

Cdl Burke, Bp Schneider issue ‘declaration of truths’ to correct rampant ‘doctrinal confusion’ in Church

[Athanasius Schneider](#), [Catholic](#), [Declaration Of Truths](#), [Jan Pawel Lenga](#), [Janis Pujats](#), [Pope Francis](#), [Raymond Burke](#), [Tomash Peta](#)

ROME, June 10, 2019 ([LifeSiteNews](#)) — Cardinal Raymond Burke and Bishop Athanasius Schneider, together with several other bishops, have issued a public declaration of truths of the faith to remedy the “almost universal doctrinal confusion and disorientation” endangering the spiritual health and eternal salvation of souls in the Church today.

PETITION: Support Senior Cardinals' and Bishops' Declaration of Truths Amid Confusion in Universal Church. [Sign the petition here.](#)

Some of the 40 truths which are elucidated in the declaration implicitly reference statements made by Pope Francis, while others relate to points of confusion that have arisen or intensified during the current pontificate. Still others address moral errors in society that are gravely harming lives, as much of the hierarchy stands by.

The eight-page document (see full text below), released in several languages on Pentecost Monday, June 10, is entitled *Declaration of the truths relating to some of the most common errors in the life of the Church of our time*.

The declaration upholds the Church’s perennial teaching on the Eucharist, marriage and priestly celibacy.

Also included among the truths of the faith is that “hell exists” and that human souls who are “condemned to hell for any unrepented mortal sin” suffer there eternally; that the “only religion positively willed by God” is that born in faith in Jesus Christ; and that “homosexual acts” and gender reassignment surgery are “grave sins” and a “rebellion” against divine and natural law.

Signatories of the declaration include: Cardinal Raymond Burke, Patron of the [Sovereign Military Order of Malta](#); Cardinal Janis Pujats, Archbishop emeritus of Riga, Latvia; His Excellency Tomash Peta, Archbishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana, Kazakhstan; Jan Pawel Lenga, Archbishop-Bishop emeritus of Karaganda, Kazakhstan; and Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana.

Explanatory note

In an explanatory note replete with references to St. Paul, the Church Fathers and the documents of Vatican II, the Cardinals and Bishops write that the Church is experiencing one of the “greatest spiritual epidemics” in her history, and a “widespread lethargy in the exercise of the Magisterium on different levels of the Church’s hierarchy in our days.”

“Our time is characterized by an acute spiritual hunger of the Catholic faithful all over the world for a reaffirmation of those truths that are obfuscated, undermined, and denied by some of the most dangerous errors of our time,” they say.

The prelates argue that the faithful feel “abandoned,” finding themselves in a “kind of existential periphery” and that such a situation “urgently demands a concrete remedy.” The public declaration of truths they have signed, they add, cannot be further delayed.

Aware of their “grave responsibility” as bishops to teach the “fullness of Christ” and “speaking the truth in love,” they say the

declaration is being published in a “spirit of fraternal charity” and as a “concrete spiritual help” so that bishops, priests, religious and laity might confess “either privately or publicly” these truths that today are “mostly denied or disfigured.”

While the signatories do not specify what form such public professions might take, one might reasonably imagine they could include a bishop making a profession in his cathedral, a priest making a profession in his parish, a religious superior making a profession in their monastery or friary, or a lay group making a profession at a public event or on the internet.

“Before the eyes of the Divine Judge and in his own conscience, each bishop, priest, and lay faithful has the moral duty to give witness unambiguously to those truths that in our days are obfuscated, undermined, and denied,” the signatories write.

Exhorting Catholic bishops and laity to “fight the good fight of the faith” (1 Tim. 6: 12), the signatories say they believe “private and public acts of a declaration of these truths” could be the beginning of “a movement” to confess and defend the truth — and to make reparation for “hidden and open sins of apostasy” committed by clergy and laity alike.

The signatories note, however, that “such a movement will not judge itself according to numbers, but according to the truth.” “God does not delight in numbers, (*Or.* 42:7),” they write, quoting St. Gregory of Nazianzus, who lived amid the doctrinal confusion of the Arian crisis.

Released one day after Pentecost, the declaration also stresses the power of the “immutable Catholic Faith” to unite the members of Christ’s Mystical Body across the ages.

