

Fr. Perozich comments —

Every Dutch person I ever have met shows the qualities of frankness, lack of ambiguity, superb clarity, and even temperament in presenting arguments. Dr. Gerard van den Aardweg does so here.

Distinctions, distinctions, distinctions. Dr. Gerard van den Aardweg makes valid distinctions in his critiques.

He acknowledges the role and validity of the papal office, and notes the possibility of a pope departing from fidelity should a pope offer opinions instead of truth. We continue to honor the office and the man who occupies it, but are not obliged to follow blindly every word and personal opinion.

He shows that is possible and right to correct authorities, including bishops and the holy father when their opinions differ from scripture and Tradition.

He shows a strategy from the “higher echelons” in the church to promote a certain agenda particularly with regard to homosexuality and to adultery and holy communion.

Van den Aardweg shows a curiosity for what drives a man to act in a certain way, a self centeredness trying to attract attention to himself.

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Opus Dei will not tolerate speaking up to authority even when the authority is not transmitting God’s timeless truth. It supports a dissident bishop and suppresses a faithful priest.

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“But this inappropriate loyalty to the Pope, coupled with the idea that it is the morally superior attitude, means that critical analysis, critical information, and discussion about the words and deeds of the Pope within Opus Dei, are considered disloyal.”

“... arguments are more demagogical than logical. There is a dose of sophistry. Here honest, correctly

presented, and excellently documented, solid doubts and critical reflections by Cardinals and lay people in reaction to a series of dangerous papal pronouncements and actions – namely, the “Dubia” of four eminent Cardinals, and the “Filial Corrections” (2017) by many distinguished, good Catholic intellectuals and theologians from all parts of the world – are derogatorily and quite incorrectly done away with as biased, partisan documents in an ordinary conflict between “left and right.”

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“A simple Catholic can see that a pope is this foundation as long as he acts accordingly, and that the story of St. Peter’s necessary public correction by St. Paul contains a lesson for all times. A priest talking like this good-intentioned Opus Dei priest exerts moral pressure on the faithful he coaches to put on the same blindfold which he sports himself. But his inordinate loyalty to the Pope and lack of understanding for justified criticism exemplified an existing mentality in Opus Dei”

Opus Dei have an 'indirect complicity with the destructive course' of Pope Francis: psychologist

In the second part of LifeSite's interview with Dr. Gerard van den Aardweg, he referred to 'symptoms of over-compliance to the homosexuality policy of this Pope' in Opus Dei, and called for Opus Dei to apologize for Bishop Bonnemain's g'rievous misbehavior as a member of Opus Dei.'



Prof. Gerard van den Aardweg speaks at the John Paul II Academy for Human and Life and the Family conference in Rome May 21, 2018
Steve Jalsevac / LifeSiteNews

Maïke Hickson

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(LifeSiteNews) – Dr. Gerard van den Aardweg, a Dutch psychologist and expert in questions of homosexuality, has given LifeSiteNews an interview, in which he discussed, in a first part, the errors about same-sex unions as promoted by the Swiss bishop Joseph Bonnemain, as well as the errors concerning the idea of same-sex couples adopting children.

In this second part of our interview, Dr. van den Aardweg, who is a former member of Opus Dei and still holds much respect for its work in general, calls out Opus Dei and challenges it to repent for its silent adaptation to the new papal guidelines regarding homosexual couples. He is also coming to the rescue of Father

Jesusmary, an Opus Dei priest in Africa who has recently been suspended for having publicly opposed Pope Francis' support of same-sex civil unions.

For Dr. van den Aardweg, it is clear that Opus Dei has to repent and correct both Bishop Bonnemain's public support of such unions and the punishment of a sincere Catholic priest trying to defend the Church's teaching on homosexuality.

"I think two practical steps are called for," van den Aardweg writes, "rehabilitation by Opus Dei authorities of the good African priest [Fr. Jesusmary] in whichever aspect of the affair it is still possible, plus encouraging and helping him to write and spread his book; and demanding of the lost and tragic bishop of Chur [Bonnemain] that he resign as soon as possible plus some public apology of the Opus Dei authorities to the faithful for his grievous misbehavior as a member of Opus Dei which they failed to prevent."

Please see here the full text of the second part of our interview with Dr. van den Aardweg:

LifeSite: How is it possible that an Opus Dei bishop can be so disloyal to the Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality? And do you think he has approval from Opus Dei to do so?

