

Pete Baklinski

‘Official persecution’ of faithful Catholics under Pope Francis has begun: scholar

CHILE, September 18, 2017 ([LifeSiteNews](#)) -- An "official persecution" of faithful Catholics has now begun under the Francis pontificate, wrote a Catholic scholar in a recently published article.

“The official punishment of a Catholic thinker for the sole crime of defending an orthodox doctrine,” wrote Professor Claudio Pierantoni, signifies the “beginning of the official persecution of orthodoxy within the Church.”

Pierantoni is a scholar of patristics and professor of medieval philosophy at the Universidad de Chile in Santiago.

He wrote in defense of Dr. Josef Seifert, who earlier this month was removed from a Catholic university in Spain by Archbishop Javier Martínez Fernández after raising some questions about the Pope’s 2016 Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

The article was published Sept. 9 in the German magazine of philosophy and theology *Aemaet*.

Pierantoni said Seifert was removed from the university after highlighting a single sentence in the Pope’s Exhortation that, explained Pierantoni, Seifert saw as a “potential source of the destruction of the whole moral teaching of the Church and even of all natural Law.”

Seifert had argued in his article that if Pope Francis believes that adultery — to quote the exhortation — “is what God himself is asking” of couples in “irregular” situations, then there is nothing

stopping any other intrinsically evil act, such as contraception and homosexuality, from eventually being justified.

It was because of this one statement that Seifert wondered if the Exhortation was not a ticking “theological atomic bomb” that had the capacity to destroy all Catholic moral teaching.

READ: *Amoris Laetitia* is a ticking ‘atomic bomb’ set to obliterate all Catholic morality: philosopher

In his removal of Seifert, Archbishop Martínez stated that the article “damages the communion of the Church, confuses the faith of the faithful, and sows distrust in the successor of Peter, which, in the end, does not serve the truth of faith, but, rather, the interests of the world.”



Archbishop Martínez Fernández | Dr. Josef Seifert

Vatican expert Sandro Magister commented that the removal of Seifert from his teaching post might go down in history as “perhaps the most dramatic legacy of *Amoris Laetitia*.”

Pierantoni criticized the Archbishop for his statement which he said “displays a truly surprising naiveté...of the present situation of the Church.”

“First of all, in order to affirm that someone is 'damaging the communion of the Church' in some matter, one must previously assume that some kind of communion, regarding the subject we are discussing, actually exists in the Church,” he said.

“Now, what bishop, what priest, what educated and informed person in the Catholic Church today is unaware that there exists no subject at present more disputed and submerged in such horrifying confusion as this one?” he added.

Pierantoni said that while confusion within the Church already existed prior to the release of the Exhortation, with its publication “relativistic currents of thought and ‘situation ethics,’ which the previous three Popes had tried hard to stop, have now surreptitiously *entered the pages of an official papal document.*”

“Things have thus reached the point that one of the most outstanding and lucid defenders of the previous Magisterium during more than three decades, personally supported and encouraged in his philosophical enterprise by St. John Paul II as one of his most precious allies in the defence of the infallible moral doctrine of the Church, Josef Seifert, is now dismissed and treated as an enemy of the communion of the same Church,” he said.

Pierantoni also criticized the Archbishop’s claim that Seifert’s article “sows distrust toward the successor of Peter.”

“Archbishop Martínez seems to be unaware...[that] by allowing into an official document affirmations that are contradictory to essential points of the previous Magisterium, and of the millenary doctrine of the Church, Pope Francis has directly thrown upon himself the utter distrust of an immense number of faithful Catholics. The disastrous consequence is that distrust is thereby thrown, in the minds of many, upon the Papacy itself,” he said.

“So, what is the real cause of this distrust? Can it really be Josef Seifert’s solid and consistent effort to oppose the error of situation ethics, a commitment to which he has devoted almost his entire life and that of the institution he founded, in faithful service to the Church and to the Word of God? Or must it not be due to the fact that this very error, contrary to the whole Christian tradition (a tradition so recently reaffirmed in an Encyclical as solemn and important as [Pope St. John Paul II’s] *Veritatis Splendor*) has now been allowed to creep into a papal document?” he added.

Following the lead of Cardinal Raymond Burke, Pierantoni argued that *Amoris Laetitia* (AL) does not require assent from Catholics because it “can in no way be considered true Magisterium.”

Pope Francis, he said, states clearly in the opening of his Exhortation that there are — to quote the Exhortation — “various ways of interpreting some aspects” of the teaching and “drawing certain consequences from it” (AL 3).