It emphasizes that the truths of the faith are not contrary to pastoral practice but are pastoral by their very nature because they unite us with Christ, who is Truth Incarnate.

The declaration thus implies that disguising the truth or making one’s private opinion to be doctrine is very unpastoral;

and that confusing others, scandalizing them by watering down the faith, or seeming to contradict Catholic tradition is not helpful for people’s spiritual or emotional lives.

Taking up the words of St. Augustine, the signatories note that standing on “the pastoral watch-tower” is the particular task of bishops.

“A common voice of Shepherds and the faithful, through a precise declaration of the truths will be without any doubt an efficient means of a fraternal and filial aid for the Supreme Pontiff in the current extraordinary situation of a general doctrinal confusion and disorientation in the life of the Church,” they write.

The bishops and cardinals emphasize that the declaration is being issued “in the spirit of Christian charity.” Quoting St. Paul, they note that such charity is shown by caring for “the spiritual health both of Shepherds and faithful, i.e., of all the members of Christ’s Body.”

The signatories conclude by entrusting the declaration of truths to “the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God under the invocation ‘*Salus populi Romani*’ (‘Salvation of the Roman People’),” given the “privileged spiritual meaning which this icon has for the Roman Church.”

As a sign of this entrustment, the declaration and explanatory note are dated May 31, 2019 — the liturgical feast of the Visitation in the new calendar, the feast of Our Lady Virgin and Queen in the old calendar, and the optional feast of Our Lady Mediatrix of all Graces.

The Declaration

The declaration of truths is composed of four parts: Fundamentals of Faith (1-2), The Creed (3-11), The Law of God (12-29) and The Sacraments (30-40).

The first part, on the “Fundamentals of Faith,” addresses attacks against the Church’s infallibility and the problem of doctrinal

relativism, i.e. belief that *the meaning* of Catholic doctrine changes or evolves, depending on the historic age or circumstances.

Referencing the First Vatican Council's dogmatic constitution on the Catholic Faith, *Dei Filius*, it states that the "right meaning" of expressions like "living Magisterium," "hermeneutic of continuity," and "development of doctrine" includes the truth that "whatever new insights may be expressed regarding the deposit of faith, nevertheless they cannot be contrary to what the Church has always proposed in the same dogma, in the same sense, and in the same meaning" (1).

Quoting a document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, it adds that "the *meaning* of dogmatic formulas remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it is expressed with greater clarity or more developed." It adds that the faithful must therefore "shun" the opinion that dogmatic formulations cannot "signify truth in a determinate way" or that these dogmatic formulas are only indeterminate "approximations" of truth (2).

The second part, on "The Creed," dispels the error that "God is glorified principally by the very fact of the progress in the temporal and earthly condition of the human race" (3). It also states that Muslims and other non-Christians do not adore God in the same way as Christians, as Christian adoration is a supernatural act of faith (5). It further states the goal of "true ecumenism" is that "non-Catholics should enter that unity which the Catholic Church already indestructibly possesses" (7).

Part II on the Creed also affirms explicitly that "hell exists and those who are condemned to hell for any unrepented mortal sin are eternally punished there by Divine justice." It therefore rejects the theory of "annihilism" which claims that the damned will cease to exist after the final judgement rather than suffering everlasting torment in hell.

In a clear reference to the controversial declaration which Pope Francis signed in Abu Dhabi, stating that the “diversity of religions” is “willed by God,” Part II also states that “The religion born of faith in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God and the only Savior of humankind, is the only religion positively willed by God.”

The Pope has said privately and subsequently at a Wednesday general audience that the Abu Dhabi declaration’s controversial statement refers to the “permissive” will of God, but there has been no official correction of the document.

The third part of the declaration, on the “Law of God,” is devoted to truths of the Catholic moral tradition. In this third section, the cardinals and bishops reaffirm the Church’s teaching, as expressed by Pope John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor*, that Christians are obliged to “acknowledge and respect the specific moral precepts declared and taught by the Church in the name of God.” Based on the same encyclical, they reject the notion that “deliberate choices of kinds of behavior contrary to the commandments of the Divine and natural” law can somehow be justified as “morally good” (13).

