

Fr. Perozich comments —

As a priest, I look to the pope and the to the bishops for unity in the proclamation of the timeless truths to nourish my soul and the souls of all the faithful to lead us to everlasting life in Jesus Christ as He revealed God's plan and truth.

In the past 50 years, I sometimes do hear that from them, and sometimes I am unaware of any such proclamations because the many statements that come from bishops, congregations, and synods which cause me to be “Bemused? Befuddled? Puzzled?” as states Dr. Randall Smith in his opening line of this article.

With my experience of having my faith and teachings declared as not being Catholic by my own bishop on November 9, 2016, Dr. Smith's article affirms the truth of my faith and Catholic teachings for me.

My heart is not filled with hate for those who impede my ability to teach the true faith as are some hate filled hearts illustrated in the article below who wish to teach their own opinions.

Despite frustrations with novelties in the Holy Catholic Church, I cannot hate and live in anger at the proponents of such novelties because I pray before the Blessed Sacrament each day, get to confession frequently, celebrate Mass daily either at home or at a parish when a pastor requests, continue to study the faith, meditate, and try to encounter Jesus in all people.

“It is hard to maintain out of proportion anger towards someone for whom you are regularly praying.” — Fr. John Zuhlsdorf

Laity can battle furiously against novelties from the pope and bishops with fewer repercussions. Priests cannot do so because of the church structures where bishops have power over us and can remove us from ministry justly or unjustly.

Take Fr. Thomas Weinandy OFM, the former theologian to the USCCB. He was dismissed immediately from that position after his “logical” theological filial appeal to Pope Francis for clarity and truth.

Others have suffered the same fate when preaching classic Catholic truth or challenging progressive privilege.

The phenomenon exists in all aspect of society: politics, education, media, and so forth.

The battles in the war for truth and fidelity to Jesus are fought on different fronts, with different threats, by different forces.

Priests have a more vulnerable life tied up by control of them by prelates.

Laity do not.

Archbishop Viganò, Cardinal Müller, Cardinal Burke, Cardinal Brandmüller, Bishop Schneider, Bishop Strickland have a power of orders and authority that priests and laity do not, and can fight for truth with their peers in the episcopacy including the papacy since the pope is the bishop of Rome.

Each level of force brings the truth of Jesus in his own way and fights against progressive privilege to bring people to Jesus in the faith that He has given to us.

*The dissemination of these articles to you from me is my contribution to the fight during the time of progressive privilege to keep you in the church and to show you a truth beyond the novel declarations of those in charge and their **“right not to be opposed,”** where dialogue deteriorates into control, people are treated as a means, and predetermined outcomes are established before synodal meetings take place.*

Here are some highlights for me, but this article speaks for itself for the reader in my opinion.

- ***One of the first things I noticed as a new Catholic was how much dissent there was in a Church that, from the outside***
- ***the constant drumbeat of dissent, but also by its self-righteous stridency. ...It was well known that you couldn't get a decent teaching post in theology at a major Catholic university if you weren't a Catholic dissenter.***
- ***it continued to seem strange to me that, although my friends and I had gotten opposition for our “Catholic” views at the secular humanist institution I had attended as an undergraduate, I found the opposition much worse at Catholic institutions.***
- ***here is a bit of double-standard going on here; that many of those who demand papal obedience now were the fiercest critics of “papatry” in the past when John Paul II was pope.***
- ***When certain more “conservative” parties are in charge, their authority is repeatedly brought into question. “Resistance” and “dissent” are taken to be high virtues and***

important priorities, enough to trump other concerns for traditional order and peaceful coexistence. When such “conservatives” are replaced by more “progressive” forces, this becomes the cause for tremendous celebration, as though the “will of the people” has finally triumphed and the tyrants brought low.