“Now, this is of course very different from anything that could be considered a ‘magisterial teaching’: not only does a statement like this preclude any attempt to considering AL’s doctrine an infallible teaching, but it also precludes considering it even as authentic magisterium, at least in those parts that present novelties or even contradictions to the previous Magisterium,” he said.

Pierantoni argued that it is because the Pope knows that his Exhortation is not magisterial teaching that he has refused to correct various bishops groups around the world who have interpreted his work in contradictory ways. For instance, the bishops in Germany allow communion for adulterers based on their interpretation of the Exhortation, while the bishops across the boarder in Poland do not – based on their interpretation.

Pierantoni said that Archbishop Martínez is “officially persecuting a most orthodox Catholic thinker” on the “false”

assumption that the Exhortation is magisterial teaching when the Pope's own words suggest otherwise.

He said Seifert's removal was not simply "discrimination," but an "official persecution based on a papal document."

"It would be hard, in modern Church history, to find another example of this. We would have rather to go back to the ancient christological controversies, when entire and vital sections of the Church – sometimes including the Papacy – were captured by heresy and thus persecuted the orthodox," he said.

"By officially punishing a Catholic thinker for the sole crime of being orthodox, he unwittingly confirms, and throws into clear relief, the *practical schism* we are suffering from in the Catholic Church, because of grave errors that have managed to creep into a papal document," he added.

Pierantoni concluded that a "faithful defender of orthodoxy" such as Seifert could not be punished as if he were a "menace to ecclesiastical communion and an enemy of the Pope" without Pope Francis himself "actively contributing to the confusion between the Magisterium and his private opinions."

"In the light of this, it is all the more necessary and urgent that some kind of 'formal,' or, maybe better, 'filial' correction to the Pope, finally appear. And may God grant the Holy Father an open heart to hear it," he concluded.

ALL ERRORS IN THEOLOGY HAVE THEIR ORIGIN IN ERRORS IN PHILOSOPHY — Fr. Brian Mullady, O.P.

The odd teaching in the church today has acquired a boldness that I have not experienced before in my 66 years of Catholicism. Distortions in language, abandonment of the bible and tradition, twisting of concepts of conscience and other ways of thinking all are being used to justify the sins of those who proclaim them in order to justify their own life experiences and actions which are not in accord with the behaviors given to us for freedom in Jesus. Chastity is one of the most abused of all concepts today. What follows here first is the truth of the bible

and catechism, and what then is exposed are justifications for sin and accusations against those who preach Jesus' truth. — Fr. Perozich

From the CCC regarding chastity which we are all trying to do with difficulty is being undermined by our church leaders:

2342 Self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life. The effort required can be more intense in certain periods, such as when the personality is being formed during childhood and adolescence.

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/09/18/bishop-mcelroy-attacks-father-james-martin-expose-cancer-within-us-catholic-church>

In Israel before their deportation to Babylon the leaders constructed altars to false gods in the actual temple in Jerusalem and priests, kings, and people offered sacrifices to these gods. Our church leaders are doing or allowing the same by promoting unchastity, leading the people astray so that they can worship their lusts. Josiah destroyed the altars during his reign, but by that time the people were corrupted.

Galatians 1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by [the] grace [of Christ] for a different gospel (not that there is another). But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach [to you] a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed!

Galatians 4:9 At a time when you did not know God, you became slaves to things that by nature are not gods;* but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and destitute elemental powers? Do you want to be slaves to them all over again?

1 Peter 2:2

False Teachers.*

1 There were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will introduce destructive heresies and even deny the Master who ransomed them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.^a 2 Many will follow their licentious ways, and because of them the way of truth will be reviled.^b 3 In their greed they will exploit you with fabrications, but from of old their condemnation has not been idle and their destruction does not sleep.⁴ For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but condemned them to the chains of Tartarus* and handed them over to be kept for judgment; 5 and if he did not spare the ancient world, even though he preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, together with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the godless world; 6 and if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah [to destruction], reducing them to ashes, making them an example for the godless [people] of what is coming; 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man oppressed by the licentious conduct of unprincipled people 8 (for day after day that righteous man living among them was tormented in his righteous soul at the lawless deeds that he saw and heard), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the devout from trial and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who follow the flesh with its depraved desire and show contempt for lordship. Bold and arrogant, they are not afraid to revile glorious beings, 11 whereas angels, despite their superior strength and power, do not bring a reviling judgment against them from the Lord. 12 But these people, like irrational animals born by nature for capture and destruction, revile things that they do not understand, and in their destruction they will also be destroyed, 13 suffering wrong as payment for wrongdoing. Thinking daytime revelry a delight, they are stains and defilements as they revel in their deceits while carousing with you. 14 Their eyes are full of adultery and insatiable for sin. They seduce unstable people, and their hearts are trained in greed. Accursed children! 15 Abandoning the straight road, they have gone astray, following the road of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved payment for wrongdoing, 16 but he received a rebuke for his own crime: a mute beast spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness. 17 These people are waterless springs and mists driven by a gale; for them the gloom of darkness has been reserved. 18 For, talking empty bombast, they seduce with licentious desires

