

Fr. Perozich comments —

Former archbishop of San Francisco John Quinn wrote a tome several years ago proposing decentralization of Vatican control over church affairs, placing more power in the hands of bishops so that they can propose theology, liturgy, pastoral practice, and morality free from classic central Vatican oversight. I believe this is being realized right now under the rule of the Holy Father Pope Francis.

The recent synods and papal statements illustrate that it all seems to work like this.

Men who propose changes are well organized, have regular meetings, a planned strategy to promote goals and implement them.

The initial strategy is to propose ambiguously their changes under the guise of “progress”.

“Progress” is an acceptable word which elicits something for the better even when the result may not be so. For example progressives in politics usually are progressing toward socialism, government control and regulation of business, speech, thought all according to the ideas of those in charge of this “progress”. Such progress favors the agents of progress while for the rest of us it controls people, decreases freedom, the economy, and our rights. In the church progress would favor novelties (a novelty is something different from the classic teaching of the church) in liturgy, morality, theology, pastoral practice.

When those who wish change are not in power, they send up trial balloons, signals of their ideas, promoting them as progressive.

*Once they get attain sufficient numbers of men in power they promote more men like themselves. They organize pre determined outcomes such as synods, control the information flow from them, and even manipulate the results to their ideas such as was done in *Amoris Laetitia* in chapter 8 and the footnotes.*

• Signals are sent out by chosen spokesmen. Some examples would be:

• New English translation of the liturgy have to be updated again in order to make them more understandable. Pope Francis gave such power to the episcopal conferences, removing it from the Congregation for Worship;

Synods discuss issues, take a vote, have spokesmen announce their version, and if acceptance still is lacking ambiguous statements are issued which allow for multiple interpretations, at least until the new interpretation (communion for the divorced and remarried, homosexual acceptance for example) are established by enough bishops so that the former practices are renounced in favor of “progress”.

The Church of England and the Episcopal Church USA already tried this. No one worships. There appears to be no reason to be saved if there is no moral code from Christ. The new salvation of the

progressives is from homophobia, islamophobia, xenophobia, rigidity, pharisaicalism, doctrinalism, and so forth. Jesus salvation from sin is not preached.

Certainly the church needs to listen to youth to see how they think, what values they hold, to know how Catholic youth came to this stage even when it is not Catholic, so that Holy Church bring the truth of Jesus to her youth, not progress beyond Christ so that she is in accord with the unchristian thought of the youth.

Yet this is what is happening with our current leadership in the church. The youth synod is just one step further toward the “progress” out of the Catholic Church and into the brave new world whose prince is not Jesus.

As Ross Douthat says in his book To Change the Church, “going beyond Jesus’ seldom leads back to Jesus.”

In the two articles below Archbishop Chaput and David Carlin say it way better than I can.

THOUGHTS ON THE *INSTRUMENTUM* *LABORIS*

Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.

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Over the past several months, I've received scores of emails and letters from laypeople, clergy, theologians, and other scholars, young and old, with their thoughts regarding the October synod of bishops in Rome focused on young people. Nearly all note the importance of the subject matter. Nearly all praise the synod's intent. And nearly all raise concerns of one sort or another about the synod's timing and possible content. The critique below, received from a respected North American theologian, is one person's analysis; others may disagree. But it is substantive enough to warrant much wider consideration and discussion as bishop-delegates prepare to engage the synod's theme. Thus, I offer it here:

Principal theological difficulties in the *Instrumentum Laboris* (IL) for the 2018 synod:

I. Naturalism

The IL displays a pervasive focus on socio-cultural elements, to the exclusion of deeper religious and moral issues. Though the document expresses the desire to “re-

read” “concrete realities” “in the light of the faith and the experience of the Church (§4),” the IL regrettably fails to do so. Specific examples:

- §52. After a discussion of the contemporary instrumentalized conception of the body and its effects of “early sexual activity, multiple sexual partners, digital pornography, exhibiting bodies online and sexual tourism,” the document laments only its “disfiguring the beauty and depth of affective and sex life.” No mention is made about the disfigurement of the soul, its consequent spiritual blindness, and impact on the reception of the gospel by the one so wounded.
- §144. There is much discussion about what young people want; little about how these wants must be transformed by grace in a life that conforms to God’s will for their lives. After pages of analysis of their material conditions, the IL offers no guidance on how these material concerns might be elevated and oriented toward their supernatural end. Though the IL does offer some criticism of exclusively materialistic/utilitarian goals (§147), the majority of the document painstakingly catalogues the varied socio-economic and cultural realities of young adults while offering no meaningful reflection on spiritual, existential, or moral concerns. The reader may easily conclude that the latter are of no importance to the Church. The IL rightfully notes that the Church must encourage youth “to abandon the constant search for small certainties (§145).” Nowhere, however, does it

note that she must also enlarge this view with the great certainty that there is a God, that he loves them, and that he wills their eternal good.

