

Fr Perozich comments —

Below are Cardinal Sarah's comments on Benedict XVI's recent reflections offered to the bishops before their meeting on sexual abuse, which never were passed on to them.

This is a google translation from French to English.

When people wish to change thinking, they bombard us with wordy statements, ambiguities, imprecise language, slogans, and euphemisms.

Benedict XVI offers simplicity, clarity, precision, truth instead.

Cardinal Sarah quotes Benedict XVI as saying the core problem today is the absence of God and of faith. "It is only where faith no longer determines the actions of man that such crimes are possible."

The bullet points are some of my takes. You readers will obviously have your own insights which are important to you.

It is a long read, but valuable to those who wish to know why leaders in the church are proclaiming novelties which promote worldly values and perverse behaviors.

Sarah continues his exposition of Benedict XVI:

- *He identifies three stages in the crisis of moral theology.*

The **first** step is the complete abandonment of the natural law as the foundation of morality with the intention - and yet laudable - to base moral theology on the Bible. This attempt leads to a failure illustrated by the case of the German moralist Schüller.

It inevitably leads to the **second** stage, namely "a moral theology exclusively determined for the purposes of human action" (I, 2). Here we recognize the current teleologist whose consequentialism was the most dramatic illustration. This current which is characterized by the ignorance of the notion of moral

object comes to affirm that, according to the very terms of Benedict XVI: "nothing is fundamentally bad", "the good does not exist but only the best relative, depending on the time and circumstances "(I, 2).

Finally, the **third** step is the affirmation that the magisterium of the Church would not be competent in moral matters. The Church could infallibly teach only on matters of faith. Yet, as Benedict XVI says, there are "moral principles inextricably linked to the fundamental principles of faith". By rejecting the moral magisterium of the Church, one removes from faith any link with the concrete life. In the end, it is therefore faith that is emptied of its meaning and reality.

- Man has a nature that he must respect and cannot manipulate at will
- The rejection of nature as a divine gift leaves the human subject desperately alone.
- there are acts "inherently evil, always, and in themselves, because of their very purpose, regardless of the subsequent intentions of the one who acts and the circumstances"
- "A world without God can only be a world without meaning. For where does all that come from? (...) The world is simply there, we do not really know how and have neither purpose nor sense. From then on, there is no longer a norm of good and bad, so only that which is stronger than the other can self-assert. Then power is the only principle. Truth does not count, it does not even exist "(II, 1). If God is not the principle, if the truth does not exist, only the power counts.
- We have seen, for a long time, spread a "priestly life" which is no longer "determined by the Faith".

- Benedict XVI describes a secularized and profane priestly lifestyle. A life where God takes second place. He gives some illustrations. It was intended that the bishops' first concern should no longer be God himself but "a radically open relationship to the world" (II, 1), he says. The seminaries have been transformed into secularized places which, according to Benedict XVI, the climate "could not support the priestly vocation". *Perhaps this is why we see bishops as political, worldly concerned.* —RP
- I believe that the attitude of the clerics who play, either with the faith of the faithful, or with their moral life, with a feeling of impunity, is true clericalism. Yes, clericalism is this attitude of refusal of punishment and punishment in case of fault against faith and morality. Clericalism is the denial of the objectivity of faith and morals on the part of clerics. The clericalism that Pope Francis calls us to eradicate consists definitively, in this unrepentant subjectivism of clerics!
- The subject, his desires, his subjective intentions, circumstances become the only reality. The objectivity of faith and morality takes second place. Such idolatry of the subject effectively excludes any punishment or punishment, both for heretical theologians and for the abusive clerics.
- If faith no longer shapes our behavior, then the Church is for us, not a divine reality and received as a gift, but a reality to be built according to our ideas and our program.
- What is the path that Benedict XVI offers us? She is simple. If the cause of the crisis is forgetfulness of God, then put God back in the center! Let us put back to the center of the Church and our liturgies the primacy of God, the presence of God, his objective and real presence.