Again, citing John Paul II (*Evangelium vitae*), the cardinals and bishops reaffirm that divine revelation and natural law include “negative prohibitions that absolutely forbid certain kinds of action, inasmuch as these kinds of action are always gravely unlawful on account of their object” (14), i.e. intrinsically evil acts. They add, therefore, that the opinion is “wrong” that says that “a good intention or a good consequence is or can ever be sufficient to justify the commission of such kinds of action” (15).

In a series of points, the signatories then reiterate the Church’s teaching that abortion is “forbidden by natural and divine law” (16); that “procedures which cause conception to happen outside of the womb are morally unacceptable” (17); and that “euthanasia” is a “grave violation of the law of God,” since it

is the “deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person” (18).

The declaration also devotes several points to marriage. It reaffirms that “by divine ordinance and natural law,” marriage is “an indissoluble union of one man and of one woman” which is “ordained for the procreation and education of children” (19-20).

It reasserts that “by natural and divine law no human being may voluntarily and without sin exercise his sexual powers outside of a valid marriage” (20), e.g. through pre-marital relations, co-habitation. It adds that it is “contrary to Holy Scripture and Tradition to affirm that conscience can truly and rightly judge that sexual acts between persons who have contracted a civil marriage with each other, can sometimes be morally right or requested or even commanded by God, although one or both persons is sacramentally married to another person (see 1 Cor 7: 11; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 84).

Citing Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, it reiterates the Church prohibition against contraception, stating that “any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means” (21).

In a clear reference to confusion arising after the promulgation the summary document on the family synod, *Amoris Laetitia*, the declaration also reasserts that those who obtain a civil divorce from a spouse to whom they are validly married and enter into a second union, living “in a marital way with the civil partner” with full knowledge and consent, “are in a state of moral sin and therefore cannot receive sanctifying grace and grow in charity” (22).

Regarding homosexuality, the signatories reaffirm with Scripture and tradition that “two persons of the same sex sin gravely when they seek venereal pleasure from each other (see Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:24-28; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:10; Jude 7)

and that homosexual acts “under no circumstances can be approved” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357) (23).

It therefore adds that it is “contrary to natural law and Divine Revelation” to say that “as God the Creator has given to some humans a natural disposition to feel sexual desire for persons of the opposite sex, so also He has given to others a natural disposition to feel sexual desire for persons of the same sex, and that God intends that the latter disposition be acted on in some circumstances” (23).

Regarding so-called same-sex “marriage,” the cardinals and bishops state that no “human law” nor “any human power whatsoever,” can “give to two persons of the same sex the right to marry one another or declare two such persons to be married, since this is contrary to natural and Divine law” (24).

Concerning gender theory, the declaration reaffirms that “the male and female sexes, man and woman, are biological realities created by the wise will of God.” It therefore terms gender reassignment surgery a “rebellion against natural and divine law” and a “grave sin.”

Part III of the declaration ends by reasserting the Church’s teaching on the legitimacy of the death penalty (28) and reaffirming her teaching on the social Kingship of Christ (29).

Finally, Part IV of the declaration, on the Sacraments, reasserts the Church’s teaching on transubstantiation (30); on the nature of the Holy Mass as “a true and proper sacrifice is offered to the Blessed Trinity and this sacrifice is propitiatory both for men living on earth and for the souls in Purgatory” (32); on the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist; and on the essential difference between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of the faithful (34).

Regarding the Sacrament of Penance, it reaffirms the teaching of the Council of Trent that this sacrament is “the only ordinary means by which grave sins committed after Baptism may be remitted, and by Divine law all such sins must be confessed by

number and by species” (see Council of Trent, sess. 14, can. 7). It also states that by divine law “the confessor may not violate” the seal of Confession, nor may any “ecclesiastical authority” or “civil power” oblige him to do so (36).

It further specifies that “by virtue of the will of Christ and the unchangeable Tradition of the Church, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist may not be given to those who are in a public state of objectively grave sin, and sacramental absolution may not be given to those who express their unwillingness to conform to Divine law, even if their unwillingness pertains only to a single grave matter (see Council of Trent, sess. 14, c. 4; Pope John Paul II, Message to the Major Penitentiary Cardinal William W. Baum, on March 22, 1996).”

