

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*The extreme charges in title give me pause to preface my comments by saying that I respect the Holy Father and the bishops in their roles to preserve and communicate the authentic Catholic faith according to canon law and through their episcopal office.*

*That said, it is important to look at how laws are made and changes are achieved in institutions whether it be the church, the government, or other organizations.*

*Some talk show hosts are calling for a constitutional convention for changes to rectify some problem that they see in the nation and government.*

*A constitutional convention or a church/diocesan synod always will have the tendency for a predetermined outcome, a lack of real discussion on certain issues, the exclusion of comments that those who have been placed in charge do not wish to be made public, and a final outcome that fits the idea of the ones in power.*

*It is the nature of the beast.*

*When the diocese of San Diego had its diocesan synod several years, each parish was charged to send 2 representatives. Four representatives, all women, lamented to me that the comments from their group on controversial issues were omitted. When they challenged the leaders of their respective groups on this, they said that the priest leader replied that it was too late to include them.*

*They were furious, felt dismissed and felt used to validate predetermined outcomes.*

*There is a saying, “Dux vult”, the leader wills it.*

*I accuse Pope Francis of nothing. It is dismissive to refer to him by his surname, Bergolio, in this article.*

*Still, in the church he has supreme authority in the synods. The complaints of bishops and cardinals who said the synods did not reflect their comments, as well as the challenges and requests for meetings for clarification by those canon law establishes for assistance to the pope, namely the cardinals, gives some credibility to the article.*

# Phony Synodality. It's Just Francis In Charge, His Own Way

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That Pope Francis exercises “absolute and unbridled power, arbitrary in the truest sense of the word,” is what now emerges both from an inventory of his acts as monarch of the little Vatican state - as in the **previous post** from Settimo Cielo - and from a political analysis of his exercise of power, as in the **editorial** by the historian Ernesto Galli della Loggia in the “Corriere della Sera” of last December 20.

But in addition to the head of state there is also and above all Francis the pastor. Who has repeatedly spoken out in favor not of monocratic but of “synodal” leadership for the universal Church.

And this is what the archbishop and theologian Bruno Forte, 71, wanted to underscore **in replying** to Galli della Loggia in the “Corriere” of January 2, presenting what he sees as a very instructive example, that of the twofold synod on the family of 2014 and 2015.

Forte was the “special secretary” of that synod, meaning the key man in its development, promoted to this role by Francis. And he recalls:

“In the lengthy audience that Pope Francis wanted to grant me before the start of the work, in which we spoke about the issues to be addressed and the possible perspectives, he clearly explained his ideas to me, **emphasizing how he could have decided on them alone on account of the authority proper to the successor of Peter, but did not want to do so, in order to arrive at conclusions that would be shared by the whole episcopate in the full exercise of its collegiality.**”

Shared by the whole episcopate? For Forte there is no doubt:

“I can say that it was like this and that the innovations introduced by ‘Amoris Laetitia’ regarding, for example, the pastoral care of wounded families were developed and shared collegially. Francis’s idea that the attitude toward couples in crisis should express God’s love for them is the one that unanimously prevailed. Not the exercise of absolute power, in short, but the persuasive power of mercy has affirmed its primacy.”

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**So they’re all in agreement, the bishops with the pope, on admitting the divorced and remarried to Eucharistic communion? Not a bit of it.** Because if one just revisits what Forte himself said in public shortly after the publication of “Amoris Laetitia” - the document with which Francis drew his conclusions of the synod - the picture changes radically.

It was May 2 2016 and Forte, archbishop of Chieti and Vasto, speaking in the municipal theater of the latter city, **related as follows the answer that Francis had given him** - probably

in the same pre-synodal “lengthy audience” mentioned above - to his question on how to proceed in the assembly on the incendiary topic of communion for illegitimate couples:

“If we were to speak explicitly of communion for the divorced and remarried, you don’t know what a mess these [the cardinals and bishops against it - ed] would make for us! **So let's not talk about it directly, you make sure the premises are in place, then I will draw the conclusions.**”

After that Forte commented, amid smiles from the audience: “Typical of a Jesuit.”

Bad move. That learned archbishop, who until then had been one of Pope Francis’s favorites and was on the way to the dazzling triumph of his career, from that day fell into disgrace. The pope dropped a cross on him. No more buddying up, no more insider roles, advisory or executive, gone as theologian of reference, no promotion as prefect of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith or president of the Italian episcopal conference, nor even, though a Neapolitan by birth, as archbishop of Naples and cardinal.

Yet all that is known about that twofold synod on the family, before, during, and after, leads to the conclusion that in the theater of Vasto, that time, Forte spoke the pure truth, much truer than what he has now rewritten and housebroken in the “Corriere della Sera.”

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A few hints are enough to validate the veracity of the reconstruction given by Forte on May 2 2016.

The first maneuver, in Pope Francis’s plans, was the convocation of the cardinals in February of 2014 in a two-day **consistory** behind closed doors for discussion on a lecture by

Cardinal Walter Kasper fully in support of communion for the divorced and remarried.

Of that consistory only Kasper's talk was made public, but it was known that most of the cardinals present took sides against it, to the great disappointment of Francis, who had made no secret of agreeing with the German cardinal and theologian.

