibitions that absolutely forbid particular kinds of action under any and all circumstances:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Scandalosa, prava, perversa*

John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* 115:

“Each of us knows how important is the teaching which represents the central theme of this Encyclical and which is today being restated with the authority of the Successor of Peter. Each of us can see the seriousness of what is involved, not only for individuals but also for the whole of society, with the reaffirmation of the universality and immutability of the moral commandments, particularly those which prohibit always and without exception intrinsically evil acts” (*DH* 4971).

See also: Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 6: 9-10; Gal. 5: 19-21; Apoc. 22:15; 4th Lateran Council, chapter 22 (*DH* 815); Council of Constance, Bull *Inter cunctas*, 14 (*DH* 1254); Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, 14: *AAS* 60 (1968) 490-91. John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 83: *AAS* 85 (1993): 1199 (*DH* 4970).

11) **AL 308:** ‘I understand those who prefer a more rigorous pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion. But I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, “always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street”.’

If understood as meaning that Our Lord Jesus Christ wills that the Church abandon her perennial discipline of refusing the Eucharist to the divorced and remarried and of refusing absolution to the divorced and remarried who do not express contrition for their state of life and a firm purpose of amendment with regard to it:

1. *Haeretica, sacrae Scripturae contraria.*
2. *Scandalosa, prava, perversa, impia, blasphema.*

1 Cor. 11:27:

“Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord.”

Familiaris consortio, 84:

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

2nd Lateran Council, canon 20:

“Because there is one thing that conspicuously causes great disturbance to holy Church, namely false penance, we warn our brothers in the episcopate, and priests, not to allow the souls of the laity to be deceived or dragged off to hell by false penances. It is certain that a penance is false when many sins are disregarded and a penance is performed for one only, or when it is done for one sin in such a way that the penitent does not renounce another” (*DH* 717).

See also: Mt. 7:6; Mt. 22: 11-13; 1 Cor. 11:28-30; Heb. 13:8; Council of Trent, session 14, Decree on Penance, cap. 4; Council of Trent, session 13, Decree on the most holy Eucharist (*DH* 164647)); Innocent XI, Condemned propositions of the ‘Laxists’, 60-63 (*DH* 2160-63); John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1385, 1451, 1490.

B. Propositions falling under lesser censures

12) **AL 295**: ‘Saint John Paul II proposed the so-called “law of gradualness” in the knowledge that the human being “knows, loves and accomplishes moral good by different stages of growth”. This is not a “gradualness of law” but rather a gradualness in the prudential exercise of free acts on the part of subjects who are not in a position to understand, appreciate, or fully carry out the objective demands of the law.’

If understood as meaning that free acts that do not fully carry out the objective demands of divine law can be morally good:

1. *Erronea in fide.*
2. *Scandalosa, prava.*

1 Jn. 3:4:

“Whosoever committeth sin, committeth also iniquity; and sin is iniquity.”

See also: Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum*, ASS 20 (1887-88): 598 (DH 3248); John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 40: AAS 85 (1993): 1165 (DH 4953).

13) **AL 296:** ‘There are two ways of thinking which recur throughout the Church’s history: casting off and reinstating. The Church’s way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement. The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone for ever.’

AL 297: ‘No one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel!’

Understood as meaning that in circumstances where an offender does not cease to commit an offence the Church does not have the power or the right to inflict punishments or condemnations without later remitting them or lifting them, or that the Church does not have the power or the right to condemn and anathematise individuals after their death:

1. *Erronea in fide.*
2. *Scandalosa, pernicioiosa, derogans praxi sive usui et disciplinae Ecclesiae.*

1983 Code of Canon Law, can. 1358:

“The remission of a censure cannot be granted except to an offender whose contempt has been purged.”

3rd Council of Constantinople, Condemnation of the Monothelites and of Pope Honorius I:

“As to these self-same men whose impious teachings we have rejected, we have also judged it necessary to banish their names from the holy Church of God, that is, the name of Sergius, who began to write about this impious doctrine, of Cyrus of Alexandria, of Pyrrhus, of Paul and of Peter and of those who have presided on the throne of this God-protected city, and the same for those who have been like-minded. Then also (the name) of Theodore who was bishop of Pharan. All these aforementioned persons were mentioned by Agatho, the most holy and thrice-blessed pope of elder Rome, in his letter to the . . . emperor, and rejected by him as having thought in a way contrary to our orthodox faith; and we determine that they are also subject to anathema. Along with these we have seen fit to banish from the holy Church of God and to anathematize also Honorius, the former pope of the elder Rome” (*DH* 550).

See also: 2nd Council of Constantinople, canons 11-12; Lateran Synod, canon 18 (*DH* 518-20); Leo II, Letter *Regi regum*, *DH* 563; 4th Council of Constantinople, canon 11; Council of Florence, Decree for the Jacobites, *DH* 1339-

1346; Benedict XV, 1917 canons 855, 2214, 2241:1 and 2257; John Paul II, 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, canons 915 and 1311; *Code of Canon Law for Eastern Churches*, canon 1424:1.

14) **AL 298:** ‘The divorced who have entered a new union, for example, can find themselves in a variety of situations, which should not be pigeonholed or fit into overly rigid classifications leaving no room for a suitable personal and pastoral discernment. One thing is a second union consolidated over time, with new children, proven fidelity, generous self-giving, Christian commitment, a consciousness of its irregularity and of the great difficulty of going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new sins.’

If understood as meaning that persons who are civilly married to someone other than their true spouse can show Christian virtue by being sexually faithful to their civil partner:

1. *Erronea in fide.*
2. *Scandalosa.*

1 Cor. 7:10-11:

“To them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband; and if she depart, that she remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And let not the husband put away his wife.”

See also: Gen. 2: 21; Mal. 2:15-16; Mt. 5:32, 19:9; Mk. 10:11-12; Lk. 16:18; Heb. 13:4; Letter *Quam laudabiliter* of Leo I, DH 283; Letter *Regressus ad nos* of Leo I, DH 311-

14; Letter *Gaudemus in Domino* of Innocent III, *DH* 777-79; 2nd Council of Lyons, *Profession of Faith of Emperor Michael Palaeologus* (*DH* 860); Council of Trent, Session 24 canons 5, 7; Pius VI, *Rescript. ad Episc. Agriens.*, 11th July 1789; *Archanum*, *ASS* 12 (1879-80): 388-94; Pius XI, *Casti connubii*, *AAS* 22 (1930): 546-50 (cf. *Dz* 3706-10); John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 19, 80-81, 84: *AAS* 74 (1982) 92-149; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1643-49.

15) **AL 298**: “The Church acknowledges situations “where, for serious reasons, such as the children’s upbringing, a man and woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate”. [footnote 329] In such situations, many people, knowing and accepting the possibility of living “as brothers and sisters” which the Church offers them, point out that if certain expressions of intimacy are lacking, “it often happens that faithfulness is endangered and the good of the children suffers”.’ (N.B. The last clause in double quotation marks misleadingly applies to divorced and civilly married couples a statement of Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, 51, that refers only to validly married couples.)

Understood as endorsing claims that divorced and civilly remarried couples have an obligation of sexual faithfulness to each other rather than to their true spouses, or that their living ‘as brother and sister’ could be either a culpable occasion of sin against that supposed obligation, or a culpable cause of harm to their children:

1. *Erronea in fide.*
2. *Scandalosa, prava, perversa.*

Ecclesiasticus 15:21:

“He hath commanded no man to do wickedly, and he hath given no man licence to sin.”

See also: Rom. 3:8, 8: 28; 1 Thess. 4:7; Jas. 1:13-14; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 79-83: *AAS* 85 (1993): 1197-99 (cf. *DH* 4969-70).

16) **AL 300**: ‘Since “the degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases”, the consequences or effects of a rule need not necessarily always be the same. [footnote 336] This is also the case with regard to sacramental discipline, since discernment can recognize that in a particular situation no grave fault exists.’

AL 305: ‘Because of forms of conditioning and mitigating factors, it is possible that in an objective situation of sin – which may not be subjectively culpable, or fully such – a person can be living in God’s grace, can love and can also grow in the life of grace and charity, while receiving the Church’s help to this end. [footnote 351] In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments. Hence, “I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber, but rather an encounter with the Lord’s mercy”. I would also point out that the Eucharist “is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak”.’

Understood as saying that absence of grave fault due to diminished responsibility can permit admission to the Eucharist in the cases of divorced and civilly remarried persons who do not separate, nor under-

take to live in perfect continence, but remain in an objective state of adultery and bigamy:

1. *Erronea in fide, falsa.*
2. *Scandalosa.*

John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio* 84:

“The Church reaffirms her practice, which is based upon Sacred Scripture, of not admitting to Eucharistic Communion divorced persons who have remarried. They are unable to be admitted thereto from the fact that their state and condition of life objectively contradict that union of love between Christ and the Church which is signified and effected by the Eucharist. Besides this, there is another special pastoral reason: if these people were admitted to the Eucharist, the faithful would be led into error and confusion regarding the Church’s teaching about the indissolubility of marriage. Reconciliation in the sacrament of Penance, which would open the way to the Eucharist, can only be granted to those who, repenting of having broken the sign of the Covenant and of fidelity to Christ, are sincerely ready to undertake a way of life that is no longer in contradiction to the indissolubility of marriage. This means, in practice, that when, for serious reasons, such as for example the children’s upbringing, a man and a woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate, they ‘take on themselves the duty to live

in complete continence, that is, by abstinence from the acts proper to married couples’.”

1 Jn. 2:20:

“You have the unction from the Holy One, and know all things.”

See also Ez. 3:17; Mt. 28:20; 1 Cor. 11:27-29; Eph. 5:30-32; 2nd Lateran Council, *DH* 717; Paul V, *Rituale Romanum*, 49; Benedict XIV, *Confirmation of the Synod of the Maronites*; Encyclical letter *Ex omnibus*; Benedict XV, 1917 *Code of Canon Law*, canon 855; John Paul II, 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, canon 915; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the reception of Eucharistic communion by those faithful who after a divorce have entered a new marriage*, *AAS* 86 (1994): 974-79; *Code of Canon Law for Eastern Churches*, canon 712; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1650, 2390; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Concerning Some Objections to the Church’s Teaching on the Reception of Holy Communion by Divorced and Remarried Members of the Faithful*, in “Documenti e Studi”, *On the Pastoral Care of the Divorced and Remarried*, Vatican City 1998, pp. 20-29; Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts (PCLT), “*Declaration Concerning the Admission to Holy Communion of Faithful who are Divorced and Remarried*”, online; Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* 29: *AAS* 99 (2007), 128-29.

17) **AL 298**: ‘The divorced who have entered a new union, for example, can find themselves in a variety of situations, which should not be pigeonholed or fit into overly rigid classifications leaving no room for a suitable personal and pastoral discernment. One thing is a second union consoli-

dated over time, with new children, proven fidelity, generous self-giving, Christian commitment, a consciousness of its irregularity and of the great difficulty of going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new sins.’

If understood as meaning that the divorced and remarried can either sin or culpably expose themselves to the occasion of sin by abstaining from sexual relations in accordance with the perennial teaching and discipline of the Church:

1. *Temeraria, falsa.*
2. *Scandalosa, prava, derogans praxi et disciplinae Ecclesiae.*

Ecclesiasticus 15:16:

“If thou wilt keep the commandments and perform acceptable fidelity for ever, they shall preserve thee.”

See also: 1 Cor. 7:11, 10:13; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 102-03; AAS 85 (1993): 1213-14; Apostolic Exhortation, *Familiaris consortio*, 84, AAS 74 (1982) 92-149; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1650; Benedict XVI, Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* 99 (2007), 128-29.

18) **AL 298:** ‘There are also the cases of those who made every effort to save their first marriage and were unjustly abandoned, or of “those who have entered into a second union for the sake of the children’s upbringing, and are sometimes subjectively certain in conscience that their previous and irreparably broken marriage had never been valid”.’

If understood as meaning that subjective certainty in conscience about the invalidity of a previous

marriage is sufficient on its own to excuse from guilt or legal penalty those who contract a new marriage when their previous marriage is recognised as valid by the Church:

1. *Temeraria, falsa.*
2. *Scandalosa.*

Council of Trent, Session 24, canon 12:

“If anyone says that matrimonial cases do not belong to ecclesiastical judges, let him be anathema”
(DH 1812).

See also: Leo XIII, *Arcanum*, ASS 12 (1879), 393; John Paul II, 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, canons 1059-60, 1085.

19) **AL 311**: “The teaching of moral theology should not fail to incorporate these considerations.”

Understood as meaning that the teaching of moral theology in the Catholic Church should present as probable or true any of the propositions censured above:

1. *Falsa.*
2. *Scandalosa, prava, perversa, perniciosa.*

Matt. 5:19:

“He therefore that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.”

See also: Is. 5:20; Mt. 28:20; 1 Tim. 6:20; Jas. 3:1; Pius IX, Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, *DH* 2802; 1st Vatican Council, Constitution *Dei Filius*, cap. 4 (*DH* 3020); Pius X, Motu Proprio *Sacrorum antistitum*, *DH* 3541; 1st Vatican Council, Constitution *Dei Filius*, cap. 4 (*DH* 3020); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Iusiurandum fidelitatis in suscipiendo officio nomine ecclesiae exercendo*, *AAS* 81 (1989): 106; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Donum veritatis*, On the ecclesial vocation of the theologian, *AAS* 82 (1990): 1559; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 115-16: *AAS* 85 (1993): 1223-24; Benedict XVI, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Notification on the Works of Father Jon Sobrino SJ*, 2 (*DH* 5107).

The propositions censured above have been condemned in many previous magisterial documents. It is urgently necessary that their condemnation be repeated by the Supreme Pontiff in a definitive and final manner and that it be authoritatively stated that *Amoris laetitia* does not require any of them to be believed or considered as possibly true.

ENDNOTES:

1. Cf. Lucien Choupin, *Valeur des décisions doctrinales et disciplinaires du Saint-Siège*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1913), pp. 52-55; and A.-M. Aubry, *Obéir ou assentir? De la «soumission religieuse» au magistère simplement authentique*, Paris, *DDB*, *Collection «Sed Contra»*, 2015.
2. See H. Quilliet, 'Censures doctrinales', *DTC* II, 2101-2113, and the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, '*Doctrinal commentary on the concluding formula of the Professio fidei*', June 29th, 1998.
3. Scriptural references are taken from the *Vulgate* or from the neo-Vulgate
4. All references to *Denzinger* are taken from the 43rd edition.