of the flesh those who have barely escaped* from people who live in error. 19 They promise them freedom, though they themselves are slaves of corruption, for a person is a slave of whatever overcomes him. 20 For if they, having escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of [our] Lord and savior Jesus Christ, again become entangled and overcome by them, their last condition is worse than their first. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment handed down* to them. 22 What is expressed in the true proverb has happened to them,s “The dog returns to its own vomit,” and “A bathed sow returns to wallowing in the mire.”

II. THE VOCATION TO CHASTITY

2337 Chastity means the successful integration of sexuality within the person and thus the inner unity of man in his bodily and spiritual being. Sexuality, in which man's belonging to the bodily and biological world is expressed, becomes personal and truly human when it is integrated into the relationship of one person to another, in the complete and lifelong mutual gift of a man and a woman.

The virtue of chastity therefore involves the integrity of the person and the integrality of the gift.

The integrity of the person

2338 The chaste person maintains the integrity of the powers of life and love placed in him. This integrity ensures the unity of the person; it is opposed to any behavior that would impair it. It tolerates neither a double life nor duplicity in speech.¹²⁵

2339 Chastity includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery which is a training in human freedom. The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy.¹²⁶ "Man's dignity therefore requires him to act out of conscious and free choice, as moved and drawn in a personal way from within, and not by blind impulses in himself or by mere external constraint. Man gains such dignity when, ridding himself of all

slavery to the passions, he presses forward to his goal by freely choosing what is good and, by his diligence and skill, effectively secures for himself the means suited to this end."127

2340 Whoever wants to remain faithful to his baptismal promises and resist temptations will want to adopt the means for doing so: self-knowledge, practice of an ascesis adapted to the situations that confront him, obedience to God's commandments, exercise of the moral virtues, and fidelity to prayer. "Indeed it is through chastity that we are gathered together and led back to the unity from which we were fragmented into multiplicity."128

2341 The virtue of chastity comes under the cardinal virtue of temperance, which seeks to permeate the passions and appetites of the senses with reason.

2342 Self-mastery is a long and exacting work. One can never consider it acquired once and for all. It presupposes renewed effort at all stages of life.129 The effort required can be more intense in certain periods, such as when the personality is being formed during childhood and adolescence.

2343 Chastity has laws of growth which progress through stages marked by imperfection and too often by sin. "Man . . . day by day builds himself up through his many free decisions; and so he knows, loves, and accomplishes moral good by stages of growth."130

2344 Chastity represents an eminently personal task; it also involves a cultural effort, for there is "an interdependence between personal betterment and the improvement of society."131 Chastity presupposes respect for the rights of the person, in particular the right to receive information and an education that respect the moral and spiritual dimensions of human life.

2345 Chastity is a moral virtue. It is also a gift from God, a grace, a fruit of spiritual effort.132 The Holy Spirit enables one whom the water of Baptism has regenerated to imitate the purity of Christ.133

Richard Perozich
2747 S. Kihei Road A-201
Kihei, HI 96753
808-214-5564
rperozich@gmail.com

On Sep 19, 2017, at 3:20 AM, Allyson Smith <allysons@cox.net> wrote:

Here he goes again ... SMH (shaking my head). The cancer in the Church is the failure by bishops like McElroy to teach the full truth and beauty of the Catholic faith on all matters, particularly sexual morality.

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/09/18/bishop-mcelroy-attacks-father-james-martin-expose-cancer-within-us-catholic-church>

Bishop McElroy: Attacks on Father James Martin expose a cancer within the U.S. Catholic Church

Father James Martin is a distinguished Jesuit author who has spent his life building bridges within the Catholic Church and between the church and the wider world. He has been particularly effective in bringing the Gospel message to the millennial generation. When we survey the vast gulf that exists between young adults and the church in the United States, it is clear that there could be no more compelling missionary outreach for the future of Catholicism than the terrain that Father Martin has passionately and eloquently pursued over the past two decades. There are few evangelizers who have engaged that terrain with more heart and skill and devotion.

Last year Father Martin undertook a particularly perilous project in this work of evangelization: building bridges between the church and the L.G.B.T. community in the United States. He entered it knowing that the theological issues pertaining to homosexuality constituted perhaps the most volatile element of ecclesial life in U.S. culture.