***Conference held in Rome at the St. Louis Center,
May 14, 2019, by His Eminence Cardinal Robert Sarah,
Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the
Discipline of the Sacraments***

Madam Ambassador, Eminences, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear friends,

First of all, allow me to thank you for this invitation in the prestigious setting of the French Institute Center Saint-Louis for the publication in French of my book "The evening is approaching and already the day is falling". This book analyzes the crisis of faith, the priestly crisis, the crisis of the Church, the crisis of Christian anthropology, the spiritual collapse and the moral decadence of the West and all the consequences.

I am very honored to be able to join humbly in the lineage of the French Catholic theologians and thinkers who have illustrated the Roman intellectual life.

Yet tonight I will not talk to you about this book. Indeed, the most fundamental ideas that I developed there were illustrated, exposed and demonstrated with brilliance last April by Pope Benedict XVI in the notes he had written for the Summit of Presidents of Episcopal Conferences on sexual abuse convened in Rome by Pope Francis from 21 to 24 February. The Pope emeritus published these notes in a Bavarian magazine, with the agreement of the Holy Father and the Cardinal Secretary of State.

But his reflection has been a true source of light in the night of faith that touches the whole Church. It has aroused reactions that sometimes border on intellectual hysteria. I was personally struck by the indigence and stupidity of many comments. One must believe that once again, the theologian Ratzinger, whose stature is that of a true "Father and Doctor of the Church", aimed right and touched the nuclear heart of the crisis of the Church.

So tonight I would like to let ourselves be enlightened by this demanding and luminous thought. How could we summarize Benedict XVI's thesis? Let me just quote it: "Why has pedophilia reached such proportions? In the final analysis, the reason is the absence of God "(III, 1). This is the architectonic principle of all the reflection of the Pope Emeritus. This is the conclusion of his long demonstration. This is the point from which any research on

the scandal of sexual abuse committed by priests must leave to propose an effective solution.

The crisis of pedophilia in the Church, the scandalous and frightening multiplication of abuses has one and only one ultimate cause: the absence of God. Benedict XVI summarizes it in another formula that is just as clear, and I quote: "It is only where faith no longer determines the actions of man that such crimes are possible" (II, 2).

Ladies and Gentlemen, theological genius of Joseph Ratzinger joins here not only his experience as pastor of souls and bishop, father of his priests, but also his personal, spiritual and mystical experience. It goes back to the root cause, it allows us to understand what will be the only way out of the dreadful and humiliating scandal of pedophilia. The crisis of sexual abuse is the symptom of a deeper crisis: the crisis of faith, the crisis of the meaning of God.

Some commentators, whether malevolent or incompetent, pretended to believe that Benedict XVI asserted that only doctrinally deviant clerics became child abusers. It is clear that there is no question of such simplistic shortcuts. What Pope Ratzinger wants to show and demonstrate is much deeper and more radical. He states that a climate of atheism and absence of God creates the moral, spiritual and human conditions of a proliferation of sexual abuse.

Psychological explanations certainly have their interest, but they only make it possible to identify the fragile subjects, disposed to the passage to the act. Only the absence of God can explain a situation of proliferation and multiplication so terrible of abuse.

We will now come to the demonstration of Pope Benedict.

Previously, it is appropriate to settle their account with lazy and superficial comments that have tried to disqualify this theological reflection by accusing it of confusing homosexual behavior and the abuse of minors. Benedict XVI nowhere asserts that homosexuality is the cause of abuse. It goes without saying

that the overwhelming majority of homosexuals are not suspicious of wanting to abuse anyone. But it must be said that investigations into the abuse of minors have revealed the tragic extent of homosexual practices or simply contrary to chastity within the clergy. And this phenomenon is also a painful manifestation, as we shall see, of a climate of absence of God and loss of faith.

On the other hand, other readers, too fast or too stupid - I do not know - have taxed Benedict XVI of historical ignorance on the pretext that his demonstration begins with the evocation of the crisis of 1968. But the abuses began before-well heard - Benedict XVI knows it and affirms it. He wants to show that the moral crisis of 1968 is itself already a manifestation and a symptom of the crisis of faith and not an ultimate cause. From this crisis of 1968 he could say: "It is only where Faith no longer determines the actions of men, that such things become possible".