Van den Aardweg: I believe this only became possible under this pontificate. For if we look at the statements you have quoted at the beginning of our interview, this bishop almost repeats the sections on homosexual relations, on "welcoming (practicing) homosexuals in the Church," in the controversial Interim Report of the Synod of the Bishops for the Family in Rome, 2014. So it is clear he did not invent this view himself, **he follows a strategy**

marked out on higher echelons with the obvious support of the pope.

He also appears to have zealously embraced the suggestions of the pope to allow remarried divorcees to receive Holy Communion etc. In both cases, he even shows less reserve than the Pope himself. It is possible that he had the wish to see gay and other unnatural relationships recognized before, but in any case, **now he has the support of the Pope.** But indeed, how can an Opus Dei priest preach this revolutionary breach with the doctrines of the Church? And would he dare doing so if there were at least a clear disapproval from the top of Opus Dei? **For we are not faced with one unhappy statement but with repeated pronounced provocations against the moral doctrine of the Church on unnatural sexuality, with a moral heresy so to speak.** The question cannot be avoided whether the leadership of Opus Dei is involved, and what this would mean with respect to Bonnemain's revolutionary ideas. I think there are several indications that something is wrong. The question must be publicly discussed because **this Opus Dei prelate has sought the limelight himself to teach his doctrines.** Thus: is he a rebellious dissident acting on his own or is there more or less support for his ideas at the top of Opus Dei?

But I think the first puzzle to solve is **what drives him personally to play this curious role.** The bishop attracts the attention to himself in a rather curious way, spreading pictures of himself as a male model in a Calvin Klein shirt, weight-lifting in a work-out room; spreading pictures of statues of nude males he sees during his trips. Curious, because he apparently doesn't notice that **he gives the impression as being somewhat strange, as self-centered, wanting to attract the attention by playing some role.** He seems not to be aware this is not what strengthens his image of spiritual Father, his authority. Or is

there a connection with his message? And there is another consideration. Every man knows and feels the abnormality of homosexual inclinations and feels aversion at the thought of homo-sex. It is unlikely that an adult man with normally developed masculine feelings and normal sexual interests is willing to spontaneously fight for the ideas this bishop repeatedly ventilates in public. Inevitably he arouses the question: **is he himself troubled by same-sex attractions?**

Bishop Bonnemain, of Chur, Switzerland.



This would largely explain the part he plays, make it at least understandable, including his apparent lack of empathy with the feelings of the people of his flock, and of many outside his flock. Surely that suggests a personal tragedy, but that is what this elderly man – an Opus Dei priest of 73 years who certainly has played a quite different role in the past – embodies anyway. My point is that if this is true, he should openly tell the truth, because his function gives people a right to know, and him the duty to show his colors. **Nowadays, people have a right to know the deviant sexual background of persons who pretend to lead and teach them, for it profoundly influences a person's moral and spiritual thinking and judgments.** Nietzsche, presumably himself afflicted with same-sex feelings, remarked: One's sexuality penetrates into the highest spheres of one's thinking and feelings. In any case, this pitiful, problematic man should not be a bishop in the Catholic Church.

LifeSite: What is the reason that the Opus Dei leadership has not opposed his presentations? Do they have sympathies for his ideas?

Van den Aardweg: One reason may be found in the treatment of Fr. Jesusmary, the African Opus Dei priest whose case you have clearly explained in your article. I understand that he has been sternly warned not to publish a book in defense of the moral doctrine of the Church on homosexual relations which therefore implicitly or explicitly shows the inadmissibility of the course of Pope Francis in this matter. This treatment seems to indicate that his superiors, very probably in line with the leadership in Rome, reject criticism of the Pope. I do not know Fr. Jesusmary, I do not know the inside story, but even if he would be a difficult person – for which I can't see an indication in your article, by the way – what he says and what he fights for is a just cause, and is it absolutely responsible that he as a priest who is loyal to the Church gives the right information and teaching to the confused faithful.

He indeed seems a courageous man who listens to his normal feelings, his conscience, who uses his sound intellect and has well pondered over his decision to write the book. **His stance is right: “sin is the limit” of compliance. Apparently, the dominant objection of the Opus Dei leadership impeding them from finding a solution whereby he can defend the truth is their unwillingness to accept justified criticism of the Pope.** That indicates indirect complicity with the destructive course of this Pope with respect to an essential point of morality. So we look at the troubling picture of on the one side an Opus Dei priest who, visible to the whole world, attacks the sexual morality of the Church but is not firmly corrected, and on the other side of an Opus Dei priest who courageously defends the sexual morality of the Church but is disciplined.