SEEKING CLARITY: A PLEA TO UNTIE THE KNOTS IN *AMORIS LAETITIA*

The *Dubia* of the Four Cardinals

In September 2016, four cardinals of the Catholic Church wrote a letter to Pope Francis, asking for clarification on five questions, called the “*dubia*” concerning *Amoris Laetitia*. Having not received a response, they made their letter public, explaining their decision to do so in what they called “A Necessary Foreword”.

A Necessary Foreword

The sending of the letter to His Holiness Pope Francis by four cardinals derives from a deep pastoral concern.

We have noted a grave disorientation and great confusion of many faithful regarding extremely important matters for the life of the Church. We have noted that even within the episcopal college there are contrasting interpretations of Chapter 8 of *Amoris Laetitia*.

The great Tradition of the Church teaches us that the way out of situations like this is recourse to the Holy Father, asking the Apostolic See to resolve those doubts, which are the cause of disorientation and confusion.

Ours is, therefore, an act of justice and charity.

Of justice: With our initiative, we profess that the Petrine ministry is the ministry of unity, and that to Peter, to the Pope, belongs the service of confirming in the faith.

Of charity: We want to help the Pope to prevent divisions and conflicts in the Church, asking him to dispel all ambiguity.

We have also carried out a specific duty. According to the Code of Canon Law (349) the cardinals, even taken individually, are entrusted with the task of helping the Pope to care for the universal Church.

The Holy Father has decided not to respond. We have interpreted his sovereign decision as an invitation to continue the reflection and the discussion, calmly and with respect.

And so we are informing the entire people of God about our initiative, offering all of the documentation.

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

We hope that no one will judge us unjustly, as adversaries of the Holy Father and people devoid of mercy. What we have done and are doing derives from the deep collegial affection that unites us to the Pope, and from an impassioned concern for the good of the faithful.

Cardinal Walter Brandmüller

Cardinal Raymond L. Burke

Cardinal Carlo Caffarra

Cardinal Joachim Meisner

The Letter of the Four Cardinals to the Pope

To His Holiness Pope Francis
and for the attention of His Eminence Cardinal Gerhard L. Müller

Most Holy Father,

Following the publication of your apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, theologians and scholars have proposed interpretations that are not only divergent, but also conflicting, above all in regard to Chapter VIII. Moreover, the media have emphasized this dispute, thereby provoking uncertainty, confusion and disorientation among many of the faithful.

Because of this, we the undersigned, but also many bishops and priests, have received numerous requests from the faithful of various social strata on the correct interpretation to give to Chapter VIII of the exhortation.

Now, compelled in conscience by our pastoral responsibility and desiring to implement ever more that synodality to which Your Holiness urges us, with profound respect, we permit ourselves to ask you, Holy Father, as supreme teacher of the faith, called by the Risen One to confirm his brothers in the faith, to resolve the uncertainties and bring clarity, benevolently giving a response to the *dubia* that we attach the present letter.

May Your Holiness wish to bless us, as we promise constantly to remember you in prayer.

Cardinal Walter Brandmüller
Cardinal Carlo Caffarra

Cardinal Raymond L. Burke
Cardinal Joachim Meisner

Rome, September 19, 2016

The *Dubia*

1. It is asked whether, following the affirmations of *Amoris Laetitia* (300-305), it has now become possible to grant absolution in the sacrament of penance and thus to admit to holy Communion a person who, while bound by a valid marital bond, lives together with a different person *more uxorio* without fulfilling the conditions provided for by *Familiaris Consortio*, 84, and subsequently reaffirmed by *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 34, and *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 29. Can the expression “in certain cases” found in Note 351 (305) of the exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* be applied to **divorced persons who are in a new union and who continue to live more uxorio**?
2. After the publication of the post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (304), does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 79, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, on the existence of **absolute moral norms** that prohibit intrinsically evil acts and that are binding without exceptions?
3. After *Amoris Laetitia* (301) is it still possible to affirm that a person who habitually lives in contradiction to a commandment of God’s law, as for instance the one that prohibits adultery (Matthew 19:3-9), finds him or herself in an **objective situation of grave habitual sin** (Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, “Declaration,” June 24, 2000)?

4. After the affirmations of *Amoris Laetitia* (302) on “**circumstances which mitigate** moral responsibility,” does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 81, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, according to which “circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act ‘subjectively’ good or defensible as a choice”?
5. After *Amoris Laetitia* (303) does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 56, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, that excludes a creative interpretation of the **role of conscience** and that emphasizes that conscience can never be authorized to legitimate exceptions to absolute moral norms that prohibit intrinsically evil acts by virtue of their object?

Explanatory Note of the Four Cardinals

CONTEXT

Dubia (from the Latin: “doubts”) are formal questions brought before the Pope and to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith asking for clarifications on particular issues concerning doctrine or practice.

What is peculiar about these inquiries is that they are worded in a way that requires a “Yes” or “No” answer, without theological argumentation. This way of addressing the Apostolic See is not an invention of our own; it is an age-old practice.

Let’s get to what is concretely at stake.

Upon the publication of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* on love in the family, a debate has arisen particularly around its eighth chapter. Here specifically, Paragraphs 300-305 have been the object of divergent interpretations.

For many – bishops, priests, faithful – these paragraphs allude to or even explicitly teach a change in the discipline of the Church with respect to the divorced who are living in a new union, while others, admitting the lack of clarity or even the ambiguity of the passages in question, nonetheless argue that these same pages can be read in continuity with the previous magisterium and do not contain a modification in the Church’s practice and teaching.

Motivated by a pastoral concern for the faithful, four cardinals have sent a letter to the Holy Father under the

form of *dubia*, hoping to receive clarity, given that doubt and uncertainty are always highly detrimental to pastoral care.

The fact that interpreters come to different conclusions is also due to divergent ways of understanding the Christian moral life. In this sense, what is at stake in *Amoris Laetitia* is not only the question of whether or not the divorced who have entered into a new union can – under certain circumstances – be readmitted to the sacraments.

Rather, the interpretation of the document also implies different, contrasting approaches to the Christian way of life.

Thus, while the first question of the *dubia* concerns a practical question regarding the divorced and civilly remarried, the other four questions touch on fundamental issues of the Christian life.

THE QUESTIONS

Doubt No. 1:

It is asked whether, following the affirmations of *Amoris Laetitia* (300-305), it has now become possible to grant absolution in the sacrament of penance, and thus to admit to holy Communion a person who, while bound by a valid marital bond, lives together with a different person *more uxorio* without fulfilling the conditions provided for by *Familiaris Consortio*, 84, and subsequently reaffirmed by *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 34, and *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 29. Can the expression “in certain cases” found in Note 351 (305) of the exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* be applied to **divorced persons who are in a new union and who continue to live *more uxorio*?**

Question 1 makes particular reference to *Amoris Laetitia*, 305, and to Footnote 351. While Note 351 specifically speaks of the sacraments of penance and Communion, it does not mention the divorced and civilly remarried in this context, nor does the main text.

Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 84, already contemplated the possibility of admitting the divorced and civilly remarried to the sacraments. It mentions three conditions:

- The persons concerned cannot separate without committing new injustices (for instance, they may be responsible for the upbringing of their children);
- They take upon themselves the commitment to live according to the truth of their situation, that is, to cease living together as if they were husband and wife (*more uxorio*), abstaining from those acts that are proper to spouses;
- They avoid giving scandal (that is, they avoid giving the appearance of sin so as to avoid the danger of leading others into sin).

The conditions mentioned by *Familiaris Consortio*, 84, and by the subsequent documents recalled will immediately appear reasonable once we remember that the marital union is not just based on mutual affection and that sexual acts are not just one activity among others that couples engage in.

Sexual relations are for marital love. They are something so important, so good and so precious that they require a particular context, the context of marital love. Hence, not only the divorced living in a new union need to abstain, but also everyone who is not married. For the Church, the

Sixth Commandment – “Do not commit adultery” – has always covered any exercise of human sexuality that is not marital, i.e., any kind of sexual relations other than those engaged in with one’s rightful spouse.

It would seem that admitting to Communion those of the faithful who are separated or divorced from their rightful spouse and who have entered a new union in which they live with someone else as if they were husband and wife would mean for the Church to *teach by her practice* one of the following affirmations about marriage, human sexuality and the nature of the sacraments:

- A divorce does not dissolve the marriage bond, and the partners to the new union are not married. However, *people who are not married can under certain circumstances legitimately engage in acts of sexual intimacy.*
- *A divorce dissolves the marriage bond.* People who are not married cannot legitimately engage in sexual acts. The divorced and remarried are legitimate spouses and their sexual acts are lawful marital acts.
- A divorce does not dissolve the marriage bond, and the partners to the new union are not married. People who are not married cannot legitimately engage in sexual acts, so that the divorced and civilly remarried live in a situation of habitual, public, objective and grave sin. However, admitting persons to the Eucharist does not mean for the Church to approve their public state of life; the faithful can approach the Eucharistic table even with consciousness of grave sin, and receiving absolution in the sacrament of penance does not always require the purpose of amending one’s life. *The sacraments,*

therefore, are detached from life: Christian rites and worship are on a completely different sphere than the Christian moral life.

Doubt No. 2:

After the publication of the post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (304), does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 79, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, on the existence of **absolute moral norms** that prohibit intrinsically evil acts and that are binding without exceptions?

The second question regards the existence of so-called intrinsically evil acts. John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 79, claims that one can “qualify as morally evil according to its species ... the deliberate choice of certain kinds of behavior or specific acts, apart from a consideration of the intention for which the choice is made or the totality of the foreseeable consequences of that act for all persons concerned.”

Thus, the encyclical teaches that there are acts that are always evil, which are forbidden by moral norms that bind without exception (“moral absolutes”). These moral absolutes are always negative, that is, they tell us what we should *not* do. “Do not kill.” “Do not commit adultery.” Only negative norms can bind without exception.

According to *Veritatis Splendor*, with intrinsically evil acts no discernment of circumstances or intentions is necessary. Uniting oneself to a woman who is married to another is and remains an act of adultery, that as such is never to be done, even if by doing so an agent could possibly extract precious secrets from a villain's wife so as to save the kingdom

(what sounds like an example from a James Bond movie has already been contemplated by St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Malo*, q. 15, a. 1). John Paul II argues that the intention (say, “saving the kingdom”) does not change the species of the act (here: “committing adultery”), and that it is enough to know the species of the act (“adultery”) to know that one must not do it.

Doubt No. 3:

After *Amoris Laetitia* (301) is it still possible to affirm that a person who habitually lives in contradiction to a commandment of God’s law, as for instance the one that prohibits adultery (Matthew 19:3-9), finds him or herself in an **objective situation of grave habitual sin** (Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, “Declaration,” June 24, 2000)?

In Paragraph 301, *Amoris Laetitia* recalls that: “The Church possesses a solid body of reflection concerning mitigating factors and situations.” And it concludes that “hence it can no longer simply be said that all those in any ‘irregular’ situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace.”

In its “Declaration,” of June 24, 2000, the Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts seeks to clarify Canon 915 of the Code of Canon Law, which states that those who “obstinately persist in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy Communion.” The Pontifical Council’s “Declaration” argues that this canon is applicable also to faithful who are divorced and civilly remarried. It spells out that “grave sin” has to be understood objectively, given that the minister of the Eucharist has no means of judging another person’s subjective imputability.

Thus, for the “Declaration,” the question of the admission to the sacraments is about judging a person’s objective life situation and not about judging that this person is in a state of mortal sin. Indeed, subjectively he or she may not be fully imputable or not be imputable at all.

Along the same lines, in his encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 37, St. John Paul II recalls that “the judgment of one’s state of grace obviously belongs only to the person involved, since it is a question of examining one’s conscience.” Hence, the distinction referred to by *Amoris Laetitia* between the subjective situation of *mortal* sin and the objective situation of *grave* sin is indeed well established in the Church’s teaching.

John Paul II, however, continues by insisting that “in cases of outward conduct which is seriously, clearly and steadfastly contrary to the moral norm, the Church, in her pastoral concern for the good order of the community and out of respect for the sacrament, cannot fail to feel directly involved.” He then reiterates the teaching of Canon 915 mentioned above.

Question 3 of the *Dubia*, hence, would like to clarify whether, even after *Amoris Laetitia*, it is still possible to say that persons who habitually live in contradiction to a commandment of God’s law, such as the commandment against adultery, theft, murder or perjury, live in objective situations of grave habitual sin, even if, for whatever reasons, it is not certain that they are subjectively imputable for their habitual transgressions.

Doubt No. 4:

After the affirmations of *Amoris Laetitia* (302) on “**circumstances which mitigate** moral responsibility,” does one

still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 81, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, according to which "circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act 'subjectively' good or defensible as a choice"?

In Paragraph 302, *Amoris Laetitia* stresses that on account of mitigating circumstances "a negative judgment about an objective situation does not imply a judgment about the imputability or culpability of the person involved." The *Dubia* point to the Church's teaching as expressed in John Paul II's *Veritatis Splendor*, according to which circumstances or good intentions can never turn an intrinsically evil act into one that is excusable or even good.

The question arises whether *Amoris Laetitia*, too, is agreed that any act that transgresses against God's commandments, such as adultery, murder, theft or perjury, can never, on account of circumstances that mitigate personal responsibility, become excusable or even good.

Do these acts, which the Church's Tradition has called bad in themselves and grave sins, continue to be destructive and harmful for anyone committing them in whatever subjective state of moral responsibility he may be?

Or could these acts, depending on a person's subjective state and depending on the circumstances and intentions, cease to be injurious and become commendable or at least excusable?

Doubt No. 5:

After *Amoris Laetitia* (303) does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis Splen-*

dor, 56, based on sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, that excludes a creative interpretation of the **role of conscience** and that emphasizes that conscience can never be authorized to legitimate exceptions to absolute moral norms that prohibit intrinsically evil acts by virtue of their object?

Amoris Laetitia, 303, states that “conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God.” The *Dubia* ask for a clarification of these affirmations, given that they are susceptible to divergent interpretations.

For those proposing the creative idea of conscience, the precepts of God’s law and the norm of the individual conscience can be in tension or even in opposition, while the final word should always go to conscience that ultimately decides about good and evil. According to *Veritatis Splendor*, 56, “on this basis, an attempt is made to legitimize so-called ‘pastoral’ solutions contrary to the teaching of the magisterium, and to justify a ‘creative’ hermeneutic according to which the moral conscience is in no way obliged, in every case, by a particular negative precept.”

In this perspective, it will never be enough for moral conscience to know “this is adultery,” or “this is murder,” in order to know that this is something one cannot and must not do.

Rather, one would also need to look at the circumstances or the intentions to know if this act could not, after all, be excusable or even obligatory (Question 4 of the *Dubia*). For these theories, conscience could indeed rightfully decide that,

in a given case, God's will for me consists in an act by which I transgress one of his commandments. "Do not commit adultery" is seen as just a general norm. In the here and now, and given my good intentions, committing adultery is what God really requires of me. Under these terms, cases of virtuous adultery, lawful murder and obligatory perjury are at least conceivable.

