

Fr. Perozich comments —

The book *Uprooted. Dialogues on the Liquid Church*, is a cry for help for Church members who feel uprooted in a pontificate with crises in meaning of liturgy, priesthood, mercy, justice, homosexuality.

The “merciful ones” “mercifully” isolate, ridicule and eliminate those who disagree with them. Their mercy is only a slogan. Their mercy is disconnected from justice.

Kindness, mercy and tolerance are invoked only for the causes of the “merciful ones”.

Their mercy disappears in ad hominum attacks of racist, homophobe, fascist, Nazi, reactionary, ultra-traditionalist. and other insults.

The “merciful ones” try to create for themselves a moral purity to make themselves immune from attack as they crucify and silence others. They attack people to discredit their ideas, a rude dishonest method.

Pope Francis, the author says, does this in his morning Masses against others’ ideas.

The “mercyism” is separates mercy from justice. States, for example, need to protect the innocent, not just forgive the crimes of the guilty.

If mercy ignores justice mercy becomes an absurdity, distorts the concept of God, separates the Christian from conversion, creates a false right for a creature to be forgiven.

Regarding immigration, limits are merciful in order to respect those who already live where others wish to be. An immigrant’s first right is not to be forced to leave their homeland. That is true justice and mercy.

True opposition in the church today is not between liberals and conservatives, rather it is between the presumptuous and the humble, the arrogant and the simple.

Those who rightly criticize mercyism “clog up the gears of the machine that guarantees privileges to clergy and laity alike.” It is for the privileged a battle of survival to protect themselves and the system which is unfaithful to its reason for existing, an apathy to this by such persons.

The result is the search by many outside the Roman Catholic Church for reverent liturgy, spirituality.

Others, discouraged, live in fear with a lack of confidence in themselves to live the new life in God. They are now accommodated in their discouragement rather than uplifted in their sonship as children of God by leaders called to preach justice and mercy, to distinguish between good and evil, to give concrete direction rather than vagueries.

WE, THE UPROOTED

Aurelio Porfiri



Author's Intro (Exclusive for The Remnant):

The feeling a lot of Catholics have today in the Church is often similar to a feeling of being alienated from your own country. I talked about this many times with my friend Aldo Maria Valli, a journalist and a writer, who has been a vaticanist for years. In his blog *Duc in altum* (among the most popular and authoritative) he has long been committed to the defense of Catholic tradition, the right doctrine and correct liturgy, even if years ago he was more a Catholic leaning toward the liberal side. I too, a Church musician for decades, have tried to understand the reasons behind the many changes in the Church in recent years, changes that now I can no longer justify. And it seems things are not going to change soon. This has given to us a sense of being uprooted, and this is the main reason behind our book, "Uprooted. Dialogues on the

Liquid Church" (2018 Chorabooks). It is a book in the form of dialogue about the many issues that we are facing: liturgy, homosexuality, crisis of priesthood, mercy and justice and many more.

It is not a book that conceals some kind of resentment, but is like a cry for help and also a signal to all those that feel the same. Aldo Maria and I were surprised when going around for conferences, that many Italians Catholic that have our book, felt we were also representing them in our book. So, the reason of having the book now ready for the English audiences. As an example, you may read the chapter where we speak of the Church of Mercy.

- AP **THE CHURCH OF MERCY**

From Aurelio Porfiri-Aldo Maria Valli (2018), *Uprooted. Dialogues on the Liquid Church* - Chorabooks, used with permission



Aurelio Porfiri: There has been much talk and controversy about this concept of the “Church of Mercy” which has been so emphasized in the pontificate of Francis. Of course, I too have noted that the “merciful ones,” who hang on every word that comes from St. Peter’s (or rather from Santa Marta), when they encounter someone who disagrees with them they “mercifully” isolate, ridicule, and eliminate them. Now I ask: is this mercy valid for everyone, or is it, as some are beginning to think, only an effective slogan to send messages, including social ones, that otherwise would not be sent? Let’s be clear: mercy is a very important Christian concept, but it is never disconnected from justice. God could not be merciful if he were not also just, because the measure of mercy can only be applied when the situation of sin has been outlined by justice. You cannot forgive if you don’t know why you are forgiving. And then, if you will allow me, there is the need to distinguish between mercy on the personal level and on the social level. Certainly, the State ought to try to rehabilitate those who err, but it also ought to think about protecting those who have not erred, avoiding the possibility of people who are potentially dangerous roaming the streets undisturbed. The State, exercising its power of control and coercion, protects its citizens and also protects those with evil intentions from repeating their crimes. In this case, as in others, we observe that the highest form of mercy is justice.