The declaration concludes by reaffirming that priestly celibacy “belongs to immemorial and apostolic tradition according to the constant witness of the Fathers of the Church and of the Roman Pontiffs” (39). In an apparent reference to the upcoming Amazonian Synod, it therefore states that priestly celibacy “should not be abolished in the Roman Church through the innovation of an optional priestly celibacy, either at the regional or the universal level” (39).

Finally, citing Pope John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, the declaration of truths concludes by reaffirming the male-only Catholic priesthood: “whether in the episcopacy, the priesthood, or the diaconate.”

Read the full Declaration in PDF form [HERE](#). Read the explanatory note below, or in PDF form [HERE](#). The Declaration first appeared in the National Catholic Register.

Explanatory note to the “Declaration of the truths relating to some of the most common errors in the life of the Church of our time”

In our time the Church is experiencing one of the greatest spiritual epidemics, that is, an almost universal doctrinal confusion and disorientation, which is a seriously contagious danger for spiritual health and eternal salvation for many souls. At the same time one has to recognize a widespread lethargy in the exercise of the Magisterium on different levels of the Church's hierarchy in our days. This is largely caused by the non-compliance with the Apostolic duty - as stated also by the Second Vatican Council - to “vigilantly ward off any errors that threaten the flock” (*Lumen gentium*, 25).

Our time is characterized by an acute spiritual hunger of the Catholic faithful all over the world for a reaffirmation of those truths that are obfuscated, undermined, and denied by some of the most dangerous errors of our time. The faithful who are suffering this spiritual hunger feel themselves abandoned and thus find themselves in a kind of existential periphery. Such a situation urgently demands a concrete remedy. A public declaration of the truths regarding these errors cannot admit a further deferral. Hence we are mindful of the following timeless words of Pope Saint Gregory the Great: “Our tongue may not be slack to exhort, and having undertaken the office of bishops, our silence may not prove our condemnation at the tribunal of the just Judge. (...) The people committed to our care abandon God, and we are silent. They live in sin, and we do not stretch out a hand to correct.” (*In Ev. hom.* 17: 3. 14)

We are aware of our grave responsibility as Catholic bishops according to the admonition of Saint Paul, who teaches that God gave to His Church “shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints

for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4: 12-16).

In the spirit of fraternal charity, we publish this Declaration of truths as a concrete spiritual help, so that bishops, priests, parishes, religious convents, lay faithful associations, and private persons as well might have the opportunity to confess either privately or publicly those truths that in our days are mostly denied or disfigured. The following exhortation of the Apostle Paul should be understood as addressed also to each bishop and lay faithful of our time, “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6: 12 - 14).

Before the eyes of the Divine Judge and in his own conscience, each bishop, priest, and lay faithful has the moral duty to give witness unambiguously to those truths that in our days are obfuscated, undermined, and denied. Private and public acts of a declaration of these truths could initiate a movement of a confession of the truth, of its defense, and of reparation for the widespread sins against the Faith, for the sins of hidden and open

apostasy from Catholic Faith of a not small number both of the clergy and of the lay people. One has to bear in mind, however, that such a movement will not judge itself according to numbers, but according to the truth, as Saint Gregory of Nazianzus said, amidst the general doctrinal confusion of the Arian crisis, that “God does not delight in numbers” (*Or.* 42:7).

In giving witness to the immutable Catholic Faith, clergy and faithful will remember the truth that “the entire body of the faithful cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples’ supernatural discernment in matters of faith, when from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals” (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, 12).

Saints and great Bishops who lived in times of doctrinal crises may intercede for us and guide us with their teaching, as do the following words of Saint Augustine, with which he addressed Pope Saint Boniface I, “Since the pastoral watch-tower is common to all of us who discharge the office of the episcopate (although you are prominent therein on a loftier height), I do what I can in respect of my small portion of the charge, as the Lord condescends by the aid of your prayers to grant me power” (*Contra ep. Pel.* I, 2).

A common voice of the Shepherds and the faithful through a precise declaration of the truths will be without any doubt an efficient means of a fraternal and filial aid for the Supreme Pontiff in the current extraordinary situation of a general doctrinal confusion and disorientation in the life of the Church.