This would mean to conceive of conscience as a faculty for autonomously deciding about good and evil and of God's law as a burden that is arbitrarily imposed and that could at times be opposed to our true happiness.

However, conscience does not *decide* about good and evil. The whole idea of a "decision of conscience" is misleading. The proper act of conscience is to judge and not to decide. It says, "This is good." "This is bad." This goodness or badness does not depend on it. It acknowledges and recognizes the goodness or badness of an action, and for doing so, that is, for judging, conscience needs criteria; it is inherently dependent on truth.

God's commandments are a most welcome help for conscience to get to know the truth and hence to judge verily. God's commandments are the expression of the truth about our good, about our very being, disclosing something crucial about how to live life well. Pope Francis, too, expresses himself in these terms, when, in *Amoris Laetitia*, 295: "The law is itself a gift of God which points out the way, a gift for everyone without exception."

The Filial Correction

On 16 July 2017, clerical and lay scholars from around the world addressed a *correctio filialis* (a filial correction) to Pope Francis, identifying seven heresies contained in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

Correctio filialis de haeresibus propagatis

Summary

A 25-page letter signed by 40 Catholic clergy and lay scholars was delivered to Pope Francis on August 11th. Since no answer was received from the Holy Father, it is being made public today, 24th September, Feast of Our Lady of Ransom and of Our Lady of Walsingham. **The letter, which is open to new signatories, now has the names of 62 clergy and lay scholars from 20 countries**, who also represent others lacking the necessary freedom of speech. It has a Latin title: ‘Correctio filialis de haeresibus propagatis’ (literally, ‘A filial correction concerning the propagation of heresies’). **It states that the pope has, by his Apostolic Exhortation Amoris laetitia, and by other, related, words, deeds and omissions, effectively upheld 7 heretical positions about marriage, the moral life, and the reception of the sacraments, and has caused these heretical opinions to spread in the Catholic Church.** These 7 heresies are expressed by the signatories in Latin, the official language of the Church.

This letter of correction has 3 main parts. In the first part, the signatories explain why, as believing and practising Catholics, they have the right and duty to issue such a correction to the supreme pontiff. Church law itself requires that competent persons not remain silent when the pastors of the Church are misleading the flock. This involves no conflict with the Catholic dogma of papal infallibility, since

the Church teaches that a pope must meet strict criteria before his utterances can be considered infallible. Pope Francis has not met these criteria. **He has not declared these heretical positions to be definitive teachings of the Church, or stated that Catholics must believe them with the assent of faith.** The Church teaches no pope can claim that God has revealed some new truth to him, which it would be obligatory for Catholics to believe.

The second part of the letter is the essential one, since it contains the ‘Correction’ properly speaking. **It lists the passages of *Amoris laetitia* in which heretical positions are insinuated or encouraged, and then it lists words, deeds, and omissions of Pope Francis which make it clear beyond reasonable doubt that he wishes Catholics to interpret these passages in a way that is, in fact, heretical.** In particular, the pope has directly or indirectly countenanced the beliefs that obedience to God’s Law can be impossible or undesirable, and that the Church should sometimes accept adultery as compatible with being a practising Catholic.

The final part, called ‘Elucidation’, discusses two causes of this unique crisis. One cause is ‘Modernism’. Theologically speaking, **Modernism is the belief that God has not delivered definite truths to the Church, which she must continue to teach in exactly the same sense until the end of time.** Modernists hold that God communicates to mankind only experiences., which human beings can reflect on, so as to make various statements about God, life and religion; but such statements are only provisional, never fixed dogmas. Modernism was condemned by Pope St Pius X at the start of the 20th century, but it revived in the

middle of the century. The great and continuing confusion caused in the Catholic Church by Modernism obliges the signatories to describe the true meaning of ‘faith’, ‘heresy’, ‘revelation’, and ‘magisterium’.

A second cause of the crisis is the **apparent influence of the ideas of Martin Luther on Pope Francis**. The letter shows how Luther, the founder of Protestantism, had ideas on marriage, divorce, forgiveness, and divine law which correspond to those which the pope has promoted by word, deed and omission. It also notes the explicit and unprecedented praise given by Pope Francis to the German heresiarch.

The signatories do not venture to judge the degree of awareness with which Pope Francis has propagated the 7 heresies which they list. **But they respectfully insist that he condemn these heresies, which he has directly or indirectly upheld.**

The signatories profess their loyalty to the holy Roman Church, assure the pope of their prayers, and ask for his apostolic blessing.

[To view the list of signatories, please visit: <http://www.correctiofilialis.org/signatories/>]

July 16th, 2017
Feast of our Lady of Mt Carmel

Most Holy Father,

With profound grief, but moved by fidelity to our Lord Jesus Christ, by love for the Church and for the papacy, and by filial devotion toward yourself, we are compelled to address a correction to Your Holiness on account of the propagation of heresies effected by the apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia* and by other words, deeds and omissions of Your Holiness.

We are permitted to issue this correction by natural law, by the law of Christ, and by the law of the Church, which three things Your Holiness has been appointed by divine providence to guard. By natural law: for as subjects have by nature a duty to obey their superiors in all lawful things, so they have a right to be governed according to law, and therefore to insist, where need be, that their superiors so govern. By the law of Christ: for His Spirit inspired the apostle Paul to rebuke Peter in public when the latter did not act according to the truth of the gospel (Gal. 2). St Thomas Aquinas notes that this public rebuke from a subject to a superior was licit on account of the imminent danger of scandal concerning the faith (*Summa Theologiae* 2a 2ae, 33, 4 ad 2), and ‘the gloss of St Augustine’ adds that on this occasion, “Peter gave an example to superiors, that if at any time they should happen to stray from the straight path, they should not disdain to be reproved by their subjects” (ibid.). The law of the Church also constrains us, since it states that “Christ’s faithful . . . have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence,

and position, to manifest to the sacred pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church” (*Code of Canon Law* 212:2-3; *Code of Canons of Oriental Churches* 15:3).

Scandal concerning faith and morals has been given to the Church and to the world by the publication of *Amoris laetitia* and by other acts through which Your Holiness has sufficiently made clear the scope and purpose of this document. Heresies and other errors have in consequence spread through the Church; for while some bishops and cardinals have continued to defend the divinely revealed truths about marriage, the moral law, and the reception of the sacraments, others have denied these truths, and have received from Your Holiness not rebuke but favour. Those cardinals, by contrast, who have submitted *dubia* to Your Holiness, in order that by this time-honoured method the truth of the gospel might be easily affirmed, have received no answer but silence.

Most Holy Father, the Petrine ministry has not been entrusted to you that you might impose strange doctrines on the faithful, but so that you may, as a faithful steward, guard the deposit against the day of the Lord’s return (Lk. 12; 1 Tim. 6:20). We adhere wholeheartedly to the doctrine of papal infallibility as defined by the First Vatican Council, and therefore we adhere to the explanation which that same council gave of this charism, which includes this declaration: “The Holy Spirit was not promised to the successors of Peter 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” (*Pastor aeternus*, cap. 4). For this reason, Your Predecessor, Blessed Pius IX, praised the

collective declaration of the German bishops, who noted that “the opinion according to which the pope is ‘an absolute sovereign because of his infallibility’ is based on a completely false understanding of the dogma of papal infallibility.”¹ Likewise, at the 2nd Vatican Council, the Theological Commission which oversaw the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, noted that the powers of the Roman pontiff are limited in many ways.²

Those Catholics, however, who do not clearly grasp the limits of papal infallibility are liable to be led by the words and actions of Your Holiness into one of two disastrous errors: either they will come to embrace the heresies which are now being propagated, or, aware that these doctrines are contrary to the word of God, they will doubt or deny the prerogatives of the popes. Others again of the faithful are led to put in doubt the validity of the renunciation of the papacy by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Thus, the Petrine office, bestowed upon the Church by our Lord Jesus Christ for the sake of unity and faith, is so used that a way is opened for heresy and for schism. Further, noting that practices now encouraged by Your Holiness’s words and actions are contrary not only to the perennial faith and discipline of the Church but also to the magisterial statements of Your predecessors, the faithful reflect that Your Holiness’s own statements can enjoy no greater authority than that of former popes; and thus the authentic papal magisterium suffers a wound of which it may not soon be healed.

We, however, believe that Your Holiness possesses the charism of infallibility, and the right of universal jurisdiction over Christ’s faithful, in the sense defined by the Church. In our protest against *Amoris laetitia* and against other deeds,

words and omissions related to it, we do not deny the existence of this papal charism or Your Holiness's possession of it, since neither *Amoris laetitia* nor any of the statements which have served to propagate the heresies which this exhortation insinuates are protected by that divine guarantee of truth. Our correction is indeed required by fidelity to infallible papal teachings which are incompatible with certain of Your Holiness's statements.

As subjects, we do not have the right to issue to Your Holiness that form of correction by which a superior coerces those subject to him with the threat or administration of punishment (cf. *Summa Theologiae* 2a 2ae, 33, 4). We issue this correction, rather, to protect our fellow Catholics – and those outside the Church, from whom the key of knowledge must not be taken away (cf. Lk. 11:52) – hoping to prevent the further spread of doctrines which tend of themselves to the profaning of all the sacraments and the subversion of the Law of God.

* * *

We wish now to show how several passages of *Amoris laetitia*, in conjunction with acts, words, and omissions of Your Holiness, serve to propagate seven heretical propositions.³

The passages of *Amoris laetitia* to which we refer are the following:

AL 295: ‘Saint John Paul II proposed the so-called “law of gradualness” in the knowledge that the human being “knows, loves and accomplishes moral good by different stages of growth”. This is not a “gradualness of law” but rather a gradualness in

the prudential exercise of free acts on the part of subjects who are not in a position to understand, appreciate, or fully carry out the objective demands of the law.’

AL 296: “There are two ways of thinking which recur throughout the Church’s history: casting off and reinstating. The Church’s way, from the time of the Council of Jerusalem, has always been the way of Jesus, the way of mercy and reinstatement. The way of the Church is not to condemn anyone for ever.”

AL 297: ‘No one can be condemned for ever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel!’

AL 298: ‘The divorced who have entered a new union, for example, can find themselves in a variety of situations, which should not be pigeonholed or fit into overly rigid classifications leaving no room for a suitable personal and pastoral discernment. One thing is a second union consolidated over time, with new children, proven fidelity, generous self-giving, Christian commitment, a consciousness of its irregularity and of the great difficulty of going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new sins. The Church acknowledges situations “where, for serious reasons, such as the children’s upbringing, a man and woman cannot satisfy the obligation to separate [footnote 329: In such situations, many people, knowing and accepting the

possibility of living “as brothers and sisters” which the Church offers them, point out that if certain expressions of intimacy are lacking, “it often happens that faithfulness is endangered and the good of the children suffers”.] There are also the cases of those who made every effort to save their first marriage and were unjustly abandoned, or of “those who have entered into a second union for the sake of the children’s upbringing, and are sometimes subjectively certain in conscience that their previous and irreparably broken marriage had never been valid”. Another thing is a new union arising from a recent divorce, with all the suffering and confusion which this entails for children and entire families, or the case of someone who has consistently failed in his obligations to the family. It must remain clear that this is not the ideal which the Gospel proposes for marriage and the family. The Synod Fathers stated that the discernment of pastors must always take place “by adequately distinguishing”, with an approach which “carefully discerns situations”. We know that no “easy recipes” exist.’

AL 299: ‘I am in agreement with the many Synod Fathers who observed that “the baptized who are divorced and civilly remarried need to be more fully integrated into Christian communities in the variety of ways possible, while avoiding any occasion of scandal. The logic of integration is the key to their pastoral care, a care which would allow them not

only to realize that they belong to the Church as the body of Christ, but also to know that they can have a joyful and fruitful experience in it. They are baptized; they are brothers and sisters; the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts gifts and talents for the good of all. ... Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, but instead as living members, able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always, who takes care of them with affection and encourages them along the path of life and the Gospel.”

AL 300: ‘Since “the degree of responsibility is not equal in all cases”, the consequences or effects of a rule need not necessarily always be the same. [foot-note 336] This is also the case with regard to sacramental discipline, since discernment can recognize that in a particular situation no grave fault exists.’

AL 301: ‘It is [sic] can no longer simply be said that all those in any “irregular” situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace. More is involved here than mere ignorance of the rule. A subject may know full well the rule, yet have great difficulty in understanding “its inherent values, or be in a concrete situation which does not allow him or her to act differently and decide otherwise without further sin.”’

AL 303: ‘Conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal.’

AL 304: ‘I earnestly ask that we always recall a teaching of Saint Thomas Aquinas and learn to incorporate it in our pastoral discernment: “Although there is necessity in the general principles, the more we descend to matters of detail, the more frequently we encounter defects... In matters of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all, as to matters of detail, but only as to the general principles; and where there is the same rectitude in matters of detail, it is not equally known to all... The principle will be found to fail, according as we descend further into detail”. It is true that general rules set forth a good which can never be disregarded or neglected, but in their formulation they cannot provide absolutely for all particular situations.’

AL 305: ‘Because of forms of conditioning and mitigating factors, it is possible that in an objective situation of sin – which may not be subjectively culpable, or fully such – a person can be living in God’s grace, can love and can also grow in the life

of grace and charity, while receiving the Church's help to this end. [footnote 351: In certain cases, this can include the help of the sacraments. Hence, "I want to remind priests that the confessional must not be a torture chamber, but rather an encounter with the Lord's mercy. I would also point out that the Eucharist "is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak."']

AL 308: 'I understand those who prefer a more rigorous pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion. But I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, "always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street".'

AL 311: 'The teaching of moral theology should not fail to incorporate these considerations.'

The words, deeds and omissions of Your Holiness to which we wish to refer, and which in conjunction with these passages of *Amoris laetitia* are serving to propagate heresies within the Church, are the following:

- Your Holiness has refused to give a positive answer to the *dubia* submitted to you by Cardinals Burke, Caffarra, Brandmüller, and Meisner, in which you were respectfully requested to confirm that the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* does not abolish five teachings of the Catholic faith.

- Your Holiness intervened in the composition of the *Relatio post disceptationem* for the Extraordinary Synod on the Family. The *Relatio* proposed allowing Communion for divorced-and-remarried Catholics on a “case-by-case basis”, and said pastors should emphasize the “positive aspects” of lifestyles the Church considers gravely sinful, including civil remarriage after divorce and premarital cohabitation. These proposals were included in the *Relatio* at your personal insistence, despite the fact that they did not receive the two-thirds majority required by the Synod rules for a proposal to be included in the *Relatio*.