Aldo Maria Valli: “Mercy” is the word which better than any other summarizes the magisterium of Francis. But unfortunately, Bergoglio impoverished the concept of mercy by separating it from justice. The defenders of Francis say: in order to try to bring back people of this time to the faith, the Pope focused more on the God of mercy than on the God of justice. But this is absurd: Our God, the God of the Christians, is merciful precisely as a judge. If he let everything pass, if he accepted everything, if he welcomed everything, regardless of personal choices and behaviors, he would not be a Father but an evil teacher who deceives and opens the gates of hell. Christian teaching cannot be separated from the call to conversion and, I would add, to contrition, which is something more than repentance: it is horror for sin. Instead, in this “Church of Mercy,” or perhaps it would be better to say “Mercy-ism” or cheap mercy, one only deceives, saying: do whatever you want, because at the end the Father will pardon everything. It is clear that I am simplifying a lot, but in the end this is the concept that is being passed off. There does not exist a right of the creature to be forgiven, just as God does not have the duty to forgive. But now instead we have come to the point of theorizing exactly this.

AP: In reality, this use of “kindness, mercy, tolerance” is already well-known among those of the left, where these qualities are constantly evoked, but only for their own cause, in the sense

that they are kind and merciful and tolerant only with those who think like they do. But we are all capable of that. But as soon as you try to challenge their thought which makes itself dominant in this way, they make your life impossible. You would expect them to listen, understand, show tolerance...but it is a delusion, because to the degree that you think differently from them you are a racist, homophobe, ultra-traditionalist, fascist, Nazi, reactionary, and all the other insults which you know well. In short, what is the point of their projecting this false goodness? Naturally it is so as to create a sense of moral purity and to make themselves immune from attack. As I have said, mercy is an important element of Christianity, but it is a bit like having “cheese and pepper pasta” without the pepper...call it something else. As I have said many times on the theme of immigrants, it is correct to welcome others for those who are able to do so. But then, seeing the streets full of poor people from all over the world who ask for alms or worse than that, I ask myself: is this mercy towards them? Is this mercy towards those who already live here? Because in reality a false mercy takes place, one deprived of justice. If I ask you to welcome three people at your house, if you are able to you may do so. But if I ask you to host three thousand, surely you will say that it's not possible. I will not therefore say that you are not merciful because you refuse to welcome three thousand

people into your apartment that is smaller than one hundred square meters.

AMV: Be careful, Aurelio! You are perhaps at risk of falling into the same schematic as our critics. We should never fall into the temptation to judge others based on the opposition of progressives vs. conservatives, left vs. right, traditionalists vs. modernists. To be clear, I myself have often done this, but it is still wrong. I know many friends who say they are liberal, and who I would place among modernists with regard to the Church, and yet they are reasonable people whom we can speak serenely about our thoughts. Perhaps the true opposition is between the presumptuous and the humble, between the arrogant and the simple. And I can assure you that I have met many arrogant traditionalists! As far as the left and the right, I confess that I don't know where to locate myself. Until a short time ago, I would have defined myself in terms of political categories as center-left. But now? Regarding immigrants, I think that the first and fundamental form of help we should give them is to guarantee their right to not leave their home country. It is too easy to speak of welcoming, but it is much more complicated to force oneself to what can be done so that these people would not be forced to leave their homelands and end up in the hands of the traffickers. This, I would say, would be true justice. The rest is demagoguery seasoned with sentimentality which serves only to pacify our consciences.

AP: True, at times the schematics can be harmful, but they help us to understand. There are Marxists who are more reasonable than some conservatives (despite their Marxism, I would say). But the discussion we are having is not about people but rather ideas. I hope that in this book we will succeed in avoiding, as we have thus far, what has been done all too often by certain areas of the Church and journalism, namely, attacking people in order to discredit their ideas. It is a well-known tactic, one often used in the United States, where the uncomfortable candidates are eliminated by rummaging through their private lives. What candidate was not found to have a secret lover, an expense that was not registered, a youthful indiscretion? It is not much different from what happens in the “Church of Mercy,” where the voices which object are always labelled by those journalists who defend the Church based on forgiveness, tolerance, and understanding. I try to not fall into this sin, even with people whom humanly speaking I definitely do not appreciate. Instead I always try to engage them at the level of their ideas. We no longer live in times when personal attacks go unpunished: today the law offers so many possibilities to defend oneself from calumnies and infamy. Yet these are still used with great finesse, seeking to discredit anyone who holds inconvenient ideas, so that, if one falls, so also do all the others.