Let's now follow his demonstration step by step. It occupies the first part of his text. He wants to show the deep process that is at work here. He says, I emphasize, that this process is "well prepared" and that it is "still in progress".

Pope Benedict uses here an example, the evolution of moral theology, to go back to the source of this crisis. He identifies three stages in the crisis of moral theology.

The first step is the complete abandonment of the natural law as the foundation of morality with the intention - and yet laudable - to base moral theology on the Bible. This attempt leads to a failure illustrated by the case of the German moralist Schüller.

It inevitably leads to the second stage, namely "a moral theology exclusively determined for the purposes of human action" (I, 2). Here we recognize the current teleologist whose consequentialism was the most dramatic illustration. This current which is characterized by the ignorance of the notion of moral object comes to affirm that, according to the very terms of

Benedict XVI: "nothing is fundamentally bad", "the good does not exist but only the best relative, depending on the time and circumstances "(I, 2).

Finally, the third step is the affirmation that the magisterium of the Church would not be competent in moral matters. The Church could infallibly teach only on matters of faith. Yet, as Benedict XVI says, there are "moral principles inextricably linked to the fundamental principles of faith". By rejecting the moral magisterium of the Church, one removes from faith any link with the concrete life. In the end, it is therefore faith that is emptied of its meaning and reality.

I would like to emphasize how from the beginning of this process it is the absence of God that is at work. From the first step, the rejection of the natural law manifests the forgetfulness of God. Indeed, nature is the first gift of God. It is in a way the first revelation of the Creator. Rejecting natural law as the foundation of morality to oppose the Bible manifests an intellectual and spiritual process already at work in mentalities. It is the refusal by man to receive from God being and the laws of being that manifest its coherence.

The nature of things, says Benedict XVI, is "the admirable work of the Creator, bearing in itself a" grammar "which indicates a finality and criteria". **"Man also has a nature that he must respect and that he can not manipulate at will.** Man is not only a self-created freedom, he is spirit and will, but he is also nature and his will is right when he respects nature, listens and when he accepts himself for what he is, he accepts that he did not create himself ". To discover nature as wisdom, order and law is to meet the author of this order. "Is it really meaningless to think about whether the objective reason manifesting itself in nature does not suppose a Creative Reason, a 'Creator Spiritus'?" asked Benedict XVI again.

I believe with Joseph Ratzinger that the rejection of this creator God has long crept into the heart of Western man. Since long before the 1968 crisis, this rejection of God is at work.

But we must show with Pope Benedict XVI all the successive manifestations. **The rejection of nature as a divine gift leaves the human subject desperately alone.** Only then will his subjective intentions and solitary conscience count. Morality is reduced to seeking to understand the motives and intentions of the subjects. She can no longer guide them to happiness according to a natural objective order that allows her to discover goodness and avoid evil. The rejection of the natural law inevitably leads to the rejection of the notion of moral object. Therefore, there are no more acts objectively and intrinsically bad, always and everywhere whatever the circumstances.

Faced with such a thought, St. John Paul II wanted to recall in "Veritatis Splendor" the objectivity of good. Benedict XVI lets us guess at what collaborative work this magisterial encyclical has represented between the Holy Polish Pope and himself, but also many collaborators that can not be reduced to a particular school of theology.

"Veritatis Splendor" can thus forcefully affirm that there are acts "inherently evil, always, and in themselves, because of their very purpose, regardless of the subsequent intentions of the one who acts and the circumstances" (No. 80) and this because these acts are "in radical contradiction with the good of the person".

I would like to emphasize with Benedict XVI that this statement is only the consequence of the objectivity of faith and ultimately the objectivity of God's existence. If God exists, if he is not a creation of my subjectivity, then there is, in the words of the Pope Emeritus, "values which must never be abandoned" (II, 2). For relativistic morality, everything becomes a question of circumstances. It is never necessary to sacrifice one's life for the truth of God, martyrdom is useless. On the contrary, Benedict XVI states that "martyrdom is a fundamental category of Christian

existence, the fact that martyrdom is no longer morally necessary in this theory shows that it is the very essence of Christianity that is at stake here" (ibid.). I, 2). To put it in a nutshell: If no value is so objective that one has to die for it, then God is no longer an objective reality worthy of martyrdom.