- In an interview in April 2016, a journalist asked Your Holiness if there are any concrete possibilities for the divorced and remarried that did not exist before the publication of *Amoris laetitia*. You replied ‘Io posso dire, sì. Punto’; that is, ‘I can say yes. Period.’ Your Holiness then stated that the reporter’s question was answered by the presentation given by Cardinal Schönborn on *Amoris laetitia*. In this presentation Cardinal Schönborn stated:

My great joy as a result of this document resides in the fact that it coherently overcomes that artificial, superficial, clear division between “regular” and “irregular”, and subjects *everyone* to the common call of the Gospel, according to the words of St. Paul: “For God has consigned all to disobedience, that He may have mercy on all” (Rom. 11, 32). ... what does the Pope say in relation to access to the sacraments for people who live in “irregular” situations? Pope

Benedict had already said that “easy recipes” do not exist (AL 298, note 333). Pope Francis reiterates the need to discern carefully the situation, in keeping with St. John Paul II’s *Familiaris consortio* (84) (AL 298). “Discernment must help to find possible ways of responding to God and growing in the midst of limits. By thinking that everything is black and white, we sometimes close off the way of grace and of growth, and discourage paths of sanctification which give glory to God” (AL 205). He also reminds us of an important phrase from *Evangelii gaudium*, 44: “A small step, in the midst of great human limitations, can be more pleasing to God than a life which appears outwardly in order but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties” (AL 304). In the sense of this “via caritatis” (AL 306), the Pope affirms, in a humble and simple manner, in a note (351) that the help of the sacraments may also be given “in certain cases”.⁴

Your Holiness amplified this statement by asserting that *Amoris laetitia* endorses the approach to the divorced and remarried that is practised in Cardinal Schönborn’s diocese, where they are permitted to receive communion.

- On Sept. 5th 2016 the bishops of the Buenos Aires region issued a statement on the application of *Amoris laetitia*. In it they stated:

6) En otras circunstancias más complejas, y cuando no se pudo obtener una declaración de nulidad, la opción mencionada puede no ser de hecho factible.

No obstante, igualmente es posible un camino de discernimiento. Si se llega a reconocer que, en un caso concreto, hay limitaciones que atenúan la responsabilidad y la culpabilidad (cf. 301-302), particularmente cuando una persona considere que caería en una ulterior falta dañando a los hijos de la nueva unión, *Amoris laetitia* abre la posibilidad del acceso a los sacramentos de la Reconciliación y la Eucaristía (cf. notas 336 y 351). Estos a su vez disponen a la persona a seguir madurando y creciendo con la fuerza de la gracia. ...

9) Puede ser conveniente que un eventual acceso a los sacramentos se realice de manera reservada, sobre todo cuando se prevean situaciones conflictivas. Pero al mismo tiempo no hay que dejar de acompañar a la comunidad para que crezca en un espíritu de comprensión y de acogida, sin que ello implique crear confusiones en la enseñanza de la Iglesia acerca del matrimonio indisoluble. La comunidad es instrumento de la misericordia que es «inmerecida, incondicional y gratuita» (297).

10) El discernimiento no se cierra, porque «es dinámico y debe permanecer siempre abierto a nuevas etapas de crecimiento y a nuevas decisiones que permitan realizar el ideal de manera más plena» (303), según la «ley de gradualidad» (295) y confiando en la ayuda de la gracia.

...

[6] In other, more complex cases, and when a declaration of nullity has not been obtained, the above mentioned option may not, in fact, be feasible. Nonetheless, a path of discernment is still possible. If it comes to be recognized that, in a specific case, there are limitations that mitigate responsibility and culpability (cf. 301-302), especially when a person believes they would incur a subsequent wrong by harming the children of the new union, *Amoris laetitia* offers the possibility of access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist (cf. footnotes 336 and 351). These sacraments, in turn, dispose the person to continue maturing and growing with the power of grace. ...

9) It may be right for eventual access to sacraments to take place privately, especially where situations of conflict might arise. But at the same time, we have to accompany our communities in their growing understanding and welcome, without this implying creating confusion about the teaching of the Church on the indissoluble marriage. The community is an instrument of mercy, which is “unmerited, unconditional and gratuitous” (297).

10) Discernment is not closed, because it “is dynamic; it must remain ever open to new stages of growth and to new decisions which can enable the ideal to be more fully realized” (303), according to the “law of gradualness” (295) and with confidence in the help of grace.]

This asserts that according to *Amoris laetitia* confusion is not to be created about the teaching of the Church on the indissolubility of marriage, that the divorced and remarried can receive the sacraments, and that persisting in this state is compatible with receiving the help of grace. Your Holiness wrote an official letter dated the same day to Bishop Sergio Alfredo Fenoy of San Miguel, a delegate of the Argentina bishops' Buenos Aires Region, stating that the bishops of the Buenos Aires region had given the only possible interpretation of *Amoris laetitia*:

Querido hermano:

Recibí el escrito de la Región Pastoral Buenos Aires «Criterios básicos para la aplicación del capítulo VIII de *Amoris laetitia*». Muchas gracias por habérmelo enviado; y los felicito por el trabajo que se han tomado: un verdadero ejemplo de acompañamiento a los sacerdotes... y todos sabemos cuánto es necesaria esta cercanía del obispo con su clero y del clero con el obispo . El prójimo «más prójimo» del obispo es el sacerdote, y el mandamiento de amar al prójimo como a sí mismo comienza para nosotros obispos precisamente con nuestros curas.

El escrito es muy bueno y explícita cabalmente el sentido del capítulo VIII de *Amoris Laetitia*. No hay otras interpretaciones.

[Beloved brother,

I received the document from the Buenos Aires Pastoral Region, “Basic Criteria for the Application of Chapter Eight of *Amoris laetitia*.” Thank you very much for sending it to me. I thank you for the work they have done on this: a true example of accompaniment for the priests ... and we all know how necessary is this closeness of the bishop with his clergy and the clergy with the bishop. The neighbor ‘closest’ to the bishop is the priest, and the commandment to love one’s neighbor as one’s self begins for us, the bishops, precisely with our priests. The document is very good and completely explains the meaning of chapter VIII of *Amoris laetitia*. There are no other interpretations.]⁵

- Your Holiness appointed Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia as president of the Pontifical Academy for Life and grand chancellor of the Pontifical Pope John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family. As head of the Pontifical Council for the Family, Archbishop Paglia was responsible for the publication of a book, *Famiglia e Chiesa, un legame indissolubile* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), that contains the lectures given at three seminars promoted by that dicastery on the topics of ‘Marriage: Faith, Sacrament, Discipline’; ‘Family, Conjugal Love and Generation’; and ‘The Wounded Family and Irregular Unions: What Pastoral Attitude’. This book and the seminars it described were intended to put forward proposals for the Synod on the Family, and promoted the granting of communion to divorced and remarried Catholics.

- Guidelines for the diocese of Rome were issued under Your Holiness's authority permitting the reception of the Eucharist under certain circumstances by civilly divorced and remarried Catholics living *more uxorio* with their civil partner.

- Your Holiness appointed Bishop Kevin Farrell as prefect of the newly established Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, and promoted him to the rank of cardinal. Cardinal Farrell has expressed support for Cardinal Schönborn's proposal that the divorced and remarried should receive communion. He has stated that the reception of communion by the divorced and remarried is a 'process of discernment and of conscience.'⁶

- On January 17th, 2017, the *Osservatore Romano*, the official journal of the Holy See, published the guidelines issued by the archbishop of Malta and the bishop of Gozo for the reception of the Eucharist by persons living in an adulterous relationship. These guidelines permitted the sacrilegious reception of the Eucharist by some persons in this situation, and stated that in some cases it is impossible for such persons to practise chastity and harmful for them to attempt to practise chastity. No criticism of these guidelines was made by the *Osservatore Romano*, which presented them as legitimate exercises of episcopal teaching and authority. This publication was an official act of the Holy See that went uncorrected by yourself.

CORRECTIO

His verbis, actis, et omissionibus, et in iis sententiis libri *Amoris laetitia* quas supra diximus, Sanctitas Vestra sustentavit

recte aut oblique, et in Ecclesia (quali quantaque intelligentia nescimus nec iudicare audemus) propositiones has sequentes, cum munere publico tum actu privato, propagavit, falsas profecto et haereticas:

1. “Homo iustificatus iis caret viribus quibus, Dei gratia adiutus, mandata obiectiva legis divinae impleat; quasi quidvis ex Dei mandatis sit iustificatis impossibile; seu quasi Dei gratia, cum in homine iustificationem efficit, non semper et sua natura conversionem efficiat ab omni peccato gravi; seu quasi non sit sufficiens ut hominem ab omni peccato gravi convertat.”
2. “Christifidelis qui, divortium civile a sponsa legitima consecutus, matrimonium civile (sponsa vivente) cum alia contraxit; quique cum ea more uxorio vivit; quique cum plena intelligentia naturae actus sui et voluntatis propriae pleno ad actum consensu eligit in hoc rerum statu manere: non necessarie mortaliter peccare dicendus est, et gratiam sanctificantem accipere et in caritate crescere potest.”
3. “Christifidelis qui alicuius mandati divini plenam scientiam possidet et deliberata voluntate in re gravi id violare eligit, non semper per talem actum graviter peccat.”
4. “Homo potest, dum divinae prohibitioni obtemperat, contra Deum ea ipsa obtemperacione peccare.”
5. “Conscientia recte ac vere iudicare potest actus venereos aliquando probos et honestos esse aut licite rogari posse aut etiam a Deo mandari, inter eos qui matrimonium civile contraxerunt quamquam sponsus cum alia in matrimonio sacramentali iam coniunctus est.”

6. “Principia moralia et veritas moralis quae in divina revelatione et in lege naturali continentur non comprehendunt prohibitiones qualibus genera quaedam actionis absolute vetantur utpote quae propter obiectum suum semper graviter illicita sint.”
7. “Haec est voluntas Domini nostri Iesu Christi, ut Ecclesia disciplinam suam perantiquam abiciat negandi Eucharistiam et Absolutionem iis qui, divortium civile consecuti et matrimonium civile ingressi, contritionem et propositum firmum sese emendandi ab ea in qua vivunt vitae conditione noluerunt patefacere.”⁷

These propositions all contradict truths that are divinely revealed, and that Catholics must believe with the assent of divine faith. They were identified as heresies in the petition concerning *Amoris laetitia* that was addressed by 45 Catholic scholars to the cardinals and Eastern patriarchs of the Church.⁸ It is necessary for the good of souls that they be once more condemned by the authority of the Church. In listing these seven propositions we do not intend to give an exhaustive list of all the heresies and errors which an unbiased reader, attempting to read *Amoris laetitia* in its natural and obvious sense, would plausibly take to be affirmed, suggested or favoured by this document: a letter sent to all the cardinals of the Church and to the Eastern Catholic patriarchs lists 19 such propositions. Rather, we seek to list the propositions which Your Holiness’s words, deeds and omissions, as already described, have in effect upheld and propagated, to the great and imminent danger of souls.

At this critical hour, therefore, we turn to the *cathedra veritatis*, the Roman Church, which has by divine law pre-em-

inence over all the churches, and of which we are and intend always to remain loyal children, and we respectfully insist that Your Holiness publicly reject these propositions, thus accomplishing the mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ given to St Peter and through him to all his successors until the end of the world: “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren.”

We respectfully ask for Your Holiness’s apostolic blessing, with the assurance of our filial devotion in our Lord and of our prayer for the welfare of the Church.

* * *

ELUCIDATION

In order to elucidate our *Correctio*, and to put forward a firmer defence against the spread of errors, we wish to draw attention to two general sources of error which appear to us to be fostering the heresies that we have listed. We speak, firstly, of that false understanding of divine revelation which generally receives the name of Modernism, and secondly, of the teachings of Martin Luther.

A. The problem of Modernism

The Catholic understanding of divine revelation is frequently denied by contemporary theologians, and this denial has led to widespread confusion among Catholics on the nature of divine revelation and faith. In order to prevent any misunderstanding that might arise from this confusion, and to justify our claim about the current propagation of heresies within the Church, we will describe the Catholic understanding of divine revelation and faith, which is presumed in this document.

This description is also necessary in order to respond to the passages in *Amoris laetitia* where it is asserted that the teachings of Christ and of the magisterium of the Church should be followed. These passages include the following: “Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the Church” (AL 3). “Faithful to Christ’s teaching we look to the reality of the family today in all its complexity” (AL 32). “The teaching of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae* and the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* ought to be taken up anew” (AL 222). “The teaching of the Master (cf. Mt 22:30) and Saint Paul (cf. 1 Cor 7:29-31) on marriage is set – and not by chance – in the context of the ultimate and definitive dimension of our human existence. We urgently need to rediscover the richness of this teaching” (AL 325). These passages might be seen as ensuring that nothing in *Amoris laetitia* serves to propagate errors contrary to Catholic teaching. A description of the true nature of adherence to Catholic teaching will clarify our assertion that *Amoris laetitia* does indeed serve to propagate such errors.