Thus exaggerated loyalty to the Pope may be main reason why the bishop of Chur was not stopped by the Opus Dei leadership. They did not want to criticize a priest who is a disciple of the Pope. And maybe they think they can go along with his ideas to some extent, I have no idea. **But this inappropriate loyalty to the Pope, coupled with the idea that it is the morally superior attitude, means that critical analysis, critical information, and discussion about the words and deeds of the Pope within Opus Dei, are considered disloyal.** No matter how great the confusion is among Catholics, their need of uncensored information and good orientation among the “lay” members, is not less than among other Catholics. This is also my personal experience, as I have been a “lay” member (“supernumerary”) of Opus Dei. The official attitude is one of looking away from the reality of the destructive course of Pope Francis and concentrating on the good things he is thought to do and say. This is not to say that Opus Dei is tyrannical; and various leading persons are not at all blind or inaccessible on this issue. Yet the dominant climate is rather one of denial.

An editorial in the Irish Opus Dei publication *Position Papers* (Oct. 2017) may illustrate this mentality. The priest-author was in Israel on the spot where Christ after his Resurrection “reinstated” Peter as the Pope; he writes:

“...the Pope and the Church are indefectible despite everything. ... We should remember this as we witness the latest round in the ‘conservative versus liberal’ turmoil surrounding the papacy of Pope Francis. We believe that Pope Fr. is ‘the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity’ [in the Church; CCC, 882]. And that is the case despite his weaknesses and human fallibility (which he has in common with his 265 predecessors). ...

If the sheep were to snub Peter on account of this record of human frailty, they would snub the loving care of Christ itself.”

His arguments are more demagogical than logical. There is a dose of sophistry. Here honest, correctly presented, and excellently documented, solid doubts and critical reflections by Cardinals and lay people in reaction to a series of dangerous papal pronouncements and actions – namely, the “Dubia” of four eminent Cardinals, and the “Filial Corrections” (2017) by many distinguished, good Catholic intellectuals and theologians from all parts of the world – are derogatorily and quite incorrectly done away with as biased, partisan documents in an ordinary conflict between “left and right.” And this on the basis of an absolutized rhetorical exclamation of the late St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei, to the effect that Opus Dei stands staunchly behind Church and Pope “despite everything” (that is, despite their human weaknesses.) And subsequently these **concerned people are falsely accused of “snubbing Peter” and even Christ**, while Francis’ obviously destructive work is played down as mere “human frailty,” not worse than the frailties of “all his predecessors.” Thus not worse than the “frailties” of St. John Paul II, St. Pius X, Pius XII, and so on.

Now the difficulty for many Catholics to grasp the seriousness of what this Pope is doing to the Church may be understandable, but an educated priest who maintained in 2017 that Francis was the **“visible source and foundation of unity” in the Church**, chose to shut his eyes to the reality. **A simple Catholic can see that a pope is this foundation as long as he acts accordingly, and that the story of St. Peter’s necessary public correction by St. Paul contains a lesson for all times. A priest talking like this good-intentioned Opus**

Dei priest exerts moral pressure on the faithful he coaches to put on the same blindfold which he sports himself. But his inordinate loyalty to the Pope and lack of understanding for justified criticism exemplified an existing mentality in Opus Dei.

In all probability, the excess of Bishop Bonnemain could have been prevented had the leading priests of Opus Dei been less over-compliant with the patently wrong homosexuality policy of this Pope. It should have prompted them to resolutely intervene, perhaps a long time ago. Loyalty to the pope has its limits: [the limit is] sin, as Fr. Jesusmary says. Moreover, **inordinate loyalty to this Pope amounts to disloyalty to the former popes and their teachings, in this case, regarding homosexuality.** Moreover, it amounts to disloyalty to the unchangeable moral doctrine of the Church. A number of the same Opus Dei priests and members who at the time extolled John Paul II and Benedict XVI, are silent now when the present pope undermines their work, and there is a measure of support for this Pope's attempts to recognize "stable" relationships which was impossible 20-25 years ago. I have smelled a certain change of mentality in this respect in Spain, for instance. Twenty years ago a leading Opus Dei member, a psychiatrist, and other members openly combatted the movement for political legalization of gay unions. Now there are symptoms of over-compliance to the homosexuality policy of this Pope.

