

*Note well that the article is not a criticism of the Second Vatican Council or its written content. It IS critical of a peculiar use of the phrase “spirit of the council” as if this allows a different interpretation of the text by whoever wishes to interpret it according to their thinking, even perverting or ignoring the text. It does not.*

*Not a few people in the church wish to remake it in their own image and likeness, according to their own ideas and desires, and thus have adopted this phrase. Pope Benedict XVI said that we must study and put into practice the council as written, and criticized this “spirit” interpretation that many use. — Fr. Richard Perozich*

## **It All Started With the "Spirit of the Council." The "Correctio" Explained by Pietro De Marco**



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## **THE HERETICAL BACKGROUND OF MUCH OF TODAY'S PASTORAL PRACTICE**

**by Pietro De Marco**

What convinced me to sign the "[Correctio](#)" is its doctrinal core, meaning the clarification of the "false and heretical propositions propagated in the Church" even by Pope Francis. The propositions under censure in fact have the value of going to the heart of intellectual opinions and attitudes of theological-dogmatic significance that for decades have been spread in the intellectual Catholic "koinè."

Pope Jorge Mario Bergoglio participates spontaneously in this "koinè." It is a result of what is currently called the "spirit of the Council," meaning of the Council as constructed by the intelligentsia on the sidelines and asserted over the subsequent years. Whole generations, in particular those that are now growing old, have been impregnated with it and are still acting as its representatives with no self-criticism, as if the Church had not gone through more than half a century of travail on account of the errors and perverse effects induced precisely by that "spirit."

With the current pontificate, a "conciliar" vision made of few formulas, mostly dismissive of that which is the essence of Catholicism – reason and institution, dogma and liturgy, sacraments and morality – is spreading and imposing itself as the public opinion of the Church, sure of the pope's personal support, brimming with certainty, without discernment of the implications and not without conceit or disdain against those who are opposed to it: in fact, just like every ideology works.

In effect, one grasps an argumentary and rhetorical aspect of this not only of the pontiff's opinings, but also in official documents like "Amoris Laetitia." Thus, by way of example, the distinction between regular and irregular is taken as "artificial and exterior"; the age-old judgment on Protestantism is attributed to "fear and prejudice about the other's faith"; respect for tradition means "keeping in mothballs, like a

coating against parasites”; the age-old legitimization of the death penalty on the part of the Church is traced back to the “preoccupation to hold on to power and wealth”; and so on. A dismissive attitude and typical “grassroots” rhetoric, in addition to the anticlerical repertoire, that infested the 1960’s and ‘70’s (I have a detailed and abundant memory of this, between Florence and Bologna) from which the militant conciliar “momentum” never freed itself, but which were in decline until the election of Bergoglio as pope paradoxically re-legitimized them at the very top.

Premises and effects of this culture are indeed expressed in the propositions defined as “false and heretical” by the "Correctio." Such propositions must be understood as implicit assumptions, or as major premises, of what that “conciliar” vision has for years consistently affirmed or proposed for belief, and implements on the so-called pastoral terrain. When word and practice are brought to their objective premise of a doctrinal nature, their erosive and destructive power appears. These are, in fact, the doctrinal chasms that for decades have made it possible for pastoral practice to drift along on formulas that are liberating, approachable, generous, accompanied by reassurances for the faithful relative to their “evangelical” foundation: a foundation that is taken as self-evident, given the conformity of Jesus, a Jesus weak and “sinful,” to the human as ordinarily experienced.

In the face of all this, the "Correctio" is like a little "Pascendi," the anti-modernist encyclical of one hundred and ten years ago, but however – and dramatically – does not come from a pontiff but is addressed to him as a censure.

It has been pointedly noted how, precisely in the “critical” theological and pastoral cultures that accompany the action of the pope, always aimed at downgrading canon law, unprecedented attention is now being paid to norms. Why? Because the pastoral sensibility, devoid of any theological rationale, has become a pursuit of reduction, of exoneration. The pastoral concerns that guide clergies and episcopates today consist in seeking to guarantee a sort of egalitarian treatment for the faithful, to gratify them with a public recognition of equal rights of which access to the Eucharist is only the tip of the iceberg, no matter what their situation with regard to moral theology and canon law. Not

many seem to realize this, not even the pope, but the pastoral practice of mercy today runs, particularly in the urban and secularized societies of the whole world, in the petit bourgeois “existential peripheries” more than in the “favelas,” precisely the perverse machinery of the hypertrophy of individual rights.

Rights and advantages, then: pastoral practice tends to resemble a customer loyalty program. Today access to the Eucharist on request, tomorrow much more. In fact, beyond moral theology and law, it is the dissolution of the theology of grace and of the supernatural life, it is the reduction of the sacraments to anthropology and social ethics, which become ever more apparent.

The immediate result is a paradoxical Pelagianism without norms, except for those that are individual, intuitive, emotional, situational. Which is the approach that has been pursued for centuries by modernizing branches of Protestantism and “churchless” forms of Christianity. It comes as no surprise to see the almost enthusiastic discovery of Luther that emerges in the words of Bergoglio and that, not without consternation, the "Correctio" repudiates.

This is why the first formulation censured by the "Correctio" ("Homo iustificatus iis caret viribus...") is, in its technicality, the most profound, in the sense that it goes to the heart of the multi-decade drama of recent Catholic theology. This repudiates in the current “pastorality” the nullification of the cognition of grace, in particular of sanctifying grace, which is replaced with the believer’s claim to justification with regard to God and the Church.

Even the most generous of hypotheses concerning Francis - that his intention is to win general approval for Rome in the world, in order to then convey with the authority conferred upon him by a new universal legitimization an eternal announcement that today is not heeded and indeed not capable of being received – would make sense if the present-day phase of the loyalty program did not leave behind itself the ruins of truths to be proposed for belief tomorrow.

This two-stage hypothesis (to be “approachable” today in order to be listened to again tomorrow, in rigorously orthodox preaching and proclamation) still characterized the upright intentions of Pope John XXIII and the conciliar fathers. But the “grassroots” culture at work in

Bergoglio does not participate in it in any way. Being “approachable” today is in reality equivalent to an acritical becoming equal in order to be accepted, without any "metanoia" in the other. Because the other has in the meantime become a canon, and moreover a fluid one.

This mimetic attraction toward the world, meaning toward modern secularism, which over fifty years has produced in the Church a dramatic exsanguination of men, with the Society of Jesus among the hardest hit, has as its background precisely a complex of false and heretical convictions. This mimetic complex, proposed with authority by intellectual innovators, these bundles of half truths and errors have been opposed by all the recent popes.

But now there is a pope who for the first time is making himself the guarantor and actor "in capite" precisely of that corrosive postconciliar magma and of the unhappy present-day attempt to satisfy the unruly faithful at the expense of Christian truth and profundity. And the sociological pressure of the world of the divorced is, for many theologians and moralists, only a pretext.

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*The above text is a summary of a more extensive contribution from Professor Pietro De Marco, which can be read in its entirety on this other page of Settimo Cielo:*

**> *La mia posizione entro la "Correctio"***

*(English translation by **Matthew Sherry**, Ballwin, Missouri, U.S.A.)*