We therefore ask Your Holiness to permit us to recall the following truths, which are taught by Holy Scripture, Sacred Tradition, the universal consensus of the Fathers, and the magisterium of the Church, and which summarise Catholic teaching on faith, divine revelation, infallible magisterial teaching, and heresy:

1. The gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven.⁹

2. Jesus Christ is true God and true man. In consequence, all his teachings are the teachings of God Himself.¹⁰
3. All the propositions that are contained in the Catholic faith are truths communicated by God.¹¹
4. In believing these truths with an assent that is an act of the theological virtue of faith, we are believing the testimony of a speaker. The act of divine faith is a particular form of the general intellectual activity of believing a proposition because a speaker asserts it, and because the speaker is held to be honest and knowledgeable with respect to the assertion he is making. In an act of divine faith, God is believed when he says something, and he is believed because he is God and hence is knowledgeable and truthful.¹²
5. Belief in divine testimony differs from belief in the testimony of human beings who are not divine, because God is all-knowing and perfectly good. In consequence, he can neither lie nor be deceived. It is thus impossible for divine testimony to be mistaken. Because the truths of the Catholic faith are communicated to us by God, the assent of faith that is given to them is most certain. A Catholic believer cannot have rational grounds for doubting or disbelieving any of these truths.¹³
6. Human reason by itself can establish the truth of the Catholic faith based on the publicly available evidence for the divine origin of the Catholic Church, but such reasoning cannot produce an act of faith. The theological virtue of faith and the act of faith can only be produced by divine grace. A person who has this virtue but then freely and knowingly chooses to disbelieve a truth of the Catholic faith sins mortally and loses eternal life.¹⁴

7. The truth of a proposition consists in its saying of what is, that it is; scholastically expressed, it consists in *adaequatio rei et intellectus*. Every truth is as such true, no matter by whom or when or in what circumstances it is considered. No truth can contradict any other truth.¹⁵
8. The Catholic faith does not exhaust all the truth about God, because only the divine intellect can fully comprehend the divine being. Nonetheless every truth of the Catholic faith is entirely and completely true, in that the features of reality that such a truth describes are exactly as these truths present them to be. There is no difference between the content of the teachings of the faith and how things are.¹⁶
9. The divine speech that communicates the truths of the Catholic faith is expressed in human languages. The inspired Hebrew and Greek text of the Holy Scriptures is itself uttered by God in all of its parts. It is not a purely human report or interpretation of divine revelation, and no part of its meaning is due solely to human causes. In believing the teaching of the Holy Scriptures we are believing God directly. We are not believing the statements made by God on the basis of believing the testimony of some other, non-divine person or persons.¹⁷
10. When the Catholic Church infallibly teaches that a proposition is a divinely revealed part of the Catholic faith and is to be believed with the assent of faith, Catholics who assent to this teaching are believing what God has communicated, and are believing it on account of His having said it.¹⁸
11. The languages in which divine revelation is expressed, and the cultures and histories that shaped these lan-

guages, do not constrain, distort, or add to the divine revelation that is expressed in them. No part or aspect of the Holy Scriptures or of the infallible teaching of the Church concerning the content of divine revelation is produced only by the languages and historical conditions in which they are expressed, but not by God's action in communicating truths. Hence, no part of the content of the teaching of the Church can be revised or rejected on the grounds that it is produced by historical circumstances rather than by divine revelation.¹⁹

12. The magisterial teaching of the Church after the death of the last apostle must be understood and believed as a single whole. It is not divided into a past magisterium and a contemporary or living magisterium that can ignore earlier magisterial teaching or revise it at will.²⁰
13. The Pope, who has the supreme authority in the Church, is not himself exempt from the authority of the Church, in accordance with divine and ecclesiastical law. He is bound to accept and uphold the definitive teaching of his predecessors in the papal office.²¹
14. A heretical proposition is a proposition that contradicts a divinely revealed truth that is included in the Catholic faith.²²
15. The sin of heresy is committed by a person who possesses the theological virtue of faith, but then freely and knowingly chooses to disbelieve or doubt a truth of the Catholic faith. Such a person sins mortally and loses eternal life. The judgement of the Church upon the personal sin of heresy is exercised only by a priest in the sacrament of penance.²³

16. The canonical crime of heresy is committed when a Catholic a) publicly doubts or denies one or more truths of the Catholic faith, or publicly refuses to give assent to one or more truths of the Catholic faith, but does not doubt or deny all these truths or deny the existence of Christian revelation, and b) is pertinacious in this denial. Pertinacity consists in the person in question continuing to publicly doubt or deny one or more truths of the Catholic faith after having been warned by competent ecclesiastical authority that his doubt or denial is a rejection of a truth of the faith, and that this doubt or denial must be renounced and the truth in question must be publicly affirmed as divinely revealed by the person being warned.²⁴

(The above descriptions of the personal sin of heresy and of the canonical crime of heresy are given solely in order to be able to exclude them from the subject of our protest. We are only concerned with heretical propositions propagated by the words, deeds and omissions of Your Holiness. We do not have the competence or the intention to address the canonical issue of heresy.)

B. The influence of Martin Luther

In the second place, we feel compelled by conscience to advert to Your Holiness's unprecedented sympathy for Martin Luther, and to the affinity between Luther's ideas on law, justification, and marriage, and those taught or favoured by Your Holiness in *Amoris laetitia* and elsewhere.²⁵ This is necessary in order that our protest against the seven heretical propositions listed in this document may be complete; we wish to show, albeit in summary form, that these are not

unrelated errors, but rather form part of a heretical system. Catholics need to be warned not only against these seven errors, but also against this heretical system as such, not least by reason of Your Holiness's praise of the man who originated it.

Thus, in a press conference on June 26th, 2016, Your Holiness stated:

I think that Martin Luther's intentions were not mistaken; he was a reformer. Perhaps some of his methods were not right, although at that time, if you read Pastor's history, for example – Pastor was a German Lutheran who experienced a conversion when he studied the facts of that period; he became a Catholic – we see that the Church was not exactly a model to emulate. There was corruption and worldliness in the Church; there was attachment to money and power. That was the basis of his protest. He was also intelligent, and he went ahead, justifying his reasons for it. Nowadays, Lutherans and Catholics, and all Protestants, are in agreement on the doctrine of justification: on this very important point he was not mistaken.²⁶

In a homily in the Lutheran Cathedral in Lund, Sweden, on Oct 31st, 2016, Your Holiness stated:

As Catholics and Lutherans, we have undertaken a common journey of reconciliation. Now, in the context of the commemoration of the Reformation of 1517, we have a new opportunity to accept a common path, one that has taken shape over the

past fifty years in the ecumenical dialogue between the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church. Nor can we be resigned to the division and distance that our separation has created between us. We have the opportunity to mend a critical moment of our history by moving beyond the controversies and disagreements that have often prevented us from understanding one another.

Jesus tells us that the Father is the “*vinedresser*” (cf. v. 1) who tends and prunes the vine in order to make it bear more fruit (cf. v. 2). The Father is constantly concerned for our relationship with Jesus, to see if we are truly one with him (cf. v. 4). He watches over us, and his gaze of love inspires us to purify our past and to work in the present to bring about the future of unity that he so greatly desires.

We too must look with love and honesty at our past, recognizing error and seeking forgiveness, for God alone is our judge. We ought to recognize with the same honesty and love that our division distanced us from the primordial intuition of God’s people, who naturally yearn to be one, and that it was perpetuated historically by the powerful of this world rather than the faithful people, which always and everywhere needs to be guided surely and lovingly by its Good Shepherd. Certainly, there was a sincere will on the part of both sides to profess and uphold the true faith, but at the same time we realize that we closed in on ourselves out of fear or bias with

regard to the faith which others profess with a different accent and language.

[...]

The spiritual experience of Martin Luther challenges us to remember that apart from God we can do nothing. “How can I get a propitious God?” This is the question that haunted Luther. In effect, the question of a just relationship with God is the decisive question for our lives. As we know, Luther encountered that propitious God in the Good News of Jesus, incarnate, dead and risen. With the concept “*by grace alone*”, he reminds us that God always takes the initiative, prior to any human response, even as he seeks to awaken that response. The doctrine of justification thus expresses the essence of human existence before God.²⁷

In addition to stating that Martin Luther was correct about justification, and in close accordance with this view, Your Holiness has declared more than once that our sins are the place where we encounter Christ (as in your homilies of September 4th, and September 18th, 2014), justifying this view with St Paul, who in fact glories in his own “infirmities” (“*astheneia*”, cf. 2 Cor. 12:5, 9) and not in his sins, so that the power of Christ may dwell in him.²⁸ In an address to members of *Communion and Liberation* on March 7th, 2015 Your Holiness said:

The privileged place of encounter is the caress of Jesus’ mercy regarding my sin. This is why you may have heard me say, several times, that the place for

this, the privileged place of the encounter with Jesus Christ is my sin.²⁹

Furthermore, in addition to other propositions of *Amoris laetitia* which have been listed in the letter sent to all the cardinals and Eastern Catholic patriarchs, and which have been therein qualified as heretical, erroneous, or ambiguous, we read also this:

We should not however confuse different levels: there is no need to lay upon two limited persons the tremendous burden of having to reproduce perfectly the union existing between Christ and his Church, for marriage as a sign entails ‘a dynamic process..., one which advances gradually with the progressive integration of the gifts of God’ (AL 122).

While it is true that the sacramental sign of matrimony entails a dynamic process toward holiness, it is beyond doubt that by the sacramental sign the union of Christ with his Church is perfectly reproduced by grace in the married couple. It is not a question of imposing a tremendous burden on two limited persons, but rather of acknowledging the work of the sacrament and of grace (*res et sacramentum*).

Surprisingly we notice here, as in several other parts of this Apostolic Exhortation, a close relationship with Luther’s disparagement of marriage. For the German revolutionary, the Catholic conception of a sacrament as effective *ex opere operato*, in an allegedly ‘mechanical’ way, is unacceptable. Although he maintains the distinction of *signum et res*, after 1520, with *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, he no longer applies it to marriage. Luther denies that marriage has any reference to sacramentality, on the grounds that

we nowhere read in the Bible that the man who marries a woman receives a grace of God, and that neither do we read anywhere that marriage was instituted by God to be a sign of anything. He claimed that marriage is a mere symbol, adding that although it can represent the union of Christ with the Church, such figures and allegories are not sacraments in the sense we use the term (cf. *Luther's Works* {LW} 36:92). For this reason, marriage – whose fundamental aim is to conceive children and to raise them up in the ways of God (cf. LW 44:11-12) - according to Luther belongs to the order of creation and not to that of salvation (cf. LW 45:18); it is given only in order to quench the fire of concupiscence, and as a bulwark against sin (cf. LW 3, Gen. 16:4).

Moreover, beginning with his personal vision about how human nature is corrupted by sin, Luther is conscious that man is not always anxious to respect God's law. Therefore, he is convinced that there is a double manner by which God rules over mankind, to which corresponds a double moral vision about marriage and divorce. Thus divorce is generally admitted by Luther in the case of adultery, but only for non-spiritual people.

His reasoning is that there are two forms of divine government in this world: the spiritual and the temporal. By his spiritual government, the Holy Spirit leads Christians and righteous people under the Gospel of Christ; by his temporal government, God restrains non-Christians and the wicked in order to maintain an outward peace (cf. LW 45:91). Two also are the laws regulating moral life: one is spiritual, for those living under the influence of the Holy Spirit, the other is temporal or worldly, for those who cannot comply with the spiritual one (cf. LW 45:88-93). This double

moral vision is applied by Luther to adultery in reference to Mt 5:32: hence, Christians must not divorce even in the case of adultery (the spiritual law); but divorce exists and was granted by Moses because of sin (the worldly law). The permission to divorce is thus seen as a limit put by God upon carnal people to restrain their misbehaviour and prevent them from doing worse on account of their wickedness (cf. LW 45:31).

How can we not see here a close similarity with what has been suggested by Your Holiness in *Amoris laetitia*? On the one hand marriage is supposedly safeguarded as a sacrament, while on the other hand divorce and remarriage are regarded ‘mercifully’ as a *status quo* to be – although only ‘pastorally’ – integrated into the life of the Church, thus openly contradicting the word of our Lord. Luther was led to an acceptance of re-marriage by his identification of concupiscence with sin; for he recognized marriage as a remedy for concupiscence. In reality, concupiscence is not as such sinful, just as re-marriage when one has a living spouse is not a *status*, but a privation of truth.

However, Luther’s self-contradiction, generated by his two-fold view of marriage-itself seen as something that pertains properly to the Law and not to the Gospel – is then supposedly overcome by the precedence of faith: a “cordial trust” in order to adhere subjectively to God. He claims that faith justifies man insofar as the punishing justice withdraws into mercy and is changed permanently into forgiving love. This is made possible out of a “joyful bargain” (*fröhlicher Wechseln*) by which the sinner can say to Christ: “You are my righteousness just as I am your sin” (LW 48:12; cf. also 31:351; 25:188). By this “happy exchange”, Christ becomes

the only sinner and we are justified through the acceptance of the Word in faith.

In Your pilgrimage to Fatima for the beginning of this providential centenary, Your Holiness clearly alluded to this Lutheran view about faith and justification, stating on May 12th, 2017:

Great injustice is done to God's grace whenever we say that sins are punished by his judgment, without first saying – as the Gospel clearly does – that they are forgiven by his mercy! Mercy has to be put before judgment and, in any case, God's judgment will always be rendered in the light of his mercy. Obviously, God's mercy does not deny justice, for Jesus took upon himself the consequences of our sin, together with its due punishment. He did not deny sin, but redeemed it on the cross. Hence, in the faith that unites us to the cross of Christ, we are freed of our sins; we put aside all fear and dread, as unbefitting those who are loved (cf. 1 Jn. 4:18).³⁰

The gospel does not teach that all sins will in fact be forgiven, nor that Christ alone experienced the 'judgement' or justice of God, leaving only mercy for the rest of mankind. While there is a 'vicarious suffering' of our Lord in order to expiate our sins, there is not a 'vicarious punishment', for Christ was made "sin for us" (cf. 2 Cor. 5:21) and not a *sinner*. Out of divine love, and not as the object of God's wrath, Christ offered the supreme sacrifice of salvation to reconcile us with God, taking upon himself only the consequences of our sins (cf. Gal. 3:13). Hence, so that we may be justified

and saved, it is not sufficient to have faith that our sins have been removed by a supposed vicarious punishment; our justification lies in a conformity to our Saviour achieved by that faith which works through charity (cf. Gal. 5:6).

Most Holy Father, permit us also to express our wonderment and sorrow at two events occurring in the heart of the Church, which likewise suggest the favour in which the German heresiarch is held under Your pontificate. On January 15th, 2016, a group of Finnish Lutherans were granted Holy Communion in the course of a celebration of Holy Mass that took place at St Peter's basilica. On 13th October, 2016, Your Holiness presided over a meeting of Catholics and Lutherans in the Vatican, addressing them from a stage on which a statue of Martin Luther was erected.

ENDNOTES:

1. Denzinger-Hünemann {DH} 3117, Apostolic letter *Mirabilis illa constantia*, March 4th, 1875.
2. *Relatio* of the Theological Commission on n. 22 of *Lumen gentium*, in *Acta Synodalia*, III/I, p. 247.
3. This section therefore contains the *Correctio* properly speaking, and is that to which the signatories intend principally and directly to subscribe.
4. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2016/04/08/160408a.html>
5. http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2016/09/12/pope_endorses_argentine_bishops_document_on_amoris_laetitia/1257635
6. <https://www.ncronline.org/news/vatican/new-cardinal-farrell-amoris-laetitia-holy-spirit-speaking>
7. By these words, deeds, and omissions, and by the above-mentioned passages of the document *Amoris laetitia*, Your Holiness has upheld, directly or indirectly, and, with what degree of awareness we do not seek to judge, both by public office and by private act propagated in the Church the following false and heretical propositions:

1). 'A justified person has not the strength with God's grace to carry out the objective demands of the divine law, as though any of the commandments of God are impossible for the justified; or as meaning that God's grace,

when it produces justification in an individual, does not invariably and of its nature produce conversion from all serious sin, or is not sufficient for conversion from all serious sin.’