- This naturalism is also evidenced in the document's preoccupation with the following considerations: globalization (§10); advocating for the Church's role in creating "responsible citizens" rather than saints (§147) and preparing youth for their role in society (§135); secular goals for education (§149); promoting sustainability and other secular goals (§152-154); promoting "social and political engagement" as a "true vocation" (§156); encouragement of "networking" as a role of the Church.
- The hope of the gospel is noticeably missing. In §166, in the context of a discussion of sickness and suffering, a disabled man is quoted: "you are never prepared enough to live with a disability: it prompts you to ask questions about your own life, and wonder about your finiteness." These are existential questions for which the Church *possesses the answers*. The IL never responds to this quotation with a discussion of the Cross, redemptive suffering, providence, sin, or the Divine Love. The IL is similarly weak on the question of death in §171: suicide is described as merely "unfortunate," and no attempt is made to correlate it to the failures of a materialistic ethos. This is also seen in the tepid treatment of addiction (§49-50).

II. An inadequate grasp of the Church's spiritual authority

The IL upends the respective roles of the *ecclesia docens* and the *ecclesia discens*. The entire document is premised on the belief that the principal role of the magisterial Church is “listening.” Most problematic is §140: “The Church will have to opt for dialogue as her style and method, fostering an awareness of the existence of bonds and connections in a complex reality. . . . *No vocation, especially within the Church, can be placed outside this outgoing dynamism of dialogue* [emphasis added].” In other words, the Church does not possess the truth but must take its place alongside other voices. Those who have held the role of teacher and preacher in the Church must replace their authority with dialogue. (In this regard, see also §67-70).

- The theological consequence of this error is the conflation of the baptismal and sacramental priesthood. From the foundation of the Church, by divine command, the ordained ministers of the Church have been invested with the task of teaching and preaching; from her foundation, the baptized faithful have been tasked with hearing and conforming to the preached Word. Moreover, the mandate of preaching is co-instituted by Our Lord with the ministerial priesthood itself (Cf. Mt 28:19-20). Were the Church to abandon her ministry of preaching, that is, were the roles of the teaching Church and the listening Church to be inverted, the hierarchy itself would be inverted, and the ministerial

priesthood would collapse into the baptismal priesthood. In short, we would become Lutherans.

- Apart from this serious ecclesiological problem, this approach presents a pastoral problem. It is common knowledge that adolescents from permissive households typically yearn for parents to care enough to set limits and give direction, even if they rebel against this direction. Similarly, the Church as mother and teacher cannot through negligence or cowardice forfeit this necessary role of setting limits and directing (Cf. §178). In this regard §171, which points to the motherhood of the Church, does not go far enough. It offers only a listening and accompanying role while eliminating that of teaching.

III. A partial theological anthropology

Discussion of the human person in the IL fails to make any mention of the *will*. The human person is reduced in numerous places to “intellect and desire,” “reason and affectivity” (§147). The Church, however, teaches that man, created in the image of God, possesses an intellect and will, while sharing with the rest of the animal kingdom a body, with its affect. It is the will that is fundamentally directed toward the good. The theological consequence of this glaring omission is extraordinarily important, since the seat of the moral life resides in the will and not in the vicissitudes of the affect. Other examples include §114 and §118.

IV. A relativistic conception of vocation

Throughout the document the impression is given that vocation concerns the individual's search for private meaning and truth. Examples include:

- §129. What is meant by “personal form of holiness?” Or, one’s “own truth?” This is relativism. While the Church certainly proposes the personal appropriation of truth and holiness, Scripture is very clear that God, the First Truth, is One; the devil is legion.
- §139 gives the impression that the Church cannot propose the (singular) truth to people and that they must decide for themselves. The role of the Church consists only in accompaniment. This false humility risks diminishing the legitimate contributions that the Church can and ought to make.
- §157. Why should the Church be about “supporting pathways to change lifestyles?” This in conjunction with exhortations for youth to take responsibility for their own lives (§62) and to construct meaning for themselves (§7, §68-69) gives the impression that absolute truth is not found in God.

V. An impoverished understanding of Christian joy

Christian spirituality and the moral life are reduced to the affective dimension, clearest in §130, evidenced by a sentimentalist conception of “joy.” Joy seems to be a purely affective state, a happy emotion, sometimes grounded in the body or human love (§76), sometimes in social engagement (§90). Despite its constant reference to “joy,” nowhere does the IL describe it as the fruit of the

theological virtue of charity. Nor is charity characterized as the proper ordering of love, putting God first and then ordering all other loves with reference to God.

- The theological consequence of this is that the IL lacks any theology of the Cross. Christian joy is not antithetical to suffering, which is a necessary component of a cruciform life. The document gives the impression that the true Christian will be “happy” at all times, in the colloquial sense. It further implies the error that the spiritual life itself will always result in felt (affective) joy. The pastoral problem that results from this comes to the fore most clearly in §137: Is it the role of the Church to make youth “feel loved by him [God]” or to aid them in *knowing* they are loved regardless of how they might feel?