It was this very volatility that spurred Father Martin to write his new book *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the L.G.B.T. Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion and Sensitivity*. Using a methodology that is fully consonant with Catholic teaching, employing Scripture, the rich pastoral heritage of the church and an unadulterated realism that makes clear both the difficulty and the imperative for establishing deeper dialogue, Father Martin opens a door for proclaiming that Jesus Christ and his church seek to embrace fully and immediately men and women in the L.G.B.T. community.

Building a Bridge is a serious book, and any such work invites substantive criticism and dialogue. This is particularly true with a complex subject like the relationship of the L.G.B.T. community and the church. Many analyses of Father Martin's arguments have pointed to important problems that do not have easy answers and to the reality that dialogue must always proceed both in respect and in truth.

But alongside this legitimate and substantive criticism of Father Martin's book, there has arisen both in Catholic journals and on social media a campaign to vilify Father Martin, to distort his work, to label him heterodox, to assassinate his personal character and to annihilate both the ideas and the dialogue that he has initiated.

This campaign of distortion must be challenged and exposed for what it is—not primarily for Father Martin's sake but because this cancer of vilification is seeping into the institutional life of the church. Already, several major institutions have canceled Father Martin as a speaker. Faced with intense external pressures, these institutions have bought peace, but in doing so they have acceded to and reinforced a tactic and objectives that are deeply injurious to Catholic culture in the United States and to the church's pastoral care for members of the L.G.B.T. communities.

The concerted attack on Father Martin's work has been driven by three impulses: homophobia, a distortion of fundamental Catholic moral theology and a veiled attack on Pope Francis and his campaign against judgmentalism in the church.

The attacks on Building a Bridge tap into long-standing bigotry within the church and U.S. culture against members of the L.G.B.T. community. The persons launching these attacks portray the reconciliation of the church and the L.G.B.T. community not as a worthy goal but as a grave cultural, religious and familial threat. Gay sexual activity is seen not as one sin among others but as uniquely debased to the point that L.G.B.T. persons are to be effectively excluded from the family of the church. Pejorative language and labels are deployed regularly and strategically. The complex issues of sexual orientation and its discernment in the life of the individual are dismissed and ridiculed.

The coordinated attack on Building a Bridge must be a wake-up call for the Catholic community to look inward and purge itself of bigotry against the L.G.B.T. community. If we do not, we will build a gulf between the church and L.G.B.T. men and women and their families. Even more important, we will build an increasing gulf between the church and our God.

The second corrosive impulse of the campaign against Building a Bridge flows from a distortion of Catholic moral theology. The goal of the Catholic moral life is to pattern our lives after that of Jesus Christ. We must model our interior and exterior selves on the virtues of faith, love, hope, mercy, compassion, integrity, sacrifice, prayerfulness, humility, prudence and more. One of these virtues is chastity. Chastity is a very important virtue of the Christian moral life. The disciple is obligated to confine genital sexual activity to marriage.

But chastity is not the central virtue in the Christian moral life. Our central call is to love the Lord our God with all our heart and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Many times, our discussions in the life of the church suggest that chastity has a singularly powerful role in determining our moral character or our relationship with God. It does not.

This distortion of our faith cripples many of our discussions of sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. The overwhelming prism through which we should look at our moral lives is that we are all called to live out the virtues of Christ; we all succeed magnificently at some and fail at others. Those who emphasize the incompatibility of gay men or lesbian women living meaningfully

within the church are ignoring the multidimensional nature of the Christian life of virtue or the sinfulness of us all or both.

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The third impulse behind the campaign against Building a Bridge arises from a rejection of the pastoral theology that Pope Francis has brought into the heart of the church. Regarding the issue of homosexuality, in particular, many of those attacking Father Martin simply cannot forgive the Holy Father for uttering that historic phrase on the plane: "Who am I to judge?" The controversy over Building a Bridge is really a debate about whether we are willing to banish judgmentalism from the life of the church. Pope Francis continually reminds us that the Lord unceasingly called the disciples to reject the temptation to judge others, precisely because it is a sin so easy for us all to fall into and one so injurious to the life of the church.

The gulf between the L.G.B.T. community and the church is not primarily based on orientation; it is a gulf created by judgmentalism on both sides. That is the real starting point for a dialogue between the Catholic Church and the L.G.B.T. community in the United States today. Father Martin should be thanked for pointing to this reality, not shunned.

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Robert W. McElroy

Bishop Robert W. McElroy, named an auxiliary bishop of San Francisco in 2010, was elevated to bishop of San Diego in March 2015

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