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Interview with Cardinal Burke... He Is With Us: Trusting In The Lord In Turbulent Times



By DON FIER

(Editor's Note: His Eminence Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta and Prefect Emeritus of the Apostolic Signatura, recently visited the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wis. On December 9, His Eminence graciously granted The Wanderer a wide-ranging interview and offered many illuminating

insights on matters that concern the Church in the present time. Below is part one of the interview; part two will appear in the next issue of The Wanderer, the issue to be published on January 2 and dated January 9.)

PART ONE

Q. More than a month has passed since the Pan-Amazon synod (October 3-28, 2019). Please offer your critique on the outcome of the synod as reflected in the final report. Did the document authored jointly by you and Bishop Athanasius Schneider, *A Crusade of Prayer and Fasting*, in which you identified distressing elements contained in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, have the desired effect? In your estimation, what is the most positive outcome of the synod? What is the most negative outcome?

A. The final report certainly seems to be an improvement over the *Instrumentum Laboris*, the working document. On the other hand, however, without any corrections to the working document, one has to assume that the fundamental ideas behind it, which Bishop Athanasius Schneider and I identified in *A Crusade of Prayer and Fasting*, are still in some way — implicitly if not explicitly — part of the final document. The determining factor, of course, will be the post-synodal apostolic exhortation that Pope Francis issues in response to the recommendations of the synod.

I wish to underscore once again that the final document constitutes solely recommendations from the synod. A synod has no legislative power in the Church — it has nothing to do with changing Church doctrine and discipline. The purpose of a synod is to assist the Pope in teaching the Church's doctrine more effectively and applying its discipline more fully. This must be kept firmly in mind. I find that in many responses to the final document — from those who are writing about it — the false presumption that it somehow represents an authoritative teaching of the Church; it certainly does not.

What I find most positive about the final document is that the most egregious apostasy in the working document, namely the denial of the Lordship of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the promotion of a form of pantheism, the worship of so-called “Mother Earth,” is not explicitly promoted. Nevertheless, as I just observed, one has to know that this kind of thinking was in the mind of many of the synod fathers. Therefore, we need to be extremely cautious that no element of this pernicious apostasy enters into any kind of official document that follows.

We ourselves have to be strengthened in our faith in the Lordship of Our Lord Jesus Christ — He alone is our salvation. Our Lord is not just one part of this cosmos, which, according to the false teaching of the working document, is the font of God’s Revelation. We must firmly and unwaveringly recall the truth that Our Lord Jesus Christ is the fullness of the Revelation of God the Father.

I might observe here, too, that the recommendations of the synod must be weighed in terms of the representative participants in the synod, which came predominantly from a certain small part of the Church. The synod cannot, in any sense, be considered a synod of the bishops of the universal Church.

The most negative outcome of the final document, which is also a principal problem of the working document, is its position with regard to the ordination of the so-called *viriprobat* — the ordination of men who are married and have a family — and the implicit compromise of what has been the consistent discipline of the Latin Church, namely, that the clergy should observe perfect continence.

This cannot be presented to the faithful as simply a measure for the Pan-Amazon region. We have seen this type of deceit played out before in the Church when the faithful are told that a compromise of some important discipline is only to be very limited. For example, we know that, if the Pope grants

a relaxation of the Church's discipline on clerical celibacy for the Pan-Amazon region, the Catholic Church in Germany has bishops asking for this same relaxation to follow immediately for their country. The argument will be used that, if it is good for the Pan-Amazon Church, then it is good for the universal Church.

Q. Two prominent themes that have emerged from the Vatican in recent months (as well as from the Pan-Amazon synod) are “synodal conversion” and “ecological conversion.” Can you explain what these terms are meant to convey and what their effect on the Church will be?

A. I must confess that I, too, do not know the precise meaning of these two terms. I have suspicions of what is behind them, but the people who are using them do not define them, and I think this is very pernicious.

The Church does not need a “synodal conversion.” She has had synodal structures from the very beginning of her existence in history, and the Church's law has always provided for the respect of the bishops in union with the Holy Father in terms of having leadership of the Church. In turn, pastors should always respect the legitimate concerns of the faithful, a principle that is enshrined in the 1983 Code of Canon Law (see canon 212).