We make this public Declaration in the spirit of Christian charity, which manifests itself in the care for the spiritual health both of the Shepherds and of the faithful, i.e., of all the members of Christ’s Body, which is the Church, while being mindful of the following words of Saint Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians: “That there might be no division in the body, but the

members might be mutually careful one for another. If one member suffers any thing, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12: 25 - 27), and in the Letter to the Romans: “As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. And having different gifts, according to the grace that is given us, either prophecy, to be used according to the rule of faith; or ministry, in ministering; or he that teaches, in doctrine; he that exhorts, in exhorting; hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor preventing one another. In carefulness not slothful. In spirit fervent. Serving the Lord” (Rom. 12: 4 - 11).

The Cardinals and Bishops who sign this “Declaration of the truths” entrust it to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God under the invocation “Salus populi Romani” (“Salvation of the Roman People”), considering the privileged spiritual meaning which this icon has for the Roman Church. May the entire Catholic Church, under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin and Mother of God, “fight intrepidly the fight of the Faith, persist firmly in the doctrine of the Apostles and proceed safely amidst the storms of the world until she reaches the heavenly city” (Preface of the Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary “Salvation of the Roman people”).

May 31, 2019

Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, Patron of the [Sovereign Military Order of Malta](#)

Cardinal Janis Pujats, Archbishop emeritus of Riga

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“The Church of the living God - the pillar and the bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15)
Declaration of the truths relating to some of the most common errors in the life of the Church of our time

The Fundamentals of Faith

1. The right meaning of the expressions ‘living tradition,’ ‘living Magisterium,’ ‘hermeneutic of continuity,’ and ‘development of doctrine’ includes the truth that whatever new insights may be expressed regarding the deposit of faith, nevertheless they cannot be contrary to what the Church has always proposed in the same dogma, in the same sense, and in the same meaning (see First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, sess. 3, c. 4: “in eodem dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia”).

2. “The meaning of dogmatic formulas remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it is expressed with greater clarity or more developed. The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulas (or some category of them) cannot signify truth in a determinate way, but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it; secondly, that these formulas signify the truth only in an indeterminate way, this truth being like a goal that is constantly being sought by means of such approximations. Those who hold such an opinion do not avoid dogmatic relativism and they corrupt the concept of the Church's infallibility relative to the truth to be taught or held in a determinate way.” (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration “*Mysterium Ecclesiae*” in defense of the Catholic doctrine on the Church against certain errors of the present day, 5).

The Creed

3. “The Kingdom of God begun here below in the Church of Christ is not of this world whose form is passing, and its proper growth cannot be confounded with the progress of civilization, of science or of human technology, but it consists in an ever more profound knowledge of the unfathomable riches of Christ, an ever stronger hope in eternal blessings, an ever more ardent response to the love of God, and an ever more generous bestowal of grace and holiness among men. The deep solicitude of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, for the needs of men, for their joys and hopes, their griefs and efforts, is therefore nothing other than her great desire to be present to them, in order to illuminate them with the light of Christ and to gather them all in Him, their only Savior. This solicitude can never mean that the Church conforms herself to the things of this world, or that she lessens the ardor of her longing of her Lord and of the eternal Kingdom” (Paul VI, Apostolic letter Solemni hac liturgia (Credo of the People of God), 27). The opinion is, therefore, erroneous that says that God is glorified principally by the very fact of the progress in the temporal and earthly condition of the human race.

4. After the institution of the New and Everlasting Covenant in Jesus Christ, no one may be saved by obedience to the law of Moses alone without faith in Christ as true God and the only Savior of humankind (see Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16).

5. Muslims and others who lack faith in Jesus Christ, God and man, even monotheists, cannot give to God the same adoration as Christians do, that is to say, supernatural worship in Spirit and in Truth (see Jn 4:24; Eph 2:8) of those who have received the Spirit of filial adoption (see Rom 8:15).

6. Spiritualities and religions that promote any kind of idolatry or pantheism cannot be considered either as “seeds” or as “fruits” of the Divine Word, since they are deceptions that preclude the evangelization and eternal salvation of their adherents, as it is taught by Holy Scripture: “ the god of this world has made blind the minds of those who have not faith, so that the light of the good news of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not be shining on them right to offend God in choosing the moral evil of sin, the religious error of idolatry, blasphemy, or a false religion.” (2 Cor 4:4).