Besides the above considerations, there are other serious theological concerns in the IL, including: a false understanding of the conscience and its role in the moral life; a false dichotomy proposed between truth and freedom; false equivalence between dialogue with LGBT youth and ecumenical dialogue; and an insufficient treatment of the abuse scandal.

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Doctrine Precedes Morality

[David Carlin](#)

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Trying to look at the bright side of things, I console myself, while contemplating priestly sex abuse of minors and the great sympathy many priests and bishops have for the vice of homosexuality, with the thought that I have the inestimable privilege of being a ringside spectator of one of the great, catastrophic moments in Church history.

I was born too late for the Crucifixion; and for the persecutions of Nero and Diocletian; and for the Muslim conquest of Christian Syria, Egypt, North Africa, and Spain; and for the rupture between the Latin and Greek halves of the Church; and for the fall of Constantinople; and for the Protestant Reformation; and for the French Revolution.

But – lucky me! – I was born in time to see the leaders of the Church, our priests and bishops and cardinals (and perhaps even our pope – I’m reserving judgment on that), wreck the Church by an extraordinary combination of stupidity and immorality.

What a privilege to be present at one of history’s great bad moments. Before these moments actually happen, it’s hard to imagine that they are even possible. Apart from the conspirators, who in Rome imagined that Julius Caesar, recently honored with the title Perpetual Dictator, would

suddenly be cut down? And who, ninety years ago, could imagine that Germany, arguably the world's most cultured country, would soon throw itself into the hands of a sadistic megalomaniac?

And who, at the time of the Second Vatican Council, when the Catholic Church appeared to be in robust good health, could have imagined that the Church would soon be sent reeling, not by external enemies, but by clerics with a proneness to the unnatural vice?

I suppose the Catholic Church will eventually recover, just as it recovered from all its previous catastrophes. But there will be territorial losses. Just as there were territorial losses to Islam and to Eastern Orthodoxy and to Protestantism.

So, it is likely, there will be losses in those regions of the globe (e.g., Europe and North America) where secular humanism (aka atheism) is now socially and culturally dominant. A century or two from now, Catholicism may be, not a Euro-American religion, but a religion of India and Africa.

In the meantime, we have to try to understand the true nature of the catastrophe we are living through.

Some say it's a child abuse crisis – and stop there. They deny that the priestly sex abuse of minors has anything much to do, or anything at all to do, with homosexuality. This is the attitude of pro-LGBT Catholics, such as the editors of *America*, the Jesuit magazine. The editor-at-large of *America* is Fr. James Martin SJ, author of the notorious little book, *Building a Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter*

into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity.

But this attitude is nonsensical. What honest person in his or her right mind can deny that much – or most – of the sex abuse of minors is a spillover from the culture of homosexuality that has been for decades rather widespread among priests?

Others, more correct and more honest, argue that the fundamental problem is *exactly* that culture of homosexuality so widespread in the priesthood for many decades now. This culture has led to the emergence in many dioceses of a “lavender mafia,” that is, a semi-organized network of gay priests who protect one another, help one another to advance, and effectively prevent bishops from taking a strong stand against homosexuality and other sexual vices.

Rumors of such networks have been floating in the air for decades. Recent revelations about Cardinal Theodore McCarrick have made it impossible to dismiss these rumors as fictional.

While I agree with the argument described in the preceding paragraph, I think there is a more basic problem still that lies at the bottom of this great catastrophe. Before any seminarian or priest or bishop could have engaged, not just once but habitually, in homosexual activity, he must have *believed*, or at least half-believed, that such activity is morally permissible. Or to put this the other way around, he must have *disbelieved* the Catholic teaching on this subject.

Catholicism is a high-doctrine religion. This sharply distinguishes it from religions that are low-doctrine or no-doctrine, e.g., the pagan religions of the ancient Greeks and Romans, or the religion of liberal Protestantism.

Catholic doctrines fall into three categories: (1) Historical-miraculous, e.g., that Jesus was born of a virgin and rose from the dead; (2) Metaphysical, e.g., the Trinity, the Divinity of Christ; (3) Moral, e.g., that abortion and adultery and homosexual conduct are seriously sinful. Catholics who knowingly and deliberately reject any Catholic dogma are heretics.

It is likely, then, that our homosexually active priests were, in addition to their homosexual sins, also guilty of moral heresy. It is further likely that such moral heretics have been guilty of other kinds of heresy too. Although I can't prove it, I bet that not many priests who think homosexuality is okay nonetheless continue to believe, for example, in the Virgin Birth.

At the bottom of the whole disaster, I suggest, is a lack of belief in the fundamental doctrines of Catholicism. We live in a modern society in which very few people (apart from Mormons and very conservative Protestants) take Christian dogma seriously. Most Americans are either not Christian at all; or are only a little bit Christian, their religion being more nominal than real; or, while being seriously Christian, are convinced that the essence of Christianity is morality, doctrine being inessential.

Who can be surprised that the social environment of doctrinal skepticism may have infected many of our

priests? Or that the infection has had an impact on behavior?

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