

JUNE 20, 2017

# *Amoris Laetitia* and the Four Last Things

[JULIA MELONI](#)



**Hell—St. Teresa of Avila told her nuns** to mentally visit the inferno during life so they would not be imprisoned in it after death. St. John Vianney sighed because the saints, who were so pure, cultivated holy fear while “we, who so often offend the good God—we have no fears.”

At last month’s Rome Life Forum, Cardinal Burke [recalled](#) Fatima’s “terrifying vision of Hell, foreshadowed in the evils visited upon the world at the time.” That chilling image evokes a warning from Fr. Charles Arminjon’s *The End of the Present World*:

Remove the fear of eternal punishment from mankind, and the world will be filled with crime... Hell will simply happen sooner: instead of being postponed until the future

life, it will be inaugurated in the midst of humanity, in the present life.

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis announces: “No one can be condemned forever, because that is not the logic of the Gospel!” (297). Josef Seifert [warns](#) that it’s “nearly unavoidable” to deduce a denial of Hell—a fear echoed by [others](#). Anna Silvas [notes](#) *Amoris Laetitia*’s “missing” lexicon of eternity: “There are no immortal souls in need of eternal salvation to be found in the document!”

But papal ghostwriter Archbishop Victor Manuel Fernandez is ebullient with joy because, as he [declares](#) in a 1995 article, “I rely firmly upon the truth that all are saved.” The author of *Heal Me With Your Mouth: The Art of Kissing*, Fernandez elsewhere rhapsodizes that extra-marital sex can express “ecstatic” charity and “Trinitarian richness.”

And Fernandez the papal ghostwriter—as [Michael Pakaluk](#) and [Sandro Magister](#) have shown—repeatedly plagiarizes his previous work in *Amoris Laetitia*. For instance, Fernandez’s 2006 declaration that “Trinitarian” love can be “realized within an objective situation of sin” is echoed in *Amoris Laetitia* 305.

Last September, the four cardinals submitted their *dubia* out of grave concern for “[the true good of souls](#).” They’ve now published a [letter from April](#) requesting an audience with the pontiff—who has not responded.

As the months of papal non-engagement grow, Pope Francis’s maxim that “time is greater than space” feels increasingly ominous. Fernandez—whose cited and [uncited](#) work also appears in Pope Francis’s *Evangelii Gaudium*—has long claimed that we’re in an age of revolutionary “time.”

In his book *The Francis Project*, Fernandez laments that conservative “fanatics” can’t accept that the “Spirit”—which

can “elude the supervision of the institution of the Church”—is leading us “toward a different phase.” It’s a phase where, apparently, God is “Mother” and “you should follow your conscience” and “a pope who tells us that God wants us to be happy on this earth will never ask us to be obsessed with sacrifice.” It’s a phase where, to quote Pope Francis, the Church isn’t “[obsessed](#)” with abortion or sexual ethics either.

It’s a phase where, to quote *Evangelii Gaudium*, “time is greater than space”—where “initiating processes” in politics and the Church advances a “utopian future” with “no possibility of return” (222). It’s a frankly eerie “final cause”—“the greater, brighter horizon of the utopian future ... which draws us to itself” (222).

So “time” and the “Spirit” are the utopia’s shining protagonists. Time lets reformers “work slowly but surely” (*EG* 223). Time lets each “region” seek its own “solutions” because “not all ... doctrinal, moral, or pastoral issues need to be settled by ... the magisterium” (*AL* 3). Eventually, the “Spirit ... overcomes every conflict by creating a new ... synthesis” (*EG* 230), enabling us “to see all things as he does” (*AL* 3).

Silvas [senses](#) here the “gnostic spirit of the cult of modernity”:

I think ‘the spirit’ to which Francis so soothingly alludes has more to do with the Geist of Herr Heigel ... [which] manifests itself in the midst of contradictions and oppositions, surmounting them in a new synthesis...

We are in a world of dynamic fluidity here, of starting open-ended processes, of sowing seeds of desired change that will triumph over time. Other theorists—you have here in Italy, Gramsci and his manifesto of cultural Marxism—teach how to achieve revolution by stealth.

Hence a revolution through an “incremental change of praxis” across time. Slowly, inexorably, “region by region, bishops around the world begin to ‘interpret’ *Amoris Laetitia*” subversively—“to a point of no return.” Buenos Aires, Rome, San Diego, the Philippines, Malta, Germany, Belgium, and Sicily have one by one embraced Communion for those in adultery—with some areas earning direct [praise](#) and [thanks](#) from the pontiff.

The four cardinals’ April letter told Pope Francis how “painful” it is to see “that what is sin in Poland is good in Germany, that what is prohibited in the archdiocese of Philadelphia is permitted in Malta.” Fernandez, for his part, has proudly [claimed](#) that Pope Francis goes “slowly” because he’s “aiming at reform that is irreversible.”

So eternity must yield to “time”; the Four Last Things—death, judgment, Heaven, and Hell—must be swallowed up by the sparkly worldly utopia. Silvas sees the “end game” as “a more or less indifferent permission for any who present for Holy Communion”:

And so we attain the longed-for haven of all-inclusiveness and “mercy”: the terminal trivialization of the Eucharist, of sin and repentance, of the sacrament of Matrimony, of any belief in objective and transcendent truth, the evisceration of language, and of any stance of compunction before the living God.

A long, subversive march through the Church—synced to the “siren song” of “accompaniment,” the mellifluous music of “mercy.”

At the Rome Life Forum, Cardinal Burke preached Fatima’s prophetic message of saving souls from “mortal sin and its fruit: eternal death.” He preached prayer, penance, reparation, and Marian consecration; he preached that

pastors' "failure to teach the faith" endangers souls "mortally, in the deepest spiritual sense."

Cardinal Caffarra starkly [described](#) the world's present attempt to place Christ and his gospel on "trial." He described an Evil One who utters "banalities about man," who seduces man into sin out of sneering "contempt." The cardinal quoted Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor before Christ: "You judge of men too highly ... they are born slaves ... I swear to you that man is weaker and lower than You have ever imagined him to be!"

Cardinal Caffarra imagined Satan taunting God with an "anti-creation," a sin-soaked hell on earth: "And man will say: it is better in the alternative creation than in your creation." It's precisely what Fr. Arminjon described—Hell irrupting into the present life, Hell happening early because mankind scoffs at its eternal reality.

No happy bromides about non-condemnation can erase Christ's fifteen warnings about Hell. No heady defense of sin, no tangled jargon on "time" and "space," can theorize the Four Last Things out of existence. Cardinal Burke calls us to battle for the eternal salvation of souls; Cardinal Caffarra calls us to testify for Christ and his gospel—currently on trial.

*Editor's note: Pictured above is Cardinal Bergoglio with Fr. Victor Manuel Fernandez in 2011 in Buenos Aires. Fernandez was named archbishop by Pope Francis in 2013.*