- *Progressives hold onto power, it seems, by a certain “right” – the right not to be opposed by those who don’t really understand the needs of the people and simply aren’t as caring.*

- *a true dialogue would depend upon both parties agreeing not to use emotivism to obliterate “any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations.*

- *“Dialogue” is not a competition to see who can manipulate the audience’s emotions more effectively. It must be a non-manipulative process wherein each party is unwilling to influence the other except by reasons which that other he or she judges to be good.*

- *he [Pope John Paul II] and Benedict XVI followed a long tradition in the Church of addressing the concerns of contemporary men and women with principled arguments and reasoned exhortations, producing solid teaching documents that bore continual fruit upon repeated readings.*

Francis, however, seems devoted to vilifying those who question him and gathering together “committees” by means of which he can manufacture a certain kind of “consensus” to support what everyone knew he wanted to do when the committee was convened.

- *true “collegiality” has been replaced by corporatism and faux “consensus building,” and where “progressivism” is not only “empowered” but privileged.*

- *respect is due only to those who agree to eschew the stratagems of emotivism and engage in non-manipulative dialogue.*

- ***For Christians, there is only one defining meta-narrative; they is only one that does not end up empowering some at the expense of others. That is the narrative of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His continuing presence in the Church guided by His Spirit. Letting some other narrative obscure this one can only lead to dire consequences for Christians and for the ultimate good they hope to offer the world.***

Papolatry and Progressive Privilege

“Progressive” forces dominate the Roman curia now, and they seem to think that they are instruments of the ineluctable forces of historical progress.

December 19, 2019 Dr. Randall B. Smith
Print



Pope Francis greets the crowd during his general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican May 1, 2019. (CNS photo/Paul Haring)

Bemused? Befuddled? Puzzled? What word do I use to describe my reaction to the recent media consensus that the U. S. bishops on their *ad liminia* visits to Rome will (and indeed *must*) fall all over themselves to “reassure” Pope Francis that they in no way stand in opposition to him? I am *puzzled* because I am wondering where this hard-and-fast rule was when John Paul II was pope.

I came into the Church as an adult convert after John Paul II became pope. **One of the first things I noticed as a new Catholic was how much dissent there was in a Church that, from the outside** (as the “spiritual-but-not-religious” Moralistic Therapeutic Deist I was) seemed such an impressively unified body of beliefs and believers. In my first years of graduate study in theology, I found deep divisions over how to read the Bible, interpreting the documents of the Second Vatican Council, the nature and binding character of traditional magisterial teaching, the role and authority of the Pope, the provisions of Catholic moral teaching, and much else.

John Paul II was insistently proclaiming that a new spirit should blow through the Church, one in continuity with the great traditions of the past, and it was in accord with them that the Second Vatican Council should be interpreted. But he was also employing in exciting new ways the resources of contemporary philosophy, especially phenomenology, to help clarify classical theological formulations. No one who knew anything about history could say this was a papacy “stuck in the Dark Ages.” It was new, yet steeped in the old, and exciting.

But there was dissent everywhere. I had a professor who announced one day before class: “I had to pull my daughter out of the Ursuline Academy. They are bad mouthing the pope *every day*. I am putting my daughter into public school. They won’t bad mouth the pope there. They wouldn’t *dare*.” And they

didn't. But the Ursuline sisters did. In fact, a lot of Catholic clerics and religious did. Pretty much *all the time*.

I thought, "Wow, this Church really means it when they talk about allowing dissent." As a newly minted Catholic, I was surprised not only by **the constant drumbeat of dissent, but also by its self-righteous stridency**. I soon grew accustomed to it. **But it continued to seem strange to me that, although my friends and I had gotten opposition for our "Catholic" views at the secular humanist institution I had attended as an undergraduate, I found the opposition much worse at Catholic institutions.** It was rare to go more than ten minutes in a class without hearing, "Peter was never in Rome." Or "the empty tomb was not really empty." Or "the Exodus event never happened."