At the heart of the crisis of moral theology, there is therefore a refusal of the divine absolute, of the irruption of God in our lives which surpasses everything, which governs everything, which governs our way of living. The demonstration of Benedict XVI is clear and definitive, it is summed up with the words of the writer Dostoevsky: "If God does not exist, everything is allowed"! If the objectivity of the Divine Absolute is questioned, then transgressions most contrary to nature are possible, even sexual abuse on the minor. Moreover, the 1968 ideology has sometimes tried to make the legitimacy of pedophilia acceptable. We still have in hand the texts of these libertarian heroes who boasted transgressive loves with minors. If any moral act becomes relative to the subject's intentions and circumstances, then nothing is definitively impossible and radically contrary to human dignity. It is the moral atmosphere of rejection of God, the spiritual climate of rejection of divine objectivity that makes possible the proliferation of abuse of minors and the trivialization of acts contrary to chastity among clerics.

In the words of Benedict XVI "A world without God can only be a world without meaning. For where does all that come from? (...) The world is simply there, we do not really know how and have neither purpose nor sense. From then on, there is no longer a norm of good and bad, so only that which is stronger than the other can self-assert. Then power is the only principle. Truth does not count, it does not even exist "(II, 1). If God is not the principle, if the truth does not exist, only the power counts. What, then, prevents the abuse of this power by an adult over a minor? The demonstration of Benedict XVI is clear: "In the last analysis the reason [of the abuses] is the absence of God", "it is only where the

Faith no longer determines the actions of the man that such crimes are possible. "

After having laid down this principle, the Pope emeritus shows the consequences. I was personally very touched by the fact that, for him, the first consequence is manifested in the "question of the priestly life" (II, 1) and the formation of seminarians. It reinforces me in one of the fundamental intuitions of my last book.

Benedict XVI writes: "In the context of the meeting of Presidents of Episcopal Conferences of the whole world with Pope Francis, the question of priestly life as that of seminaries is of primary interest" He points here the immediate consequence of the forgetfulness of God: the crisis of the priesthood. It can be said that the priests are the first to be affected by the crisis of faith and that they brought with them the Christian people. The crisis of sexual abuse is the emerging and particularly revolting point of a deep crisis of the priesthood.

What is it? We will resume here the words of the Pope Emeritus. We have seen, for a long time, spread a "priestly life" which is no longer "determined by the Faith". Now, if there is a life which must entirely and absolutely be determined by the Faith, it is the priestly life. It is and must be a consecrated life, that is, given, reserved and offered to God alone and totally buried in God. But we have often seen priests living as if God did not exist.

Benedict XVI quotes the words of the theologian Balthasar: "Do not make God a presupposition" (III, 1). That is, do not make it an abstract notion. On the contrary, in the words of Pope Benedict "Above all, we must learn to recognize God as the foundation of our life instead of leaving it aside as a word that becomes inoperative" (III, 1). "

"The theme of God," he continues, "seems so unreal, so far removed from the things that concern us. ". Basically, with these words, Benedict XVI describes a secularized and profane priestly

lifestyle. A life where God takes second place. He gives some illustrations. It was intended that the bishops' first concern should no longer be God himself but "a radically open relationship to the world" (II, 1), he says. The seminaries have been transformed into secularized places which, according to Benedict XVI, the climate "could not support the priestly vocation". In fact, the life of prayer and adoration was neglected, the meaning of consecration to God was forgotten. The Pope emeritus cites the symptoms of this forgetfulness: the mixture with the secular world which introduces the noise and denies the fact that every priest is by his priesthood a man separated from the world, set apart for God (II, 1). He also quotes the constitution of homosexual clubs in the seminars. This fact is not so much the cause but the sign of a forgetfulness of God already widely installed. In fact, seminarians who live openly in contradiction with natural and revealed morality show that they do not live for God, that they do not belong to God, that they do not seek God. Perhaps they are looking for a job, perhaps they appreciate the social aspects of ministry. But they have forgotten the essential: a priest is a man of God, a man for God.

Perhaps the most serious is that their teachers did not say anything or voluntarily promoted the horizontal and worldly conception of the priesthood. As if the bishops and seminarians had also renounced the centrality of God. As if they too had put the faith in the background, making it inoperative. As if they too had replaced the primacy of a life for God and according to God by the dogma of openness to the world, of relativism and subjectivism. It is striking to see that God's objectivity has been eclipsed by a form of religion of human subjectivity. Pope Francis rightly speaks of self-referentiality. I believe that the worst form of self-referentiality is that which denies the reference to God, his objectivity to keep only the reference to man in his subjectivity.

How in such a climate live an authentically priestly life? How to put a limit to the temptation of any power? A man who has only

him for reference, who does not live for God but for himself, not according to God but according to his own desires, will eventually fall into the logic of abuse of power and abuse sexual. Who will put a brake on his desires, even the most perverse, if only his subjectivity counts? Forgetting God opens the door to all abuse. We had already seen it in society. But the forgetfulness of God is introduced even in the Church and even among the priests. Ineluctably abuses of power and sexual abuse spread among priests. Unfortunately, there are priests who practically no longer believe, no longer pray, or very few, no longer live the sacraments as a vital dimension of their priesthood. They became lukewarm and almost atheist.

Practical atheism makes the bed of the psychologies of abusers. The Church has long since been invaded by this liquid atheism. She should not be surprised to find abusers and perverts in her midst. If God does not exist, everything is allowed! If God does not exist concretely, everything is possible!

I would like to emphasize Pope Benedict XVI's beautiful reflection on canon law in general and criminal law in particular.

Indeed, canon law is fundamentally a structure that aims to protect the objectivity of our relationship with God. As Benedict XVI points out, the law must "protect the faith, which is also a legal good" (II, 2). Faith is our first common good. Through her we become sons of the Church. It is an objective good, and the first duty of authority is to defend it. Now, as the Pope emeritus remarks, "in the general consciousness of the law, Faith no longer seems to have the rank of a good that must be protected. of an alarming situation which must be seriously taken into consideration by the pastors of the Church "(II, 2). Bishops have the duty and the obligation to defend the deposit of the Catholic faith, the doctrine and the moral teaching which the Church has always and faithfully taught.

This is a crucial point. The crisis of sexual abuse has revealed a crisis of the objectivity of faith which is also manifested in terms

of authority in the Church. Indeed, just as pastors refuse to punish clerics who teach doctrines contrary to the objectivity of faith, so they refuse to punish clerics guilty of practices contrary to chastity or even sexual abuse. It's the same logic. It is a distorted expression of "guaranteeism", which Pope Benedict defines as "only the rights of the accused must be guaranteed, so much so that, in fact, all condemnation is excluded" (II, 2).

We still find the same ideology. The subject, his desires, his subjective intentions, circumstances become the only reality. The objectivity of faith and morality takes second place. Such idolatry of the subject effectively excludes any punishment or punishment, both for heretical theologians and for the abusive clerics. By refusing to consider the objectivity of the acts, as Benedict XVI remarks, one abandons the "little ones" and the weak ones to delusions of all power of the executioners. Yes, we have, by so called mercy, abandoned the faith of the weak and the small. They were left in the hands of the intellectuals who had the idea of deconstructing the faith by their smoking theories that they refused to condemn. In the same way, the victims of abuse have been abandoned. We have neglected to condemn the abusers, the tormentors of the innocence and purity of children, and sometimes of seminarians or nuns. All this under the pretext of understanding subjects, refusing the objectivity of faith and morality. I believe that to condemn and inflict punishment, both in the order of faith and in morality, is proof of great mercy on the part of authority.

As Benedict XVI points out, sexual abuse is objectively a "crime against the Faith". This qualification, he says, is not "a trick but a consequence of the importance of Faith for the Church." It is actually important to understand that such transgressions by clerics are ultimately harmful. comes to Faith "(II, 2).

I believe that the attitude of the clerics who play, either with the faith of the faithful, or with their moral life, with a feeling of

impunity, is true clericalism. Yes, clericalism is this attitude of refusal of punishment and punishment in case of fault against faith and morality. Clericalism is the denial of the objectivity of faith and morals on the part of clerics. The clericalism that Pope Francis calls us to eradicate consists definitively, in this unrepentant subjectivism of clerics!

It remains to me to approach a last consequence of the forgetfulness of God and the objectivity of the faith. If faith no longer shapes our behavior, then the Church is for us, not a divine reality and received as a gift, but a reality to be built according to our ideas and our program. I was deeply shocked and hurt by the reception of Benedict XVI's text by some. It has been said that "this message is not audible" is not what the Church needs to be credible again.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Church does not need communication experts. She is not an NGO in crisis that needs to get popular again! Her legitimacy is not in the polls, she is in God!

As Benedict XVI puts it, "The crisis caused by the many cases of priestly abuse pushes us to consider the Church as something miserable: something that we must now take back in hand and restructure. But a Church made by us can not continue hope! ". As Pope Emeritus points out, it is precisely because we have yielded to the temptation to make a Church in our image and put God aside, that today we see the multiplication of cases of abuse. Do not fall back into the same trap! The abuses reveal a Church that men wanted to take in hand! I am deeply saddened when I read under the pen of a theologian that the Church has committed a "collective sin" or that the Church contributes to a "sinful structure". The same Dominican sister calls for a questioning of the "conception of truth" peculiar to the Catholic Church. According to her, the Church should renounce all "claims of expertise or excellence in matters of holiness, truth and morality".

Such an approach only leads to the purest subjectivism. It therefore refers us to the very cause that produced the crisis. For if

there is no more truth and morality taught, who can say that there are things that can never be done? Once again, if God does not exist objectively, if the truth does not prevail, then everything is allowed!

What is the path that Benedict XVI offers us? She is simple. If the cause of the crisis is forgetfulness of God, then put God back in the center! Let us put back to the center of the Church and our liturgies the primacy of God, the presence of God, his objective and real presence. I was particularly touched as a Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship with a remark of Benedict XVI. He states that "in conversation with victims of pedophilia he was brought to an ever more acute awareness of the need for a renewal of faith in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament" and a celebration of the Eucharist renewed by more reverence. (III, 2). Ladies and Gentlemen, I want to emphasize that this is not an expert conclusion in theology but the wise word of a pastor who has been deeply touched by the stories of victims of pedophilia. Benedict XVI understood with deep delicacy that respect for the Eucharistic body of the Lord determines respect for the pure and innocent body of children.

"The Eucharist has been devalued," he says. There appeared a way of treating the Blessed Sacrament which "destroys the greatness of the mystery". With the Pope Emeritus I am deeply convinced that if we do not worship the Eucharistic body of our God, if we do not treat it with a joyous and reverent fear, then we will be tempted to profane the bodies of children.

I emphasize Benedict XVI's conclusion, "when we think of the action that would be needed above all else, it becomes clear that we do not need a new Church of our invention. On the contrary, what is needed first and foremost is the renewal of faith in the presence of Jesus Christ which is given to us in the Blessed Sacrament "(III, 2).

So ladies and gentlemen, to conclude I repeat to you with Pope Benedict: yes, the Church is full of sinners. But she is not in

crisis, we are in crisis. The devil wants to make us doubt. He wants us to believe that God is abandoning his Church. No, she is still "the field of God. There is not only tares but also the harvest of God.

To proclaim these two aspects insistently is not a false apologetic: it is a service that must be rendered to the truth, "says Benedict XVI. He proves it, his prayerful presence and teacher in our midst, in the heart of the Church, in Rome confirms this. Yes, there are among us beautiful divine harvests.

Thank you, dear Pope Benedict, for being a cooperator of the truth, a servant of the truth. Your word comforts us and reassures us. You are a witness, a "martyr" of the truth. Be thanked.