I fear that what is behind this is a kind of democratic or very Protestant idea of the Church in which, suddenly in our times, mixed meetings of clergy and laity (as is going on in Germany in their so-called “synodal way”) becomes somehow determinant of Church doctrine and discipline, apart from the apostolic tradition. This is simply nothing other than a “going away from” our Catholic faith.

With regard to “ecological conversion,” what I see behind this is a push for worship of “Mother Earth.” In truth, our mother is not the earth — our mother is the Blessed Virgin

Mary in the sense that she gave birth to our Savior. We do not have another mother, certainly not a pagan idol like the Pachamama, which is very revelatory of what is behind this whole business.

Likewise, “ecological conversion” is being used as an argument for a one-world government. This is a masonic idea, an idea of completely secularized people who no longer recognize that the governance of the world is in the hands of God, Who entrusts it to individual governments, nations, and groupings of people according to nature itself.

The idea of a one-world government is fundamentally the same phenomenon that was displayed by the builders of the Tower of Babel who presumed to exercise the power of God on earth to unite heaven with earth, which is simply incorrect. What we truly need is a religious conversion, in other words, a strong teaching and practice of faith in God and obedience to the order with which He has created us.

In my judgment, these terms are very insidious and are being used to promote a certain agenda which has nothing to do with our Catholic faith.

As far as the environment and “ecological conversion” goes, the Church has always taught respect for nature. This is why it is taught that man is the steward of God’s creation and that he will have to render an account of the creation for which he has been entrusted. God created man in His own image and likeness, that is with intelligence and free will, precisely for the mission of stewardship of the earth. This is what should be taught to people, not a so-called “ecological conversion.”

Q. Did not Pope St. John Paul II’s 1994 apostolic letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* authoritatively settle any question as to whether women can receive the sacrament of Holy Orders? Why does the topic of women being ordained to the diaconate

continue to be discussed, and why is it so prominent in the Pan-Amazon synod's final report?

A. Yes, you are absolutely correct. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* was an exercise of the papal Magisterium. It is firmly rooted in the unchanging tradition of the Church and continues to have doctrinal force. Women cannot be ordained to Orders at any level, including the diaconate, the priesthood, and the episcopate.

There is a movement being promoted by people who want the ordination of women to the priesthood. One of the women who served on the papal commission regarding this question said openly that she and those she represents are not interested in the diaconate, but the priesthood. Fundamentally, that is what would ultimately happen if women were to be ordained to the diaconate.

If one studies Church history, it is clear that the Church has never ordained deaconesses (woman deacons). Deaconesses were women who assisted at certain rites, for example, the Baptism of women. Women never received the Sacrament of Orders for assisting at such rites. Ordination of women simply cannot be — it represents a great defect in the final document of the Pan-Amazon synod.

Q. Is there a connection between the so-called binding “synod assembly” that began in Germany on the first Sunday of Advent and the Pan-Amazon synod? Is it proper that the term “binding” be included in the description of the German synod?

A. It is clear that the radical element in the German Church promoted very much the agenda and discussions leading up to the Pan-Amazon synod. A number of those who were involved in the work of preparing for the synod were, in fact, representing very much the current radical thought in Germany, which is behind this so-called “synodal way.” No synod is binding — this is a contradiction in terms. A synod is a consultative organ of the Church and always has been.

What happened is wrong. The two were most definitely connected and it is well-known that the German Church financially sponsored the Pan-Amazon synod.

Pagan Idols

Q. Were the actions of Alexander Tschugguel, who removed the Pachamama idols from Santa Maria in Traspontina and threw them in the Tiber River, an act of theft? What are your thoughts regarding the foundation of the St. Boniface Institute? Do you encourage formation of other lay apostolates that will enable the orthodox faithful to speak out?

A. In this case, it was a question of idolatry. Alexander did not steal anything but rather purged the temple of God of pagan idols. We have many examples of this in Sacred Scripture, most famously the Maccabean brothers as recounted in the Old Testament. In the eighth century, St. Boniface chopped down an oak tree that was sacred to the people he was evangelizing. In fact, this type of purging is a standard occurrence when missionaries go about their work of evangelization. At a certain point, after people have embraced the Christian faith, the missionaries destroy their pagan idols. The people are delighted by it because the Christian faith has freed them in Christ — they want to be liberated from pagan idols and any other kind of diabolical influence. So, what Alexander did was perfectly right; it was an expression of Catholic faith.