7. True ecumenism intends that non-Catholics should enter that unity which the Catholic Church already indestructibly possesses in virtue of the prayer of Christ, always heard by His Father, “that they may be one” (John 17:11), and which she professes in the Symbol of Faith, “I believe in one Church.” Ecumenism, therefore, may not legitimately have for its goal the establishment of a Church that does not yet exist.

8. Hell exists and those who are condemned to hell for any unrepented mortal sin are eternally punished there by Divine justice (see Mt 25:46). Not only fallen angels but also human souls are damned eternally (see 2 Thess 1:9; 2 Pet 3:7). Eternally damned human beings will not be annihilated, since their souls are immortal according to the infallible teaching of the Church (see Fifth Lateran Council, sess. 8).

9. The religion born of faith in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God and the only Savior of humankind, is the only religion positively willed by God. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that just as God positively wills the diversity of the male and female sexes and the diversity of nations, so in the same way he also wills the diversity of religions.

10. “Our [Christian] religion effectively establishes with God an authentic and living relationship which the other religions do not succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven” (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 53).

11. The gift of free will with which God the Creator endowed the human person grants man the natural right to choose only the good and the true. No human person has, therefore, a natural right to offend God in choosing the moral evil of sin, the religious error of idolatry, blasphemy, or a false religion.

The Law of God

12. A justified person has the sufficient strength with God’s grace to carry out the objective demands of the Divine law, since all of the commandments of God are possible for the justified. God’s grace, when it justifies the sinner, does of its nature produce conversion from all serious sin (see Council of Trent, sess. 6, Decree on Justification, c. 11; c. 13).

13. “The faithful are obliged to acknowledge and respect the specific moral precepts declared and taught by the Church in the name of God, the Creator and Lord. Love of God and of one’s neighbor cannot be separated from the observance of the commandments of the Covenant renewed in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Spirit” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, 76). According to the teaching of the same Encyclical the opinion of those is wrong, who “believe they can justify, as morally good, deliberate choices of kinds of behavior contrary to the commandments of the Divine and natural law.” Thus, “these theories cannot claim to be grounded in the Catholic moral tradition” (*ibid.*).

14. All of the commandments of God are equally just and merciful. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that a person is able, by obeying a Divine prohibition - for example, the sixth commandment not to commit adultery - to sin against God by this act of obedience, or to morally harm himself, or to sin against another.

15. “No circumstance, no purpose, no law whatsoever can ever make licit an act which is intrinsically illicit, since it is contrary to the Law of God, which is written in every human heart, knowable by reason itself, and proclaimed by the Church” (John Paul II, *Encyclical Evangelium, vitae*, 62). There are moral principles and moral truths contained in Divine revelation and in the natural law which include negative prohibitions that absolutely forbid certain kinds of action, inasmuch as these kinds of action are always gravely unlawful on account of their object. Hence, the opinion is wrong that says that a good intention or a good consequence is or can ever be sufficient to justify the commission of such kinds of action (see Council of Trent, sess. 6 de iustificatione, c. 15; John Paul II, *Apostolic Exhortation, Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 17; *Encyclical Veritatis Splendor*, 80).

16. A woman who has conceived a child within her womb is forbidden by natural and Divine law to kill this human life within her, by herself or by others, whether directly or indirectly (see John Paul II, *Encyclical Evangelium Vitae*, 62).

17. Procedures which cause conception to happen outside of the womb “are morally unacceptable, since they separate procreation from the fully human context of the conjugal act” (John Paul II, *Encyclical Evangelium Vitae*, 14).

18. No human being may ever be morally justified to kill himself or to cause himself to be put to death by others, even if the

intention is to escape suffering. “Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written word of God, is transmitted by the Church's Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, 65).

19. Marriage is by Divine ordinance and natural law an indissoluble union of one man and of one woman (see Gen 2:24; Mk 10:7-9; Eph 5:31-32). “By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown” (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 48).

20. By natural and Divine law no human being may voluntarily and without sin exercise his sexual powers outside of a valid marriage. It is, therefore, contrary to Holy Scripture and Tradition to affirm that conscience can truly and rightly judge that sexual acts between persons who have contracted a civil marriage with each other, can sometimes be morally right or requested or even commanded by God, although one or both persons is sacramentally married to another person (see 1 Cor 7: 11; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 84).