2). ‘Christians who have obtained a civil divorce from the spouse to whom they are validly married and have contracted a civil marriage with some other person during the lifetime of their spouse, who live more uxorio with their civil partner, and who choose to remain in this state with full knowledge of the nature of their act and full consent of the will to that act, are not necessarily in a state of mortal sin, and can receive sanctifying grace and grow in charity.’

3). ‘A Christian believer can have full knowledge of a divine law and voluntarily choose to break it in a serious matter, but not be in a state of mortal sin as a result of this action.’

4). ‘A person is able, while he obeys a divine prohibition, to sin against God by that very act of obedience.’

5). ‘Conscience can truly and rightly judge that sexual acts between persons who have contracted a civil marriage with each other, although one or both of them is sacramentally married to another person, can sometimes be morally right or requested or even commanded by God.’

6). ‘Moral principles and moral truths contained in divine revelation and in the natural law do not include negative prohibitions that absolutely forbid particular kinds of action, inasmuch as these are always gravely unlawful on account of their object.’

7). ‘Our Lord Jesus Christ wills that the Church abandon her perennial discipline of refusing the Eucharist to the divorced and remarried and of refusing absolution to the divorced and remarried who do not express contrition for their state of life and a firm purpose of amendment with regard to it.’

8. Here are, for these seven propositions, the references that were included in the letter to the cardinals and patriarchs:

1). Council of Trent, session 6, canon 18: “If anyone says that the commandments of God are impossible to observe even for a man who is justified and established in grace, let him be anathema” (DH 1568). See also: Gen. 4:7; Deut. 30:11-19; Ecclesiasticus 15: 11-22; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26; Heb. 10:26-29; 1 Jn. 5:17; Zosimus, 15th (or 16th) Synod of Carthage, canon 3 on grace, DH 225; Felix III, 2nd Synod of Orange, DH 397; Council of Trent, Session 5, canon 5; Session 6, canons 18-20,

22, 27 and 29; Pius V, Bull *Ex omnibus afflictionibus*, On the errors of Michael du Bay, 54, DH 1954; Innocent X, Constitution *Cum occasione*, On the errors of Cornelius Jansen, 1, DH 2001; Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus*, On the errors of Pasquier Quesnel, 71, DH 2471; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* 17: AAS 77 (1985): 222; *Veritatis splendor* 65-70: AAS 85 (1993): 1185-89, DH 4964-67.

2). Mk. 10:11-12: “Whosoever shall put away his wife and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if the wife shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery”. See also: Ex. 20:14; Mt. 5:32, 19:9; Lk. 16:18; 1 Cor. 7: 10-11; Heb. 10:26-29; Council of Trent, Session 6, canons 19-21, 27, DH 1569-71, 1577; Session 24, canons 5 and 7, DH 1805, 1807; Innocent XI, Condemned propositions of the ‘Laxists’, 62-63, DH 2162-63; Alexander VIII, Decree of the Holy Office on ‘Philosophical Sin’, DH 2291; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 65-70: AAS 85 (1993): 1185-89 (DH 4964- 67).

3). Council of Trent, session 6, canon 20: “If anyone says that a justified man, however perfect he may be, is not bound to observe the commandments of God and of the Church but is bound only to believe, as if the Gospel were merely an absolute promise of eternal life without the condition that the commandments be observed, let him be anathema” (DH 1570).

See also: Mk. 8:38; Lk. 9:26; Heb. 10:26-29; 1 Jn. 5:17; Council of Trent, session 6, canons 19 and 27; Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus*, On the errors of Pasquier Quesnel, 71, DH 2471; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia* 17: AAS 77 (1985): 222; *Veritatis splendor*, 65-70: AAS 85 (1993): 1185-89, DH 4964-67.

4). Ps. 18:8: “The law of the Lord is unspotted, converting souls.”

See also: Ecclesiasticus 15:21; Council of Trent, session 6, canon 20; Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus*, On the errors of Pasquier Quesnel, 71, DH 2471; Leo XIII, *Libertas praestantissimum*, ASS 20 (1887-88): 598 (DH 3248); John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 40: AAS 85 (1993): 1165 (DH 4953).

5). Council of Trent, session 6, canon 21: “If anyone says that Jesus Christ was given by God to men as a redeemer in whom they are to trust but not also as a lawgiver whom they are bound to obey, let him be anathema”, DH 1571.

Council of Trent, session 24, canon 2: “If anyone says that it is lawful for Christians to have several wives at the same time, and that this is not forbidden by any divine law, let him be anathema”, DH 1802.

Council of Trent, session 24, canon 5: “If anyone says that the marriage bond can be dissolved because of heresy or difficulties in cohabitation or

because of the wilful absence of one of the spouses, let him be anathema”, DH 1805.

Council of Trent, session 24, canon 7: “If anyone says that the Church is in error for having taught and for still teaching that in accordance with the evangelical and apostolic doctrine, the marriage bond cannot be dissolved because of adultery on the part of one of the spouses and that neither of the two, not even the innocent one who has given no cause for infidelity, can contract another marriage during the lifetime of the other, and that the husband who dismisses an adulterous wife and marries again and the wife who dismisses an adulterous husband and marries again are both guilty of adultery, let him be anathema”, DH 1807.

See also: Ps. 5:5; Ps. 18:8-9; Ecclesiasticus 15:21; Heb. 10:26-29; Jas. 1:13; 1 Jn. 3:7; Innocent XI, *Condemned propositions of the ‘Laxists’*, 62-63, DH 2162-63; Clement XI, Constitution *Unigenitus*, On the errors of Pasquier Quesnel, 71, DH 2471; Leo XIII, encyclical letter *Libertas praestantissimum*, ASS 20 (1887-88): 598, DH 3248; Pius XII, *Decree of the Holy Office on situation ethics*, DH 3918; 2nd Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, 16; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 54: AAS 85 (1993): 1177; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1786-87.

6). John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* 115: “Each of us knows how important is the teaching which represents the central theme of this Encyclical and which is today being restated with the authority of the Successor of Peter. Each of us can see the seriousness of what is involved, not only for individuals but also for the whole of society, with the reaffirmation of the universality and immutability of the moral commandments, particularly those which prohibit always and without exception intrinsically evil acts”, DH 4971.

See also: Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 6: 9-10; Gal. 5: 19-21; Apoc. 22:15; 4th Lateran Council, chapter 22, DH 815; Council of Constance, Bull *Inter cunctas*, 14, DH 1254; Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, 14: AAS 60 (1968) 490-91; John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 83: AAS 85 (1993): 1199, DH 4970.

7). 1 Cor. 11:27: “Whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord.”

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

2nd Lateran Council, canon 20, DH 717: “Because there is one thing that conspicuously causes great disturbance to holy Church, namely false penance, we warn our brothers in the episcopate, and priests, not to allow the souls of the laity to be deceived or dragged off to hell by false penances. It is certain that a penance is false when many sins are disregarded and a penance is performed for one only, or when it is done for one sin in such a way that the penitent does not renounce another”. See also: Mt. 7:6; Mt. 22: 11-13; 1 Cor. 11:28-30; Heb. 13:8; Council of Trent, session 14, *Decree on Penance*, cap. 4; Council of Trent, session 13, *Decree on the most holy Eucharist*, DH 1646-47; Innocent XI, *Condemned propositions of the ‘Laxists’*, 60-63, DH 2160-63; John Paul II, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1385, 1451, 1490.

9. Clement VI, *Super quibusdam*, to the Catholicos of the Armenians, question 14, DH 1065: “We ask whether you have believed and do believe that the New and Old Testament, in all their books, which the authority of the Roman Church has handed down to us, contain undoubted truth in all things.”

2nd Vatican Council, *Dei verbum* 18-19: “What the Apostles preached in fulfilment of the commission of Christ, afterwards they themselves and apostolic men, under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, handed on to us in writing: the foundation of faith, namely, the fourfold Gospel, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Holy Mother Church has firmly and with absolute constancy held, and continues to hold, that the four Gospels just named, whose historical character the Church unhesitatingly asserts, faithfully hand on what Jesus Christ, while living among men, really did and taught for their eternal salvation until the day He was taken up into heaven.”

See also: Lk. 1:1-4; Jn. 19:35; 2 Pet. 1:16; Pius IX, *Syllabus*, 7; Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, ASS 26 (1893- 1994): 276-77; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 13-17; *Praestantia scripturae*, ASS 40 (1907): 724ff.

10. 1 Jn. 5:10: “He that believeth in the Son of God has the testimony of God in himself. He that believeth not the Son, maketh him a liar.” Council of Chalcedon, *Definition*, DH 301: “Following the holy fathers, we all with one voice teach the confession of one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body; consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity, and the same consubstantial with us as regards his humanity.” 2nd Vatican Council, *Dei verbum* 4: “After speaking in many and varied ways through the prophets, ‘now at last in these days God has spoken to us in His Son’. For He sent His Son, the eternal Word, who enlightens all men, so that He might dwell among men and tell them of the innermost being of God. Jesus Christ, therefore,

the Word made flesh, was sent as “a man to men”. He ‘speaks the words of God’.” See also: Mt. 7:29; Matt. 11:25-27; Mk. 1:22; Luke 4:32; John 1:1-14; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 27.

11. 1st Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, cap. 3: “Faith, which is the beginning of human salvation, the Catholic Church professes to be a supernatural virtue, by means of which, with the grace of God inspiring and assisting us, we believe to be true what He has revealed.”

Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 22 (condemned proposition): “The dogmas that the Church holds out as revealed are not truths which have fallen from heaven.”

See also: 1 Thess. 2:13; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 23-26; *Pascendi dominici gregis*, ASS 40 (1907): 611; Paul VI, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, DH 4538.

12. Jn. 3:11: “Amen, Amen, I say to thee, that we speak what we know and we testify what we have seen, and you receive not our testimony.” Jn. 14:6: “I am the way, the truth, and the life”

1 Jn. 5:9-10: “If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God, which is greater, because he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth in the Son of God has the testimony of God in himself. He that believeth not the Son, maketh him a liar.”

1st Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, cap. 3, can. 2: “If anyone says that divine faith is not distinct from the natural knowledge of God and of moral truths; that, therefore, for divine faith it is not necessary that the revealed truth be believed on the authority of God who reveals it, let him be anathema.”

Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 26 (condemned proposition): “The dogmas of the faith are to be held only according to their practical sense; that is to say, as preceptive norms of conduct and not as norms of believing.”

Piux X, *Oath against the errors of Modernism*, DH 3542: “I hold with certainty and I sincerely confess that faith is not a blind inclination of religion welling up from the depth of the subconscious under the impulse of the heart and the inclination of a morally conditioned will, but is the genuine assent of the intellect to a truth that is received from outside by hearing. In this assent, given on the authority of the all-truthful God, we hold to be true what has been said, attested to, and revealed, by the personal God, our creator and Lord.”

See also: Jn. 8:46, 10:16; Rom. 11:33; Heb. 3:7, 5:12; Pius IX, *Qui pluribus*, Acta (Rome, 1854) 1/1, 6-13; Syllabus, 4-5; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 20; *Pascendi dominici gregis*, ASS 40 (1907): 604ff; John Paul II, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, 7.

13. Num. 23:19: “God is not a man that he should lie.”

Pius IX, *Qui pluribus*, DH 2778: “Who is or can be ignorant that all faith is to be given to God who speaks and that nothing is more suitable to reason itself than to acquiesce and firmly adhere to what it has determined to be revealed by God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived?”

1st Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, cap. 3: “Faith, which is the beginning of human salvation, the Catholic Church professes to be a supernatural virtue, by means of which, with the grace of God inspiring and assisting us, we believe to be true what He has revealed, not because we perceive its intrinsic truth by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself, who makes the revelation and can neither deceive nor be deceived.”

1st Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, cap. 3, can. 6: “If anyone says that the condition of the faithful and those who have not yet attained to the only true faith is alike, so that Catholics may have a just cause for calling in doubt, by suspending their assent, the faith which they have already received from the teaching of the Church, until they have completed a scientific demonstration of the credibility and truth of their faith: let him be anathema.”

2nd Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, 12: “The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief.”

Paul VI, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, DH 4538: “All dogmas, since they are divinely revealed, must be believed with the same divine faith.”

See also: Ap. 3:14; Innocent XI, *Condemned propositions of the ‘Laxists’*, 20-21, DH 2120-21; Pius IX, *Syllabus*, 15-18; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 25.

14. Mk. 16:20: “They going forth preached everywhere, the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with signs that followed.”

2 Cor. 3: 5: “Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves: but our sufficiency is from God.”

1 Pet. 3:15: “Sanctify the Lord, Christ, in your hearts, being ready always to satisfy everyone that asketh you a reason of that hope which is in you.”

Tit. 3:10-11: “A man that is a heretic, after the first and second admonition, avoid: knowing that he, that is such an one, is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned by his own judgement.”

Apoc. 22:19: “If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city.”

1st Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, cap. 3: “In order that the submission of our faith should be in harmony with reason, it was God’s will that there should be linked to the internal assistance of the Holy Spirit external indications of his revelation, that is to say divine acts, and first and foremost miracles and prophecies, which clearly demonstrating as they do the omnipotence and infinite knowledge of God, are most certain signs of revelation and are suited to the understanding of all people. Hence

Moses and the prophets, and especially Christ our Lord himself, worked many manifest miracles and delivered prophecies [...] So that we could fulfil our duty of embracing the true faith and of persevering unwaveringly in it, God, through his only begotten Son, founded the Church, and endowed her with clear notes of his institution to the end that she might be recognised by all as the guardian and teacher of the revealed word. To the Catholic Church alone belong all those things, so many and so marvellous, which have been divinely ordained to make for the manifest credibility of the Christian faith.”

1st Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, cap. 3: “Although the assent of faith is by no means a blind movement of the mind, yet no one can accept the gospel preaching in the way that is necessary for achieving salvation without the inspiration and illumination of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all facility in accepting and believing the truth. And so faith in itself, even if it does not work through charity, is a gift of God, and its operation is a work belonging to the order of salvation.”

See also: 2nd Council of Orange, can. 7; Innocent XI, *Condemned propositions of the 'Jaxists'* 20-21; Gregory XVI, Theses subscribed to by Louis-Eugène Bautain, 6, DH 2756; Pius IX, Syllabus, 15-18; Pius X, *Pascendi dominici gregis*, ASS 40 (1907): 596-97; *Oath against the errors of Modernism*, DH 3539; Pius XII, *Humani generis*, AAS 42 (1950): 571.

15. 2nd Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 15: “Man judges rightly that by his intellect he surpasses the material universe, for he shares in the light of the divine mind. [. . .] His intelligence is not confined to observable data alone, but can with genuine certitude attain to reality itself as knowable.”

John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 27: “Every truth, if it is authentic, presents itself as universal and absolute, even if it is not the whole truth. If something is true, then it must be true for all people and at all times.”