I have been acquainted with Alexander for several years and am now following carefully the St. Boniface Institute, which he has founded together with other devout Austrian Catholics. I have a great deal of hope for what this apostolate will be able to do to protect and promote our Catholic faith in these times of great trial, confusion, and division.

My understanding is that the St. Boniface Institute will be for the whole Church. It was founded in Austria, of course, but

the issues it will be addressing are international in scope. Alexander has come to the United States and visited other countries as well since the Pachamama incident. I listened to a speech he gave in Virginia just a couple weeks ago [Alexander gave a presentation in McLean, Va., on November 12, 2019]. It is very clear that he is addressing issues of the universal Church. His work, thus, is not limited to Austria.

I do encourage the formation of other lay apostolates in the name of the orthodox faithful, so they can speak out and defend the Catholic Faith. In fact, I would like to underscore that, because today there is a tremendous spread of confusion and error in the Church, and sadly many bishops are silent about it. All of us have a responsibility to defend our Catholic faith. In these times, it may be the lay faithful that need to show the real leadership similar to the manner in which Alexander has.

Q. The document signed by Pope Francis when he participated in an interreligious meeting in Abu Dhabi with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar states that religious plurality is willed by God. Can such a declaration be reconciled with the message of the Gospel?

A. To suggest that God willed a plurality of religions is false; it is heretical. God does not will a plurality of religions. The Holy Father was confronted with this error by Bishop Athanasius Schneider during his ad limina visit, which was not too long after the Abu Dhabi statement was signed in February. The Pope listened carefully to the bishop's arguments and indicated that he would clarify the matter. In the meantime, Catholic universities have been ordered to teach this declaration and so the confusion continues to spread. The argument to justify the declaration is that this is the permissive will of God. In other words, God permits it but does not will it in the sense that, out of respect for the freedom of

man, He permits that other religions be established. It is understood that what He permits is not His will and is, in effect, contrary to His will. Therefore, it cannot be used as an argument that God wants a plurality of religions.

I have heard people say, in fact, that there should be no effort made to convert Muslims to the Catholic Faith because their religion has its own integrity because it is willed by God. That is simply wrong. God wills to save us through the Redemptive Incarnation of God the Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ — and that is that.

Incorrect Use Of The Catechism

Q. It has been reported that Pope Francis will be hosting an event at the Vatican in May 2020 with the theme Reinventing the Global Educational Alliance. In launching the initiative, the Holy Father said: “A global educational pact is needed to educate us in universal solidarity and a new humanism.” What is the impetus behind this meeting and what is likely to be accomplished? It sounds like an event to promote a one-world government.

A. It is. All of these things are connected. With the spread of Islam, especially in Europe but also in the United States, there is an effort to dull people’s consciousness about the Kingship of Our Lord Jesus Christ as it is proclaimed in the Gospel. This is an area where the faithful must especially stand up and give witness to the truth.

It is my understanding that there are other initiatives that are attempting to teach the Abu Dhabi document in schools. This is troubling. It is similar to what happened in the whole area of sex education in recent generations.

Q. A change was approved earlier this year by Pope Francis in the teaching of the Catechism of the Catholic Church with regard to the death penalty. Now it is being reported that

additional changes will be made: (1) to define “ecological sins” against our “common home” and (2) that it is immoral to possess nuclear weapons even for the purpose of deterrence. Please offer your insights on the legitimacy of using the Catechism for such proclamations.

A. The Catechism of the Catholic Church is not a proper instrument to introduce such matters. It is a collection of all the authoritative and constant teachings of the Church. It is not a tool for the proposal of new teachings. In fact, the Church’s teaching on the death penalty has not changed. Making a revision to the Catechism gives people the impression that the teaching has changed, but that is not correct. Pope St. John Paul II was very sensitive that the death penalty should be used with the greatest possible care. It was his thought that today there is a rare incidence of cases where the use of the death penalty is necessary because of other forms of reparation for the most grievous crimes. Yet, he never declared that the death penalty is evil — it is not.

In the same way, there are no new “ecological sins.” The same Ten Commandments that the Lord God gave us on Mount Sinai are in force today. We have to respect nature as well as our own human nature. So, I do not know what this can mean. Secondly, nuclear weapons are possessed as a form of deterrence as justified by moral argumentation.

My fundamental point, however, is that introducing these three elements is not a correct use of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.