AMV: Discrediting the person rather than discussing their ideas is the method of the rude and dishonest. And if today it is used so much it is because, alas, we live in a world in which cultural and moral barbarism is rampant. We could go a long way with that discussion, but instead I would like to return to the Church (and more specifically to the Vatican) and point out what is, in my opinion, the inexcusable way that Francis uses the morning Mass at Santa Marta. In fact, he often uses it to attack and discredit his adversaries. Particularly inexcusable are the expressions which the Pope has used such as “wild dogs” in reference to those people who, in his judgment, seek out scandals and foment them. Clearly he was referring to the memoir written by the former nuncio to the United States, Carlo Maria Viganò. Now I ask myself: is it possible that the Pope, the supreme pastor, can transform daily Mass into a tribunal from which he shoots arrows at those who do not think as he does. In my opinion this is not possible. And yet I see that this vice is now generally accepted. And there is also never a shortage of cheerleaders who, instead of asking the Pope to respond to questions and emerge from his silence, show only praise for this tactic of the Pontiff, all aimed at targeting those he calls “Pharisees,” “old wives,” “fomenters of coprophagia,” “museum mummies,” “funeral faces,” “rotten-hearted,” and so on. In the face of such beautiful mercy, what is

there to say? And this is the same person who also said, “Who am I to judge?”

AP: I can only agree with you. I happened to read your interview with Rod Dreher about his wonderful book *The Benedict Option*. I think that he would be another person whom it would be good to have dialogue with us here. Let’s say it clearly: the human institution called “The Catholic Church” is a system that tries to protect itself. Those who try and raise doubts about it threaten to clog up the gears of the machine that guarantees privileges to clergy and laity alike (including journalists). Thus, behind the façade of the “Church of Mercy” it seems to me that we are witnessing a battle for survival, which should not surprise us. Systems always try to protect themselves. Certainly, we can say that this system is not faithful to its reason for existing, which is a little of what we and others are trying to do. But the system, in some cases, even if it is ill, goes into survival mode, because, as I have said, the privileges that clergy and laypeople enjoy depend on its survival. We aren’t writing poetry here; we are trying to look at reality with the most objective view possible. Is the Church today truly relevant in the lives of many people? I can tell you that everything around me is now largely post-Catholic. People who, like Dreher, can no longer stand desacralized liturgies or look for other possibilities in other Christian groups, or search for spirituality

somewhere else, even in politics, or simply become apathetic. Those who are apathetic are now an ocean, and it's a terrible disaster. At least the atheists maintain an interest in religion, even if they deny it. The apathetic neither deny nor affirm; they simply say that religion does not concern them.

AMV: It's true, apathy is the greatest evil. But I wouldn't be fooled by what you see on the surface. I think that in reality many people have a kind of nostalgia for God. I realized this when, years ago, the parish priest asked my wife and I to talk to couples who were doing a marriage preparation course. I saw many people there who were distanced from the Church, and who thought that they did not have faith any more, not so much because they had a disagreement with the Church or because they defended their liberty from dogmas and rules, but because they did not feel that they were up to it. These men and women, when they listened to our testimony (which was centered on the fact that a Christian life, if you wish to have it, is not only possible but is also beautiful and exciting), reacted by saying: we will never succeed. That is: we will never be able to open ourselves to life, to be faithful, to cultivate the spirit, to renounce the lure of the world. Why do I share all this? To say that perhaps for many of our brothers and sisters, what drives them away from faith is not so much arrogance, the idea of not needing God, but rather a profound lack of

confidence in themselves. Here is where I see the devil in action, the great demotivator, the great producer of discouragement. And we cannot respond to him with a generic message of mercy. The best response is something different: “You are worthy, and you are worthy because you are a child of God, and because you are worthy you are able to assume responsibility, to distinguish good from evil and to choose the good instead of evil.”

AP: Yes, we must give concrete directions, not vague references.