John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 82: “This prompts a second requirement: that philosophy verify the human capacity to *know the truth*, to come to a knowledge which can reach objective truth by means of that *adaequatio rei et intellectus* to which the Scholastic doctors referred.”

See also: Pius XII, *Humani generis*, AAS 42 (1950): 562-63, 571-72, 574-75; John XXIII, *Ad Petri cathedram*, AAS 1959 (51): 501-2; John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 4-10, 12-14, 49, 54, 83-85, 95-98.

16. 1 Cor. 2:9-10: “As it is written: ‘That eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him.’ But to us God hath revealed them, by his Spirit.”

1 Cor. 2:12-13: “We have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God; that we may know the things that are given us from God: which things also we speak.”

Pius XII, *Humani generis*, DH 3882-83: "Some hold that the mysteries of faith are never expressed by truly adequate concepts but only by approximate and ever changeable notions, in which the truth is to some extent expressed, but is necessarily distorted. Wherefore they do not consider it absurd, but altogether necessary, that theology should substitute new concepts in place of the old ones in keeping with the various philosophies which in the course of time it uses as its instruments, so that it should give human expression to divine truths in various ways which are even somewhat opposed, but still equivalent, as they say. [...] It is evident from what We have already said, that such efforts not only lead to what they call dogmatic relativism, but that they actually contain it."

Paul VI, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 5, DH 4540: "As for the meaning of dogmatic formulas, this remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it comes to be expressed with greater clarity and to be more fully understood. The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulations, or some category of them, cannot signify the truth in a determinate way, but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it; and secondly, that these formulations only express the truth in an indeterminate way, and that one must continue to seek this truth by further approximations of this kind." See also: Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 4.

17. 1 Thess. 2:13 "We give thanks to God without ceasing; because, that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed), the word of God." 1 Tim. 3:16: "All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach."

2 Pet. 1:20-21: "No prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time; but the holy men spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost."

Pius XII, *Divino afflante Spiritu* AAS 35 (1943): 299-300: "It is absolutely wrong and forbidden 'either to narrow inspiration to certain passages of Holy Scripture, or to admit that the sacred writer has erred,' since divine inspiration 'not only is essentially incompatible with error but excludes and rejects it as absolutely and necessarily as it is impossible that God Himself, the supreme Truth, can utter that which is not true. This is the ancient and constant faith of the Church.' This teaching, which Our Predecessor Leo XIII set forth with such solemnity, We also proclaim with Our authority."

2nd Vatican Council, *Dei verbum*, 11: "Holy mother Church, relying on the belief of the Apostles, holds that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety, with all their parts, are sacred and canonical because written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have God as their author and have been handed on as such to the Church herself.

In composing the sacred books, God chose men, and while employed by Him they made use of their powers and abilities, so that with Him acting in them and through them, they, as true authors, consigned to writing all and only those things which He wanted.”

See also: Jn. 10:16, 35; Heb. 3:7, 5:12; Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, DH 3291-92; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 9-11; *Pascendi dominici gregis*, ASS 40 (1907): 612-13; Benedict XV, *Spiritus Paraclitus*, AAS 12 (1920), 393; Pius XII, *Humani generis*, DH 3887.

18. 1 Thess. 2:13 “We give thanks to God without ceasing: because, that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but (as it is indeed), the word of God.”

1st Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, cap. 3: “Faith, which is the beginning of human salvation, the Catholic Church professes to be a supernatural virtue, by means of which, with the grace of God inspiring and assisting us, we believe to be true what He has revealed, not because we perceive its intrinsic truth by the natural light of reason, but because of the authority of God himself, who makes the revelation and can neither deceive nor be deceived. [...] Further, by divine and Catholic faith all those things are to be believed which are contained in the word of God as found in scripture and tradition, and which are proposed by the Church as to be believed as divinely revealed, whether by her solemn judgment or in her ordinary and universal magisterium.

See also: Jn. 10:16; Heb. 3:7, 5:12; Pius XII, *Mystici corporis Christi*, AAS 35 (1943): 216.

19. Pius XII, *Humani generis*, DH 3883: “The Church cannot be tied to any and every passing philosophical system. Nevertheless, those notions and terms which have been developed though common effort by Catholic teachers over the course of the centuries to bring about some understanding of dogma are certainly not based on any such weak foundation. They are based on principles and notions deduced from a true knowledge of created things. In the process of deduction, this knowledge, like a star, gave enlightenment to the human mind through the Church. Hence it is not surprising that some of these notions have not only been employed by the Ecumenical Councils, but even sanctioned by them, so that it is wicked to depart from them.”

Paul VI, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 5, DH 4540: “As for the meaning of dogmatic formulas, this remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it comes to be expressed with greater clarity and to be more fully understood. The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulations, or some category of them, cannot signify the truth in a determinate way,

but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it; and secondly, that these formulations only express the truth in an indeterminate way, and that one must continue to seek this truth by further approximations of this kind.”

John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 87: “One must remember that even if the statement of a truth is limited to some extent by times and by forms of culture, the truth or the error with which it deals can nevertheless be recognised and evaluated as such, however great the distance of space or time.”

John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 95: “The word of God is not addressed to any one people or to any one period of history. Similarly, dogmatic statements, while reflecting at times the culture of the period in which they were defined, formulate an unchanging and ultimate truth.”

John Paul II, Declaration *Dominus Iesus* on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church, 6: “The truth about God is not abolished or reduced because it is spoken in human language; rather, it is unique, full, and complete, because he who speaks and acts is the Incarnate Son of God.”

See also: Jn. 10:35; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Apoc. 22:18-19; Leo XIII, *Providentissimus Deus*, DH 3288; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 4; John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 84.

20. Gal. 1:9: “If anyone preach to you a gospel, besides that which you have received, let him be anathema.”

1st Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, cap. 4, can. 3: “If anyone says that it is possible that at some time, with the progress of knowledge, a sense should be assigned to the dogmas propounded by the Church which is different from that which the Church has understood and does understand: let him be anathema.”

Pius X, *Oath against the errors of Modernism*, DH 3541: “I sincerely hold that the doctrine of faith was handed down to us from the apostles through the orthodox Fathers with the same sense and always with the same meaning. Therefore, I entirely reject the heretical fiction that dogmas evolve and change from one meaning to another, different from the meaning which the Church held previously. I also condemn every error that substitutes for the divine deposit which has been given to the spouse of Christ to be carefully guarded by her, some philosophical invention or product of human reflection, gradually formed by human effort and due to be perfected in the future by unlimited progress.”

See also: 1 Tim. 6: 20; 2 Tim. 1:13-14; Heb. 13:7-9; Jude 3; Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*, DH 2802; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 21, 54, 50, 60, 62; *Pascendi dominici gregis*, ASS 40 (1907): 616ff.; Pius XII, *Humani generis*, DH 3886; Paul VI, Declaration *Mysterium Ecclesiae* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, DH 4540.

21. 1st Vatican Council, *Pastor aeternus*, cap. 4: “The Holy Spirit was promised to the successors of Peter not so that they might, by his rev-

elation, 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. [...] This gift of truth and never-failing faith was therefore divinely conferred on Peter and his successors in this see so that they might discharge their exalted office for the salvation of all, and so that the whole flock of Christ might be kept away by them from the poisonous food of error and be nourished with the sustenance of heavenly doctrine.

2nd Vatican Council, *Dei verbum*, 10: “The task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living magisterium of the Church, whose authority is exercised in the name of Jesus Christ. This magisterium is not above the word of God, but serves it. It teaches only what has been handed on, listening to it devoutly, guarding it scrupulously and explaining it faithfully in accord with a divine commission and with the help of the Holy Spirit. It draws from this one deposit of faith everything which it presents for belief as divinely revealed.”

See also: Matt. 16:23; Gratian, *Decretum*, Part 1, Distinction 40, Chapter 6; Innocent III, 2nd sermon ‘On the consecration of the supreme pontiff’, ML 656; 4th sermon ‘On the consecration of the supreme pontiff’, ML 670; Pius IX, letter *Mirabilis illa constantia* to the bishops of Germany, DH 3117 (cf. DH 3114).

22. Cf. John Paul II, 1983 *Code of Canon Law*, 751; *Code of Canons of Oriental Churches*, 1436.
23. Cf. Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:18; Jn. 20:23; Rom. 14:4; Gal. 1:9; 1 Tim. 1:18-20; Jude 3-6; Council of Florence, *Cantate Domino*, DH 1351; Council of Trent, Session 14, can. 9.
24. Cf. Matt. 18:17; Tit. 3:10-11; Pius X, *Lamentabili sane*, 7; John Paul II, *Code of Canon Law*, 751, 1364; *Code of Canons of Oriental Churches*, 1436.
25. The signatories do not intend in this section principally to describe the thought of Martin Luther, a subject concerning which all of them do not have the same expertise, but rather to describe certain false notions of marriage, justification and law which appear to them to have inspired *Amoris laetitia*. https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2016/june/documents/papa-francesco_20160626_armenia-conferenza-stampa.html
26. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2016/documents/papa-francesco_20161031_omelia-svezia-lund.pdf
27. http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/09/04/pope_recognize_your_sins_and_be_transformed_by_christ/1105890;
28. http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2014/09/18/pope_at_santa_marta_the_courage_to_admit_we_are_sinners/1106766
29. <http://www.news.va/en/news/the-pope-on-the-sixtieth-anniversary-of-communion>
30. <http://www.news.va/en/news/pope-francis-in-fatima-greetings-at-chapel-of-appa>

Declaration of the Truths RELATING TO SOME OF THE MOST COMMON ERRORS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH OF OUR TIME

On 31 May 2019, five prelates issued a declaration of truths relating to some of the most common errors in the life of the Church of our time. Since many of these errors either appear or are endorsed in *Amoris Laetitia*, it is appropriate to place here the truths that triumph over errors and which continue to feed the faithful today as they have nourished Catholics throughout the generations.

Explanatory Note

In our time the Church is experiencing one of the greatest spiritual epidemics, that is, an almost universal doctrinal confusion and disorientation, which is a seriously contagious danger for spiritual health and eternal salvation for many souls. At the same time one has to recognize a widespread lethargy in the exercise of the Magisterium on different levels of the Church's hierarchy in our days. This is largely caused by the non-compliance with the Apostolic duty – as stated also by the Second Vatican Council – to “vigilantly ward off any errors that threaten the flock” (*Lumen gentium*, 25).

Our time is characterized by an acute spiritual hunger of the Catholic faithful all over the world for a reaffirmation of those truths that are obfuscated, undermined, and denied by some of the most dangerous errors of our time. The faithful who are suffering this spiritual hunger feel themselves abandoned and thus find themselves in a kind of existential periphery. Such a situation urgently demands a concrete remedy. A public declaration of the truths regarding these errors cannot admit a further deferral. Hence we are mindful of the following timeless words of Pope Saint Gregory the Great: “Our tongue may not be slack to exhort, and having undertaken the office of bishops, our silence may not prove our condemnation at the tribunal of the just Judge. (...) The people committed to our care abandon God, and we are silent. They live in sin, and we do not stretch out a hand to correct.” (*In Ev. hom.* 17:3.14)

DECLARATION OF THE TRUTHS

We are aware of our grave responsibility as Catholic bishops according to the admonition of Saint Paul, who teaches that God gave to His Church “shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:12-16).

In the spirit of fraternal charity, we publish this Declaration of truths as a concrete spiritual help, so that bishops, priests, parishes, religious convents, lay faithful associations, and private persons as well might have the opportunity to confess either privately or publicly those truths that in our days are mostly denied or disfigured. The following exhortation of the Apostle Paul should be understood as addressed also to each bishop and lay faithful of our time, “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and

free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:12-14).

Before the eyes of the Divine Judge and in his own conscience, each bishop, priest, and lay faithful has the moral duty to give witness unambiguously to those truths that in our days are obfuscated, undermined, and denied. Private and public acts of a declaration of these truths could initiate a movement of a confession of the truth, of its defense, and of reparation for the widespread sins against the Faith, for the sins of hidden and open apostasy from Catholic Faith of a not small number both of the clergy and of the lay people. One has to bear in mind, however, that such a movement will not judge itself according to numbers, but according to the truth, as Saint Gregory of Nazianzus said, amidst the general doctrinal confusion of the Arian crisis, that “God does not delight in numbers” (*Or.* 42:7).

In giving witness to the immutable Catholic Faith, clergy and faithful will remember the truth that “the entire body of the faithful cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples’ supernatural discernment in matters of faith, when from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals” (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, 12).

Saints and great Bishops who lived in times of doctrinal crises may intercede for us and guide us with their teaching, as do the following words of Saint Augustine, with which he addressed Pope Saint Boniface I, “Since the pastoral watch-tower is common to all of us who discharge the office of the episcopate (although you are prominent therein on a loftier height), I do what I can in respect of my small portion

of the charge, as the Lord condescends by the aid of your prayers to grant me power” (*Contra ep. Pel.* I, 2).

A common voice of the Shepherds and the faithful through a precise declaration of the truths will be without any doubt an efficient means of a fraternal and filial aid for the Supreme Pontiff in the current extraordinary situation of a general doctrinal confusion and disorientation in the life of the Church.

We make this public Declaration in the spirit of Christian charity, which manifests itself in the care for the spiritual health both of the Shepherds and of the faithful, i.e., of all the members of Christ’s Body, which is the Church, while being mindful of the following words of Saint Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians: “That there might be no division in the body, but the members might be mutually careful one for another. If one member suffers any thing, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12: 25-27), and in the Letter to the Romans: “As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. And having different gifts, according to the grace that is given us, either prophecy, to be used according to the rule of faith; or ministry, in ministering; or he that teaches, in doctrine; he that exhorts, in exhorting; hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor preventing one another. In carefulness not slothful. In spirit fervent. Serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:4-11).

The Cardinals and Bishops who sign this “Declaration of the truths” entrust it to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God under the invocation “*Salus populi Romani*” (“Salvation of the Roman People”), considering the privileged spiritual meaning which this icon has for the Roman Church. May the entire Catholic Church, under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin and Mother of God, “fight intrepidly the fight of the Faith, persist firmly in the doctrine of the Apostles and proceed safely amidst the storms of the world until she reaches the heavenly city” (Preface of the Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary “Salvation of the Roman people”).

