

Fr. Perozich comments —

Cardinal Brandmüller is an historian. He compares and contrasts the church and some of its struggles over the centuries.

The early church was an itinerant church: no buildings, no structures, developing concept of hierarchy of the episcopate, the presbyterate, the diaconate, the laity.

The early church had no money except for the collections to help the Christians suffering in Jerusalem. Its leaders were persecuted. Most of them were murdered. The papacy brought with it a death sentence for the first few hundred years. Still it brought forth men and women willing to sacrifice all bodily pleasure including life for the promises of eternal life

The established church grew rich, and with it came corruption. It became a source of power, possessions, prestige for those who were ambitious for these earthly benefits. Once in power, they would do all to maintain it.

These earthly privileges obscure the moral life and the gospel call for transformation toward eternal life. This is a history from the past that is repeated now according to His Eminence.

In the past the laity rose up as many are doing now to demand return to the gospel. In the past, while laity and hierarchy began to work together, this union of forces is not coming into play with the current pope, cardinal and bishops.

There is much money and power in the church, and it is seized on by men whose bodies seek power, possessions, and prestige, and whose mantra consists of equality, justice, fairness, and “rights” as defined by them to keep them in power.

Their rhetoric for the mantra call on the life of Christ and their peculiar interpretations and applications of His teachings. Their personal transformation reveals itself to be lacking when they substitute social sin for personal sin and insist on a “seamless garment” equating free movement of peoples as immigrants, refugees, control of speech, gun control, government benefits for all with the sins of abortion, sexual immorality, cloning, euthanasia, embryonic stem cell research.

His Eminence presents a dire situation wherein even the current holy father Francis does not step in as did his predecessors centuries ago to try to stem the tide. It appears that the hierarchy has assumed that this is their church to run as they wish.

It is not. It is Jesus’ church, and He will wrest it from them.

The church has so much money, so much property, so much power and prestige still to run itself, that the awakening to reform itself has not yet come. It is like the U.S. government borrowing even more against the \$20 trillion debt to maintain our current lifestyle so that young socialists expect the government to be their support, succor, and savior for their lives. As a reckoning will come in government here as it did in Russia, Venezuela, and other socialist regimes, it will come in our church.

In the meantime, despite corruption among leaders, The Catholic Church remains the bride of Christ with His word, His sacraments, His life leading to eternal life. There is nowhere else to go for the full encounter with Jesus.

The faithful at all levels just need to be more discerning as to where to find the good in faithful liturgy, preaching, and service, running to pastors who preach eternal life, and running from pastors who have coopted the church for themselves.

Gomorraah in the 21st Century. The Appeal of a Cardinal and Church Historian



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“The situation is comparable to that of the Church in the 11th and 12th century.” As an authoritative Church historian and as president of the pontifical committee of historical sciences from 1998 to 2009, Cardinal Walter Brandmüller, 89, has no doubt when **he sees the present-day Church “shaken to its foundations” on account of the spread of sexual abuse and homosexuality “in an almost epidemic manner among the clergy and even in the hierarchy.”**

“How could it have come to this point?” the cardinal wonders. And his answer is found in an extensive and detailed article published in recent days in the German monthly “Vatican Magazin” directed by Guido Horst:

> **[Homosexualität und Missbrauch - Der Krise begegnen: Lehren aus der Geschichte](#)**

In its complete Italian version:

> **[Omosessualità e abusi - Affrontare la crisi: le lezioni della storia](#)**

Brandmüller refers to the centuries in which the bishoprics and the papacy itself had become such a source of wealth that there was “fighting and haggling over them,” with temporal rulers claiming that they themselves could apportion these offices in the Church.

The effect was that the place of pastors was taken by morally dissolute persons who were attached to the endowment rather than to the care of souls, by no means inclined to lead a chaste and virtuous life.

Not only concubinage, but homosexuality too was increasingly widespread among the clergy, to such an extent that

Saint Peter Damian in 1049 delivered to the newly elected pope Leo IX, known as a zealous reformer, his “Liber Antigomorrhianus,” composed in the form of a letter, which in essence was an appeal to save the Church from the **“sodomitic filth that insinuates itself like a cancer in the ecclesiastical order, or rather like a bloodthirsty beast rampaging through the flock of Christ.”** Sodom and Gomorrah, in the book of Genesis, are the two cities that God destroyed with fire on account of their sins.