LifeSite: Are there more indications to the fact that Opus Dei is changing its attitude toward certain moral teachings, thereby abandoning the positions of Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI and embracing those of Pope Francis?

Van den Aardweg: I do not believe Opus Dei will fundamentally change adherence to their moral teachings, but risks undermining

them in practice by its compliance to the strivings of this Pope and by over-avoidance of confrontations. The second man of Opus Dei in 2017, Msgr. Fazio, openly and sharply reprimanded the members who signed the lawful, well-balanced “Filial Correction” to the pope. A son (a child) does not criticize his father, was his argument. That was an invalid argument, for of course a good son or daughter defends their mother and respectfully criticizes their father when they can talk with him about his marital infidelity and admonish him to mend his life. This attitude paralyzes independent thinking about the words and actions of this pope and places an undesirable taboo on freely discussing what must be discussed and doing what can be done and perhaps must be done. It creates an atmosphere of *denial*.

Anyhow, around that time, we, a group of Catholic intellectuals, had sent a petition to the Dutch bishops, asking them to dispel the confusion caused by the destructive course in the Vatican and to make clear to the Catholics of the Netherlands that they remained loyal to the writings of the two former popes, especially about sexuality and marriage. I wrote a similar letter to the Prelate of Opus Dei, with emphasis on the issue of homosexuality. In addition I expressed my disappointment over the Msgr. Fazio’s criticism of the Filial Correction signatories, because criticism of the Vatican policy was especially needed in regard to this theme. The reaction of the Prelate made it clear to me that discussion of these requests was not possible and that any criticism of the Pope was not acceptable within Opus Dei. So I decided to discontinue my membership. Criticism of the Pope, notably relative to his promotion of homosexuality, was and is urgent, and this subject has been central in my professional life. It is my task to criticize the fallacies of the gay ideology, as I have done in this interview.

LifeSite: Are you critical of Opus Dei?

Van den Aardweg: Yes, in regard to what I have already said. But my criticism actually concerns subordinate things: certain ways of thinking, a mentality, certain blind spots.

For the rest: No, in so far as it concerns the essence of Opus Dei, the “real thing.” On the contrary. I am convinced, intellectually and by my own experience, that the doctrine and spiritual way of Opus Dei, a way to holiness for lay people, is fully Catholic, true and salutary, and indeed an initiative inspired by the Holy Spirit. Opus Dei priests are very good and pious shepherds, not seldom saintly persons, and their doctrinal and moral teachings are nothing but orthodox. The reason I mentioned my former membership in this interview is to show that I do not talk as an outsider, but as a sympathizing and grateful ex-member whose opinion is that repair is needed in the two recent cases of Fr. Jesusmary and Bishop Bonnemain. They are a wake-up call. Suppressing the reality of this Pope, denial, doesn’t work out well, neither inside nor outside of Opus Dei.

LifeSite: What do you think would effect the needed repair?

Van den Aardweg: I think two practical steps are called for: rehabilitation by Opus Dei authorities of the good African priest in whichever aspect of the affair it is still possible, plus encouraging and helping him to write and spread his book; and demanding of the lost and tragic bishop of Chur that he resign as soon as possible, plus some public apology from the Opus Dei authorities to the faithful for Bonnemain’s grievous misbehavior as a member of Opus Dei which they failed to prevent.

Dr. Maike Hickson was born and raised in Germany. She holds a PhD from the University of Hannover, Germany, after having written in Switzerland her doctoral dissertation on the history of Swiss intellectuals before and during World War II. She now lives in the U.S. and is married to Dr. Robert Hickson, and they have been blessed with two beautiful children. She is a happy housewife who likes to write articles when time permits.



Dr. Hickson published in 2014 a Festschrift, a collection of some thirty essays written by thoughtful authors in honor of her husband upon his 70th birthday, which is entitled *A Catholic Witness in Our Time*.

Hickson has closely followed the papacy of Pope Francis and the developments in the Catholic Church in Germany, and she has been writing articles on religion and politics for U.S. and European publications and websites such as LifeSiteNews, OnePeterFive, The Wanderer, Rorate Caeli, Catholicism.org, Catholic Family News, Christian Order, Notizie Pro-Vita, Corrispondenza Romana, Katholisches.info, Der Dreizehnte, Zeit-Fragen, and Westfalen-Blatt.