May 31, 2019

Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke,

Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

Cardinal Janis Pujats,

Archbishop emeritus of Riga

Tomash Peta,

Archbishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana

Jan Pawel Lenga,

Archbishop-Bishop emeritus of Karaganda

Athanasius Schneider,

Auxiliary Bishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana

“The Church of the living God - the pillar and the bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15)

Declaration of the Truths Relating to Some of the Most Common Errors in the Life of the Church of Our Time

The Fundamentals of Faith

1. The right meaning of the expressions ‘living tradition,’ ‘living Magisterium,’ ‘hermeneutic of continuity,’ and ‘development of doctrine’ includes the truth that whatever new insights may be expressed regarding the deposit of faith, nevertheless they cannot be contrary to what the Church has always proposed in the same dogma, in the same sense, and in the same meaning (see First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, sess. 3, c. 4: “*in eodem dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia*”).
2. “The *meaning* of dogmatic formulas remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it is expressed with greater clarity or more developed. The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulas (or some category of them) cannot signify truth in a determinate way, but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it; secondly, that these formulas signify the truth only in an indeterminate way, this truth being like a goal that is constantly being sought by means of such approximations. Those who hold such an opinion

do not avoid dogmatic relativism and they corrupt the concept of the Church's infallibility relative to the truth to be taught or held in a determinate way." (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration "Mysterium Ecclesiae" in defense of the Catholic doctrine on the Church against certain errors of the present day*, 5).

The Creed

3. "The Kingdom of God begun here below in the Church of Christ is not of this world whose form is passing, and its proper growth cannot be confounded with the progress of civilization, of science or of human technology, but it consists in an ever more profound knowledge of the unfathomable riches of Christ, an ever stronger hope in eternal blessings, an ever more ardent response to the love of God, and an ever more generous bestowal of grace and holiness among men. The deep solicitude of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, for the needs of men, for their joys and hopes, their griefs and efforts, is therefore nothing other than her great desire to be present to them, in order to illuminate them with the light of Christ and to gather them all in Him, their only Savior. This solicitude can never mean that the Church conforms herself to the things of this world, or that she lessens the ardor of her longing of her Lord and of the eternal Kingdom" (Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Solemnly hac liturgia (Credo of the People of God)*, 27). The opinion is, therefore, erroneous that says that God is glorified principally by the very fact of the progress in the temporal and earthly condition of the human race.

4. After the institution of the New and Everlasting Covenant in Jesus Christ, no one may be saved by obedience to the law of Moses alone without faith in Christ as true God and the only Savior of humankind (see Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16).
5. Muslims and others who lack faith in Jesus Christ, God and man, even monotheists, cannot give to God the same adoration as Christians do, that is to say, supernatural worship in Spirit and in Truth (see Jn 4:24; Eph 2:8) of those who have received the Spirit of filial adoption (see Rom 8:15).
6. Spiritualities and religions that promote any kind of idolatry or pantheism cannot be considered either as “seeds” or as “fruits” of the Divine Word, since they are deceptions that preclude the evangelization and eternal salvation of their adherents, as it is taught by Holy Scripture: “the god of this world has made blind the minds of those who have not faith, so that the light of the good news of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not be shining on them” (2 Cor 4:4).
7. True ecumenism intends that non-Catholics should enter that unity which the Catholic Church already indestructibly possesses in virtue of the prayer of Christ, always heard by His Father, “that they may be one” (John 17:11), and which she professes in the Symbol of Faith, “I believe in one Church.” Ecumenism, therefore, may not legitimately have for its goal the establishment of a Church that does not yet exist.

8. Hell exists and those who are condemned to hell for any unrepented mortal sin are eternally punished there by Divine justice (see Mt 25:46). Not only fallen angels but also human souls are damned eternally (see 2 Thess 1:9; 2 Pet 3:7). Eternally damned human beings will not be annihilated, since their souls are immortal according to the infallible teaching of the Church (see Fifth Lateran Council, sess. 8).
9. The religion born of faith in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God and the only Savior of humankind, is the only religion positively willed by God. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that just as God positively wills the diversity of the male and female sexes and the diversity of nations, so in the same way he also wills the diversity of religions.
10. “Our [Christian] religion effectively establishes with God an authentic and living relationship which the other religions do not succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven” (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 53).
11. The gift of free will with which God the Creator endowed the human person grants man the natural right to choose only the good and the true. No human person has, therefore, a natural right to offend God in choosing the moral evil of sin, the religious error of idolatry, blasphemy, or a false religion.

The Law of God

12. A justified person has the sufficient strength with God's grace to carry out the objective demands of the Divine law, since all of the commandments of God are possible for the justified. God's grace, when it justifies the sinner, does of its nature produce conversion from all serious sin (see Council of Trent, sess. 6, *Decree on Justification*, c. 11; c. 13).
13. "The faithful are obliged to acknowledge and respect the specific moral precepts declared and taught by the Church in the name of God, the Creator and Lord. Love of God and of one's neighbour cannot be separated from the observance of the commandments of the Covenant renewed in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Spirit" (John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, 76). According to the teaching of the same Encyclical the opinion of those is wrong, who "believe they can justify, as morally good, deliberate choices of kinds of behavior contrary to the commandments of the Divine and natural law." Thus, "these theories cannot claim to be grounded in the Catholic moral tradition" (*ibid.*).
14. All of the commandments of God are equally just and merciful. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that a person is able, by obeying a Divine prohibition - for example, the sixth commandment not to commit adultery - to sin against God by this act of obedience, or to morally harm himself, or to sin against another.
15. "No circumstance, no purpose, no law whatsoever can ever make licit an act which is intrinsically illicit, since

it is contrary to the Law of God, which is written in every human heart, knowable by reason itself, and proclaimed by the Church” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium, vitae*, 62). There are moral principles and moral truths contained in Divine revelation and in the natural law which include negative prohibitions that absolutely forbid certain kinds of action, inasmuch as these kinds of action are always gravely unlawful on account of their object. Hence, the opinion is wrong that says that a good intention or a good consequence is or can ever be sufficient to justify the commission of such kinds of action (see Council of Trent, sess. 6 *de iustificatione*, c. 15; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 17; Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 80).

16. A woman who has conceived a child within her womb is forbidden by natural and Divine law to kill this human life within her, by herself or by others, whether directly or indirectly (see John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, 62).
17. Procedures which cause conception to happen outside of the womb “are morally unacceptable, since they separate procreation from the fully human context of the conjugal act” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, 14).
18. No human being may ever be morally justified to kill himself or to cause himself to be put to death by others, even if the intention is to escape suffering. “Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon

the written word of God, is transmitted by the Church's Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium" (John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, 65).

19. Marriage is by Divine ordinance and natural law an indissoluble union of one man and of one woman (see Gen 2:24; Mk 10:7-9; Eph 5:31-32). "By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown" (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 48).
20. By natural and Divine law no human being may voluntarily and without sin exercise his sexual powers outside of a valid marriage. It is, therefore, contrary to Holy Scripture and Tradition to affirm that conscience can truly and rightly judge that sexual acts between persons who have contracted a civil marriage with each other, can sometimes be morally right or requested or even commanded by God, although one or both persons is sacramentally married to another person (see 1 Cor 7: 11; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 84).
21. Natural and Divine law prohibits "any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation – whether as an end or as a means" (Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, 14).
22. Anyone, husband or wife, who has obtained a civil divorce from the spouse to whom he or she is validly married, and has contracted a civil marriage with some other person during the lifetime of his legitimate spouse,

and who lives in a marital way with the civil partner, and who chooses to remain in this state with full knowledge of the nature of the act and with full consent of the will to that act, is in a state of mortal sin and therefore can not receive sanctifying grace and grow in charity. Therefore, these Christians, unless they are living as “brother and sister,” cannot receive Holy Communion (see John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 84).

23. Two persons of the same sex sin gravely when they seek venereal pleasure from each other (see Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:24-28; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:10; Jude 7). Homosexual acts “under no circumstances can be approved” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357). Hence, the opinion is contrary to natural law and Divine Revelation that says that, as God the Creator has given to some humans a natural disposition to feel sexual desire for persons of the opposite sex, so also He has given to others a natural disposition to feel sexual desire for persons of the same sex, and that God intends that the latter disposition be acted on in some circumstances.
24. Human law, or any human power whatsoever, cannot give to two persons of the same sex the right to marry one another or declare two such persons to be married, since this is contrary to natural and Divine law. “In the Creator’s plan, sexual complementarity and fruitfulness belong to the very nature of marriage” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons*, June 3, 2003, 3).

25. Unions that have the name of marriage without the reality of it, being contrary to natural and Divine law, are not capable of receiving the blessing of the Church.
26. The civil power may not establish civil or legal unions between two persons of the same sex that plainly imitate the union of marriage, even if such unions do not receive the name of marriage, since such unions would encourage grave sin for the individuals who are in them and would be a cause of grave scandal for others (see Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons*, June 3, 2003, 11).
27. The male and female sexes, man and woman, are biological realities created by the wise will of God (see Gen. 1: 27; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 369). It is, therefore, a rebellion against natural and Divine law and a grave sin that a man may attempt to become a woman by mutilating himself, or even by simply declaring himself to be such, or that a woman may in like manner attempt to become a man, or to hold that the civil authority has the duty or the right to act as if such things were or may be possible and legitimate (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2297).
28. In accordance with Holy Scripture and the constant tradition of the ordinary and universal Magisterium, the Church did not err in teaching that the civil power may lawfully exercise capital punishment on malefactors where this is truly necessary to preserve the existence or just order of societies (see Gen 9:6; John 19:11; Rom

13:1-7; Innocent III, *Professio fidei Waldensibus praescripta*; *Roman Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p. III, 5, n. 4; Pius XII, *Address to Catholic jurists* on December 5, 1954).

29. All authority on earth as well as in heaven belongs to Jesus Christ; therefore, civil societies and all other associations of men are subject to his kingship so that “the duty of offering God genuine worship concerns man both individually and socially” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2105; see Pius XI, Encyclical *Quas primas*, 18-19; 32).

The Sacraments

30. In the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, a wonderful change takes place, namely of the whole substance of bread into the body of Christ and the whole substance of wine into His blood, a change which the Catholic Church very fittingly calls transubstantiation (see Fourth Lateran Council, c. 1; Council of Trent, sess. 13, c. 4). “Every theological explanation which seeks some understanding of this mystery must, in order to be in accord with Catholic faith, maintain that in the reality itself, independently of our mind, the bread and wine have ceased to exist after the Consecration, so that it is the adorable Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus that from then on are really before us under the sacramental species of bread and wine” (Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Solemni hac liturgia (Credo of the People of God)*, 25).
31. The formulations by which the Council of Trent expressed the Church’s faith in the Holy Eucharist are suitable for men of all times and places, since they

are a “perennially valid teaching of the Church” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 15).

32. In the Holy Mass, a true and proper sacrifice is offered to the Blessed Trinity and this sacrifice is propitiatory both for men living on earth and for the souls in Purgatory. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that the sacrifice of the Mass consists simply in the fact that the people make a spiritual sacrifice of prayers and praises, as well as the opinion that the Mass may or should be defined only as Christ giving Himself to the faithful as their spiritual food (see Council of Trent, sess. 22, c. 2).
33. “The Mass, celebrated by the priest representing the person of Christ by virtue of the power received through the Sacrament of Orders and offered by him in the name of Christ and the members of His Mystical Body, is the sacrifice of Calvary rendered sacramentally present on our altars. We believe that as the bread and wine consecrated by the Lord at the Last Supper were changed into His body and His blood which were to be offered for us on the cross, likewise the bread and wine consecrated by the priest are changed into the body and blood of Christ enthroned gloriously in heaven, and we believe that the mysterious presence of the Lord, under what continues to appear to our senses as before, is a true, real and substantial presence” (Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Solemni hac liturgia (Credo of the People of God)*, 24).
34. “The unbloody immolation at the words of consecration, when Christ is made present upon the altar in the state of a victim, is performed by the priest and by him

alone, as the representative of Christ and not as the representative of the faithful. (...) The faithful offer the sacrifice by the hands of the priest from the fact that the minister at the altar, in offering a sacrifice in the name of all His members, represents Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body. The conclusion, however, that the people offer the sacrifice with the priest himself is not based on the fact that, being members of the Church no less than the priest himself, they perform a visible liturgical rite; for this is the privilege only of the minister who has been Divinely appointed to this office: rather it is based on the fact that the people unite their hearts in praise, impetration, expiation and thanksgiving with prayers or intention of the priest, even of the High Priest himself, so that in the one and same offering of the victim and according to a visible sacerdotal rite, they may be presented to God the Father” (Pius XII, Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, 92).

35. The sacrament of Penance is the only ordinary means by which grave sins committed after Baptism may be remitted, and by Divine law all such sins must be confessed by number and by species (see Council of Trent, sess. 14, can. 7).
36. By Divine law the confessor may not violate the seal of the sacrament of Penance for any reason whatsoever; no ecclesiastical authority has the power to dispense him from the seal of the sacrament and the civil power is wholly incompetent to oblige him to do so (see *Code of Canon Law 1983*, can. 1388 § 1; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1467).

37. By virtue of the will of Christ and the unchangeable Tradition of the Church, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist may not be given to those who are in a public state of objectively grave sin, and sacramental absolution may not be given to those who express their unwillingness to conform to Divine law, even if their unwillingness pertains only to a single grave matter (see Council of Trent, sess. 14, c. 4; Pope John Paul II, Message to the *Major Penitentiary* Cardinal William W. Baum, on March 22, 1996).
38. According to the constant Tradition of the Church, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist may not be given to those who deny any truth of the Catholic faith by formally professing their adherence to a heretical or to an officially schismatic Christian community (see *Code of Canon Law 1983*, can. 915; 1364).
39. The law by which priests are bound to observe perfect continence in celibacy stems from the example of Jesus Christ and belongs to immemorial and apostolic tradition according to the constant witness of the Fathers of the Church and of the Roman Pontiffs. For this reason, this law should not be abolished in the Roman Church through the innovation of an optional priestly celibacy, either at the regional or the universal level. The perennial valid witness of the Church states that the law of priestly continence “does not command new precepts; these precepts should be observed, because they have been neglected on the part of some through ignorance and sloth. These precepts, nevertheless, go back to the apostles and were established by the Fathers, as it is written, ‘Stand firm, then, brothers and keep the traditions

that we taught you, whether by word of mouth or by letter' (2 Thess. 2:15). There are in fact many who, ignoring the statutes of our forefathers, have violated the chastity of the Church by their presumption and have followed the will of the people, not fearing the judgment of God" (Pope Siricius, Decretal *Cum in unum* in the year 386).

40. By the will of Christ and the Divine constitution of the Church, only baptized men (*viri*) may receive the sacrament of Orders, whether in the episcopacy, the priesthood, or the diaconate (see John Paul II Apostolic Letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 4). Furthermore, the assertion is wrong that says that only an Ecumenical Council can define this matter, because the teaching authority of an Ecumenical Council is not more extensive than that of the Roman Pontiff (see Fifth Lateran Council, sess. 11; First Vatican Council, sess. 4, c. 3, n. 8).

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