It was a time when Hans Küng had become wealthy (a Catholic priest-professor informed me with no little satisfaction) giving lectures on Catholic campuses around the world after the publication of his book questioning papal infallibility. Charles Curran was a celebrity for dissenting from the Church's moral teaching on contraception and Richard McBrien was the face of Catholicism on television. **It was well known that you couldn't get a decent teaching post in theology at a major Catholic university if you weren't a Catholic dissenter.**

"Papolatry" was the Jesuit's phrase during those years for those who took the Pope too seriously. It was taken to be a serious threat to the Church; indeed, for some, it was *the most serious threat* to the Church.

In their 2003 book *Passionate Uncertainty: Inside the American Jesuits*, Peter McDonough and Eugene Bianchi recounted the comment of a then-fifty eight year old Jesuit sociologist who bragged that: "The Society has not sold its soul to the 'Restoration' of John Paul II." Another Jesuit, a church historian, complained: "[He's] probably the worst pope of all

times,” then corrected himself: “He’s not *one* of the worst popes; he’s *the* worst. Don’t misquote me.” They didn’t.

“There’s a cutting off of dialogue,” this Jesuit continued, “a listening to one side, at least that’s the impression he gives. Control, not listening.” A constant theme of that book was the irritation these men felt at what they saw as a failure of “subsidiarity” in the institutional Church.

Things were in such a state across the Society that the redoubtable Fr. Paul Mankowski, S.J., would, upon the death of John Paul II, **write**: “Over the course of 28 years in the Society of Jesus, I’ve watched Wojtyla-hatred turn into one of the principal sub-themes of Jesuit life.” Mankowski told the story of fellow Jesuit Fr. Cyril Barrett saying of the failed assassin Mehmet Ali Agca, “in a bellow that filled a London restaurant”: “The only thing wrong with that bloody Turk was that he couldn’t shoot straight!”

“The reason for these Jesuits’ Wojtyla-hatred,” wrote Mankowski, “is no mystery. His fiercest adversaries have always been liberal-apostate Catholics: those who, in flat contradiction to the logic of doctrine, press for that doctrine to change. Women may become priests, and approval may be given to contraception, but the institution that enacts these innovations *ipso facto* has ceased to be part of the Catholic Church.” And, he adds:

The dreams that progressivists surfaced during Paul VI’s pontificate — of a congregational, sexually emancipated, anti-sacral ‘picnic’ catholicism — were frankly infantile. Yet Catholics over 50 will remember the emotional mist of auto-suggestion that ‘the next pope’ would move with the times and make these dreams come true. Not all Jesuits got smitten by this vision, but the majority did, and was stunned when Wojtyla failed to act out its fantasy. Many left the Society to seethe outside it; others remained, and seethe within.

It seems the seething is over. The Jesuits now have their pope.

But given the previous generation's insistence on the overriding importance of "subsidiarity" within the Church and the value they placed on "dissent," why, if it isn't too indelicate to ask, are the American bishops, each of whom has his own apostolic authority, now being expected to trundle off submissively to Rome to assure the Pope and his minions that they are *absolutely not dissenting in the least* from the current pontiff? The narrative has certainly changed: from Charles Curran's "dissent" as an expression of "creative fidelity" to Austen Ivereigh's screed against those who have "wounded" the "shepherd," Francis, the "Great Reformer." It is almost enough to make one think **there is a bit of double-standard going on here; that many of those who demand papal obedience now were the fiercest critics of "papolatry" in the past when John Paul II was pope.** Is this a principled position or simply a two-faced expression of *ideology* — the sort of ideology the great Czech dissident Vaclav Havel perceptively described as "a specious way of relating to the world"?