The first result was that from then on Francis no longer convened any more consistories for free discussions among the cardinals, in spite of his many praises of synodality and collegiality. The second was that in the two sessions of the synod on the family he did all he could, in person or through his stalwarts, to arrive at “a final document that would leave the doors open, so that the pope could come and go and do as he saw fit,” meaning a document “that would leave Francis’s hands free”: this in the words of another irreproachable witness, Father Adolfo Nicolás Pachón, at the time superior general of the Society of Jesus, very close to Jorge Mario Bergoglio.

In reality the two synods were by no means peaceable. At the beginning of the second session, in October of 2015, Francis went into a rage again when he received a **letter** signed by thirteen cardinals of the first magnitude, **allied in striking at the root of the synod’s structure, because it had been “set up to facilitate predetermined results on important and controversial issues.”**

The fact is that things went just as “**predetermined.**” From **a final document ambiguous enough to allow Bergoglio's top exegete, the Jesuit Antonio Spadaro,** to preview in “**La Civiltà Cattolica**” that “on access to the sacraments this synod has indeed laid the foundations, opening a door that instead in the previous synod of 1980 had remained closed,” Francis brought out in March 2016 a magisterial document, “**Amoris Laetitia,**” in the 325 paragraphs of which there was not a single clear word in support of communion for the divorced and remarried, except

for a smatter of mentions in the three minuscule footnotes 329, 336, and 351.

And how were these three little notes to be interpreted and applied? In the babel of solutions of all kinds all over the world the bishops of the Buenos Aires region also had their say in favor of communion for the divorced and remarried, in a September 5 2016 **letter** to their priests, to which Francis responded enthusiastically the same day with his **letter** of approval:

*“El escrito es muy bueno y explícita cabalmente el sentido del capítulo VIII de 'Amoris laetitia'. No hay otras interpretaciones. Y estoy seguro de que hará mucho bien.”*

*“The text is very good and thoroughly explains the meaning of chapter VIII of 'Amoris Laetitia.' There are no other interpretations. And I am sure it will do quite a bit of good.”*

It remained to be determined what authority there was for the worldwide Church in a private letter from Bergoglio to the secretary of the bishops of the Buenos Aires region.

A dilemma all the more challenging after the September 19 delivery to Pope Francis and the congregation for the doctrine of the faith of the “dubia” formulated by four cardinals on the correct interpretation of “Amoris Laetitia.”

To the “dubia,” as serious as they were, of the four authoritative cardinals - which they **made public** two months later - Pope Francis did not answer either then or ever, nor did he receive them in audience.

Instead, on October 7, the pope's letter to the bishops of the Buenos Aires region appeared in the “**Acta Apostolicae Sedis**,” the official organ of the Holy See, rising in rank but not to the point of having to be obeyed throughout the Church.

Of course, this strange magisterium of Pope Francis did not make it through the bars of the Melbourne prison in which the innocent Cardinal George Pell was locked up until last April 7 -

one of the thirteen of the 2015 protest and one of the most supportive of the four of the “dubia” - given what he wrote in his “**Prison journal**” on March 3 2019, Ash Wednesday:

“Fidelity to Christ and his teaching remains indispensable for any fruitful Catholicism, any religious revival. This is why the 'approved' Argentinian and Maltese interpretations of ‘Amoris Laetitia’ are so dangerous. They go against the teaching of the Lord on adultery and the teachings of St Paul on the necessary dispositions to receive Holy Communion properly. [...]

“At the two Synods on the Family, some voices loudly proclaimed that the Church was a hospital or a port of refuge. This is only one image of the Church and far from the most useful or important, because the Church has to show how not to become sick, how to avoid shipwrecks, and here the commandments are essential. Jesus himself taught, 'If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love' (Jn 15:10).”

Evidently, the arbitrary and monocratic exercise of power, disguised as synodality, does not always go hand in hand with consensus. In fact it is just the opposite.

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## NOTIFICATION

In regard to the letter of the thirteen cardinals it is helpful to bear in mind that the text made public at the time by this blog was the English original that was circulating among the cardinals to whom it was proposed for signature. With one difference from the text later delivered to the pope, which no longer contained the three lines warning against the replication in the Catholic Church of “the collapse of liberal Protestant churches in the modern era, accelerated by their abandonment of key elements of Christian belief and practice in the name of pastoral adaptation.”

And there were also adjustments to the names of the thirteen signatories. Net of corrections, this blog ended up publishing nine of them, plus the two later made public by “America,” the weekly of the New York Jesuits. In total the following eleven, in alphabetical order: Carlo Caffarra, Thomas C. Collins, Daniel N. Di Nardo, Timothy M. Dolan, Willem J. Eijk, Gerhard L. Müller, Wilfrid Fox Napier, John Njue, George Pell, Robert Sarah, Jorge L. Urosa Savino.

For more details:

**> [Thirteen Cardinals Have Written to the Pope. Here's the Letter](#) (12.10.2015)**

**> [The Letter of the Thirteen Cardinals to the Pope. Episode Two](#) (14.10.2015)**

**> [The Letter of the Thirteen Cardinals. A Key Backstory](#) (15.10.2015)**

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