But the thing more worthy of note, Brandmüller writes, was that “almost simultaneously a lay movement arose that was aimed not only against the immorality of the clergy but also against the appropriation of ecclesiastical offices by secular powers.”

“What rose up was the vast popular movement called ‘pataria,’ led by members of the Milanese nobility and by some members of the clergy, but supported by the people. In close collaboration with the reformers associated with Saint Peter Damian, and then with Gregory VII, with the bishop Anselm of Lucca, an important canonist who later became Pope Alexander II, and with others still, the ‘patarini’ demanded, even resorting to violence, the implementation of the reform that after Gregory VII took the name ‘Gregorian’: for a celibacy of the clergy lived out faithfully and against the occupation of dioceses by secular powers.”

Subsequently, of course, it dispersed into pauperist and anti-hierarchical movements, on the verge of heresy, and was only partially reintegrated with the Church “thanks to the farseeing pastoral action of Innocence III.” But the “interesting aspect” on which Brandmüller insists is that “that reforming movement broke out almost simultaneously in the uppermost hierarchical circles in Rome and among the vast lay population of Lombardy, in response to a situation considered unbearable.”

So then, what is similar and different in the Church today, with respect to back then?

What is similar, Brandmüller notes, is that then as now the ones expressing the protest and demanding a purification of the Church are above all segments of the Catholic laity, especially in North America, in the footsteps of the “marvelous homage to the important role of the witness of the faithful in matters of doctrine” brought to light in the 19th century by Blessed John Henry Newman.

As then, so now these faithful find beside them a few zealous pastors. But it must be recognized - Brandmüller writes - that **the impassioned appeal to the upper hierarchy of the Church and ultimately to the pope to join them in combating the scourge of homosexuality among the clergy and the bishops is not meeting with correspondingly adequate responses, unlike in the 11th and 12th centuries.**

Also in the Christological battles of the 4th century - Brandmüller points out - “the episcopacy remained inactive for long stretches.” And if it remains so today, with respect to the spread of homosexuality among sacred ministers, **“this could be based on the fact that personal initiative and the awareness of their responsibility as pastors on the part of the individual bishops are made more difficult by the structures and apparatus of the episcopal conferences, with the pretext of collegiality or synodality.”**

As for the pope, Brandmüller attributes not only to the current one but also to his predecessors **the weakness of not opposing the currents of moral theology according to which “what was forbidden yesterday can be allowed today,” homosexual acts included.**

It is true - Brandmüller acknowledges - that the 1993 encyclical “Veritatis Splendor” of John Paul II - “in which the contribution of Joseph Ratzinger has not yet been duly recognized” - reconfirmed “with great clarity the foundations of the Church’s moral teaching.” But this “ran up against widespread

rejection from theologians, perhaps because it had been published only when the theological-moral decay was already too far advanced.”

It is also true that “some books on sexual morality were condemned” and “two professors had their teaching licenses revoked, in 1972 and 1986.” “But,” Brandmüller continues, “the truly important heretics, like the Jesuit Josef Fuchs, who from 1954 to 1982 was a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University, and Bernhard Häring, who taught at the Redemptorist Institute in Rome, as well as the highly influential moral theologian from Bonn, Franz Böckle, or from Tübingen, Alfons Auer, were able to spread without interference, right in front of Rome and the bishops, the seed of error. The attitude of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith in these cases is, in retrospect, simply incomprehensible. It saw the wolf come and stood looking on while it ravaged the fold.”

The risk is that on account of this lack of initiative on the part of the upper hierarchy even the most committed Catholic laity, left on its own, might “no longer recognize the nature of the Church founded on the sacred order and slip, in protesting against the ineptitude of the hierarchy, into an Evangelical-style communitarian Christianity.”

And instead, the more the hierarchy, from the pope down, feel supported by the effective resolve of the faithful to renew and revive the Church, the more a true housecleaning can be performed.

Brandmüller concludes:

“It is in the collaboration of the bishops, priests, and faithful, in the power of the Holy Spirit, that the current crisis can and must become the point of departure for the spiritual renewal - and therefore also for the new evangelization - of a post-Christian society.”

Brandmüller is one of the four cardinals who in 2016 submitted to Pope Francis their “**dubia**” on the changes being

made in the doctrine of the Church, without ever receiving a response.

This time will the pope listen and take him seriously into consideration, as Leo IX did with Saint Peter Damian?

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