There is an old saying: "What's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander." Not any more, it seems. This is a problem infecting not only the Catholic Church. One finds it throughout contemporary politics and culture. **When certain more "conservative" parties are in charge, their authority is repeatedly brought into question. "Resistance" and "dissent" are taken to be high virtues and important priorities, enough to trump other concerns for traditional order and peaceful coexistence. When such "conservatives" are replaced by more "progressive" forces, this becomes the cause for tremendous celebration, as though the "will of the people" has finally triumphed and the tyrants brought low.**

But then when a more “progressive” party takes power, principled dissent is taken to be a betrayal of the general will and a violation of the common good. The very thought that such “progressives” might be asked to surrender control to a more “conservative” party forces tremendous soul-searching and often requires a painful act of will. Indeed, there is often a certain kind of dangerous “illegitimacy” attributed to “counter-revolutionary” forces that does not apply to noble intentions of the progressives. **Progressives hold onto power, it seems, by a certain “right” — the right not to be opposed by those who don’t really understand the needs of the people and simply aren’t as caring.**

A serious dialogue about the needs of the people and the requirements of the common good would certainly be worth having. But **a true dialogue would depend upon both parties agreeing not to use emotivism to obliterate “any genuine distinction between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations.”** In *After Virtue*, Alasdair MacIntyre describes the difference between the two as the difference between relationships “in which each person treats the other primarily as a means to his or her ends and one in which each treats the other as an end.”

“To treat someone else as an end,” says MacIntyre,

is to offer them what I take to be good reasons for acting in one way rather than another, but to leave it to them to evaluate those reasons. It is to be unwilling to influence another except by reasons which that other he or she judges to be good. It is to appeal to impersonal criteria of the validity of which each rational agent must be his or her own judge. By contrast, to treat someone else as a means is to seek to make him or her an instrument of my purposes by adducing

whatever influences or considerations will in fact be effective on this or that occasion.

“Dialogue” is not a competition to see who can manipulate the audience’s emotions more effectively. It must be a non-manipulative process wherein each party is unwilling to influence the other except by reasons which that other he or she judges to be good. What, then, can we say about tendency among many progressives to refuse even to consider or respond to the arguments of their opponents? What about Pope Francis’s repeated refusal to reply to his critics other than by questioning their good faith?

John Paul II was a dynamic figure and exuded a powerful public personality. I never much cared for the “cult of personality” that surrounded the pope, but my concerns were tempered by the fact that both he and **Benedict XVI** followed a long tradition in the Church of addressing the concerns of contemporary men and women with principled arguments and reasoned exhortations, producing solid teaching documents that bore continual fruit upon repeated readings.

Francis, however, seems devoted to vilifying those who question him and gathering together “committees” by means of which he can manufacture a certain kind of “consensus” to support what everyone knew he wanted to do when the committee was convened. In this, he resembles nothing so much as the kind of academic bureaucrat that faculty members in colleges and universities everywhere are increasingly forced to endure, under whose enlightened despotism true “collegiality” has been replaced by corporatism and faux “consensus building,” and where “progressivism” is not only “empowered” but *privileged*. These are places where Havel’s greengrocer would

feel as though he had never left home and where the watchwords are “Don’t make trouble. ... Don’t *be* trouble.”

“Progressive” forces dominate the Roman curia now. They seem to think that they are instruments of the ineluctable forces of historical progress. I prefer to take the long view. Changes in the partisan parties that control human institutions are like shifting winds. Such changes are to be expected and can be, often enough, beneficial in a fallen world where all parties need continually to question their most basic principles and fundamental convictions, always remaining open to correction from others who disagree.

But respect is due only to those who agree to eschew the stratagems of emotivism and engage in non-manipulative dialogue. It is far too easy for fallen humans such as we are to get trapped in our own historical meta-narratives: “them” vs. “us”; the forces of historical “progress” against the forces of repressive traditionalism.” Indulging such fantasies blinds us to the corrective dialogues we need to be having with those with whom we disagree. **For Christians, there is only *one* defining meta-narrative;** they is only one that does not end up empowering some at the expense of others. **That is the narrative of Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father, and His continuing presence in the Church guided by His Spirit. Letting some other narrative obscure this one can only lead to dire consequences for Christians and for the ultimate good they hope to offer the world.**

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