21. Natural and Divine law prohibits “ any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation — whether as an end or as a means” (Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, 14).

22. Anyone, husband or wife, who has obtained a civil divorce from the spouse to whom he or she is validly married, and has contracted a civil marriage with some other person during the lifetime of his legitimate spouse, and who lives in a marital way with the civil partner, and who chooses to remain in this state

with full knowledge of the nature of the act and with full consent of the will to that act, is in a state of mortal sin and therefore can not receive sanctifying grace and grow in charity. Therefore, these Christians, unless they are living as “brother and sister,” cannot receive Holy Communion (see John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 84).

23. Two persons of the same sex sin gravely when they seek venereal pleasure from each other (see Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:24-28; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:10; Jude 7). Homosexual acts “under no circumstances can be approved” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2357). Hence, the opinion is contrary to natural law and Divine Revelation that says that, as God the Creator has given to some humans a natural disposition to feel sexual desire for persons of the opposite sex, so also He has given to others a natural disposition to feel sexual desire for persons of the same sex, and that God intends that the latter disposition be acted on in some circumstances.

24. Human law, or any human power whatsoever, cannot give to two persons of the same sex the right to marry one another or declare two such persons to be married, since this is contrary to natural and Divine law. “In the Creator's plan, sexual complementarity and fruitfulness belong to the very nature of marriage” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons*, June 3, 2003, 3).

25. Unions that have the name of marriage without the reality of it, being contrary to natural and Divine law, are not capable of receiving the blessing of the Church.

26. The civil power may not establish civil or legal unions between two persons of the same sex that plainly imitate the union of

marriage, even if such unions do not receive the name of marriage, since such unions would encourage grave sin for the individuals who are in them and would be a cause of grave scandal for others (see Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons*, June 3, 2003, 11).

27. The male and female sexes, man and woman, are biological realities created by the wise will of God (see Gen. 1: 27; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 369). It is, therefore, a rebellion against natural and Divine law and a grave sin that a man may attempt to become a woman by mutilating himself, or even by simply declaring himself to be such, or that a woman may in like manner attempt to become a man, or to hold that the civil authority has the duty or the right to act as if such things were or may be possible and legitimate (see Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2297).

28. In accordance with Holy Scripture and the constant tradition of the ordinary and universal Magisterium, the Church did not err in teaching that the civil power may lawfully exercise capital punishment on malefactors where this is truly necessary to preserve the existence or just order of societies (see Gen 9:6; John 19:11; Rom 13:1-7; Innocent III, *Professio fidei Waldensibus praescripta*; Roman Catechism of the Council of Trent, p. III, 5, n. 4; Pius XII, Address to Catholic jurists on December 5, 1954).

29. All authority on earth as well as in heaven belongs to Jesus Christ; therefore, civil societies and all other associations of men are subject to his kingship so that “the duty of offering God genuine worship concerns man both individually and socially” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2105; see Pius XI, Encyclical *Quas primas*, 18-19; 32).

The Sacraments

30. In the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, a wonderful change takes place, namely of the whole substance of bread into the body of Christ and the whole substance of wine into His blood, a change which the Catholic Church very fittingly calls transubstantiation (see Fourth Lateran Council, c. 1; Council of Trent, sess. 13, c. 4). “Every theological explanation which seeks some understanding of this mystery must, in order to be in accord with Catholic faith, maintain that in the reality itself, independently of our mind, the bread and wine have ceased to exist after the Consecration, so that it is the adorable Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus that from then on are really before us under the sacramental species of bread and wine” (Paul VI, Apostolic letter Solemni hac liturgia (Credo of the People of God), 25).

31. The formulations by which the Council of Trent expressed the Church’s faith in the Holy Eucharist are suitable for men of all times and places, since they are a “perennially valid teaching of the Church” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 15).

32. In the Holy Mass, a true and proper sacrifice is offered to the Blessed Trinity and this sacrifice is propitiatory both for men living on earth and for the souls in Purgatory. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that the sacrifice of the Mass consists simply in the fact that the people make a spiritual sacrifice of prayers and praises, as well as the opinion that the Mass may or should be defined only as Christ giving Himself to the faithful as their spiritual food (see Council of Trent, sess. 22, c. 2).

33. “The Mass, celebrated by the priest representing the person of Christ by virtue of the power received through the Sacrament of Orders and offered by him in the name of Christ and the members of His Mystical Body, is the sacrifice of Calvary rendered

sacramentally present on our altars. We believe that as the bread and wine consecrated by the Lord at the Last Supper were changed into His body and His blood which were to be offered for us on the cross, likewise the bread and wine consecrated by the priest are changed into the body and blood of Christ enthroned gloriously in heaven, and we believe that the mysterious presence of the Lord, under what continues to appear to our senses as before, is a true, real and substantial presence” (Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Solemni hac liturgia* (Credo of the People of God), 24).

34. “The unbloody immolation at the words of consecration, when Christ is made present upon the altar in the state of a victim, is performed by the priest and by him alone, as the representative of Christ and not as the representative of the faithful. (...) The faithful offer the sacrifice by the hands of the priest from the fact that the minister at the altar, in offering a sacrifice in the name of all His members, represents Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body. The conclusion, however, that the people offer the sacrifice with the priest himself is not based on the fact that, being members of the Church no less than the priest himself, they perform a visible liturgical rite; for this is the privilege only of the minister who has been Divinely appointed to this office: rather it is based on the fact that the people unite their hearts in praise, impetration, expiation and thanksgiving with prayers or intention of the priest, even of the High Priest himself, so that in the one and same offering of the victim and according to a visible sacerdotal rite, they may be presented to God the Father” (Pius XII, Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, 92).

35. The sacrament of Penance is the only ordinary means by which grave sins committed after Baptism may be remitted, and by Divine law all such sins must be confessed by number and by species (see Council of Trent, sess. 14, can. 7).

36. By Divine law the confessor may not violate the seal of the sacrament of Penance for any reason whatsoever; no ecclesiastical authority has the power to dispense him from the seal of the sacrament and the civil power is wholly incompetent to oblige him to do so (see Code of Canon Law 1983, can. 1388 § 1; Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1467).

37. By virtue of the will of Christ and the unchangeable Tradition of the Church, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist may not be given to those who are in a public state of objectively grave sin, and sacramental absolution may not be given to those who express their unwillingness to conform to Divine law, even if their unwillingness pertains only to a single grave matter (see Council of Trent, sess. 14, c. 4; Pope John Paul II, Message to the Major Penitentiary Cardinal William W. Baum, on March 22, 1996).

38. According to the constant Tradition of the Church, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist may not be given to those who deny any truth of the Catholic faith by formally professing their adherence to a heretical or to an officially schismatic Christian community (see Code of Canon Law 1983, can. 915; 1364).

39. The law by which priests are bound to observe perfect continence in celibacy stems from the example of Jesus Christ and belongs to immemorial and apostolic tradition according to the constant witness of the Fathers of the Church and of the Roman Pontiffs. For this reason, this law should not be abolished in the Roman Church through the innovation of an optional priestly celibacy, either at the regional or the universal level. The perennial valid witness of the Church states that the law of priestly continence “does not command new precepts; these precepts should be observed, because they have been neglected on the part of some through ignorance and sloth. These precepts, nevertheless, go back to the apostles and were established by the

Fathers, as it is written, ‘Stand firm, then, brothers and keep the traditions that we taught you, whether by word of mouth or by letter’ (2 Thess. 2:15). There are in fact many who, ignoring the statutes of our forefathers, have violated the chastity of the Church by their presumption and have followed the will of the people, not fearing the judgment of God” (Pope Siricius, Decretal Cum in unum in the year 386).

40. By the will of Christ and the Divine constitution of the Church, only baptized men (viri) may receive the sacrament of Orders, whether in the episcopacy, the priesthood, or the diaconate (see John Paul II Apostolic Letter, Ordinatio Sacerdotalis, 4). Furthermore, the assertion is wrong that says that only an Ecumenical Council can define this matter, because the teaching authority of an Ecumenical Council is not more extensive than that of the Roman Pontiff (see Fifth Lateran Council, sess. 11; First Vatican Council, sess. 4, c. 3, n. 8). May 31, 2019

Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta
Cardinal Janis Pujats, Archbishop emeritus of Riga

Tomash Peta, Archbishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana

Jan Pawel Lenga, Archbishop-Bishop emeritus of Karaganda

Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana