

A Memorandum on the Next Conclave Is Circulating Among the Cardinals. Here It Is



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Since the beginning of Lent the cardinals who will elect the future pope have been passing this memorandum around. Its author, who goes by the name of Demos, “people” in Greek, is unknown, but shows himself a thorough master of the subject. It cannot be ruled out that he himself is a cardinal.

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THE VATICAN TODAY

Commentators of every school, if for different reasons, with the possible exception of Father Spadaro, SJ, agree that this pontificate is a disaster in many or most respects; a catastrophe.

1. The Successor of St. Peter is the rock on which the Church is built, a major source and cause of worldwide unity. Historically (St. Irenaeus), the Pope and the Church of Rome have a unique role in preserving the apostolic tradition, the rule of faith, in ensuring that the Churches continue to teach what Christ and the apostles taught. Previously it was: “Roma locuta. Causa finita est.” Today it is: “Roma loquitur. Confusio augetur.”[confusion grows]

(A) The German synod speaks on homosexuality, women priests, communion for the divorced. The Papacy is silent.

(B) Cardinal Hollerich rejects the Christian teaching on sexuality. The Papacy is silent. This is doubly significant because the Cardinal is explicitly heretical; he does not use code or hints. If the Cardinal were to continue without Roman correction, this would represent another deeper breakdown of discipline, with few (any?) precedents in history. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith must act and speak.

(C) The silence is emphasised when contrasted with the active persecution of the Traditionalists and the contemplative convents.

2. The Christo-centricity of teaching is being weakened; Christ is being moved from the centre. Sometimes Rome even seems to be confused about the importance of a strict monotheism, hinting at some wider concept of divinity; not quite pantheism, but like a Hindu panentheism variant.

(A) Pachamama is idolatrous; perhaps it was not intended as such initially.

(B) The contemplative nuns are being persecuted and attempts are being made to change the teachings of the charismatics.

(C) The Christo-centric legacy of St. John Paul II in faith and morals is under systematic attack. Many of the staff of the Roman Institute for the Family have been dismissed; most students have left. The Academy for Life is gravely damaged, e.g., some members recently supported assisted suicide. The Pontifical Academies have members and visiting speakers who support abortion.

3. The lack of respect for the law in the Vatican risks becoming an international scandal. These issues have been crystalized through the present Vatican trial of ten accused of financial malpractices, but the problem is older and wider.

(A) The Pope has changed the law four times during the trial to help the prosecution.

(B) Cardinal Becciu has not been treated justly because he was removed from his position and stripped of his cardinalatial dignities without any trial. He did not receive due process. Everyone has a right to due process.

(C) As the Pope is head of the Vatican state and the source of all legal authority, he has used this power to intervene in legal procedures.

(D) The Pope sometimes (often) rules by papal decrees (motu proprio) which eliminate the right to appeal of those affected.

(E) Many staff, often priests, have been summarily dismissed from the Vatican Curia, often without good reason.

(F) Phone tapping is regularly practiced. I am not sure how often it is authorized.

(G) In the English case against Torzi, the judge criticised the Vatican prosecutors harshly. They are either incompetent and/or were nobbled, prevented from giving the full picture.

(H) The raid by the Vatican Gendarmeria, led by Dr. Giani in 2017 on the auditor's (Libero Milone) office on Italian territory

was probably illegal and certainly intimidating and violent. It is possible that evidence against Milone was fabricated.

4. (A) The financial situation of the Vatican is grave. For the past ten years (at least), there have nearly always been financial deficits. Before COVID, these deficits ranged around €20 million annually. For the last three years, they have been around €30-35 million annually. The problems predate both Pope Francis and Pope Benedict.

(B) The Vatican is facing a large deficit in the Pensions Fund. Around 2014 the experts from COSEA estimated the deficit would be around € 800 million in 2030. This was before COVID.

(C) It is estimated that the Vatican has lost € 217 million on the Sloane Avenue property in London. In the 1980's, the Vatican was forced to pay out \$ 230 million after the Banco Ambrosiano scandal. Through inefficiency and corruption during the past 25-30 years, the Vatican has lost at least another € 100 million, and it probably would be much higher (perhaps 150-200 million).

(D) Despite the Holy Father's recent decision, the process of investing has not been centralized (as recommended by COSEA in 2014 and attempted by the Secretariat for the Economy in 2015-16) and remains immune to expert advice. For decades, the Vatican has dealt with disreputable financiers avoided by all respectable bankers in Italy.

(E) The return on the 5261 Vatican properties remains scandalously low. In 2019, the return (before COVID) was nearly \$ 4,500 a year. In 2020, it was € 2,900 per property.

(F) The changing role of Pope Francis in the financial reforms (incomplete but substantial progress as far as reducing crime is concerned, much less successful, except at IOR, in terms of profitability) is a mystery and an enigma.

Initially the Holy Father strongly backed the reforms. He then prevented the centralization of investments, opposed the reforms and most attempts to unveil corruption, and supported

(then) Archbishop Becciu, at the centre of Vatican financial establishment. Then in 2020, the Pope turned on Becciu and eventually ten persons were placed on trial and charged. Over the years, few prosecutions were attempted from AIF reports of infringements.

The external auditors Price Waterhouse and Cooper were dismissed and the Auditor General Libero Milone was forced to resign on trumped up charges in 2017. They were coming too close to the corruption in the Secretariat of State.

5. The political influence of Pope Francis and the Vatican is negligible. Intellectually, Papal writings demonstrate a decline from the standard of St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict. Decisions and policies are often “politically correct”, but there have been grave failures to support human rights in Venezuela, Hong Kong, mainland China, and now in the Russian invasion. There has been no public support for the loyal Catholics in China who have been intermittently persecuted for their loyalty to the Papacy for more than 70 years. No public Vatican support for the Catholic community in Ukraine, especially the Greek Catholics. These issues should be revisited by the next Pope. The Vatican’s political prestige is now at a low ebb.

6. At a different, lower level, the situation of Tridentine traditionalists (Catholic) should be regularized.

At a further and lower level, the celebration of “individual” and small group Masses in the mornings in St. Peter’s Basilica should be permitted once again. At the moment, this great basilica is like a desert in the early morning.

The COVID crisis has covered up the large decline in the number of pilgrims attending Papal audiences and Masses.

The Holy Father has little support among seminarians and young priests and wide-spread disaffiliation exists in the Vatican Curia.

The Next Conclave

1. The College of Cardinals has been weakened by eccentric nominations and has not been reconvened after the rejection of Cardinal Kasper's views in the 2014 consistory. Many Cardinals are unknown to one another, adding a new dimension of unpredictability to the next conclave.

2. After Vatican II, Catholic authorities often underestimated the hostile power of secularization, the world, flesh, and the devil, especially in the Western world and overestimated the influence and strength of the Catholic Church.

We are weaker than 50 years ago and many factors are beyond our control, in the short term at least, e.g. the decline in the number of believers, the frequency of Mass attendance, the demise or extinction of many religious orders.

3. The Pope does not need to be the world's best evangelist, nor a political force. **The successor of Peter, as head of the College of Bishops, also successors of the Apostles, has a foundational role for unity and doctrine. The new pope must understand that the secret of Christian and Catholic vitality comes from fidelity to the teachings of Christ and Catholic practices. It does not come from adapting to the world or from money.**

4. **The first tasks of the new pope will be to restore normality, restore doctrinal clarity in faith and morals, restore a proper respect for the law and ensure that the first criterion for the nomination of bishops is acceptance of the apostolic tradition. Theological expertise and learning are an advantage, not a hinderance for all bishops and especially archbishops.**

These are necessary foundations for living and preaching the Gospel.

5. If the **synodal gatherings continue around the world, they will consume much time and money, probably distracting energy from evangelization** and service rather than deepening these essential activities.

If the national or continental synods are given doctrinal authority, we will have a new danger to world-wide Church unity, whereby e.g., **the German church holds doctrinal views not shared by other Churches and not compatible with the apostolic tradition.**

If there was no Roman correction of such heresy, the Church would be reduced to a loose federation of local Churches, holding different views, probably closer to an Anglican or Protestant model, than an Orthodox model.

An early priority for the next pope must be to remove and prevent such a threatening development, by requiring unity in essentials and not permitting unacceptable doctrinal differences. The morality of homosexual activity will be one such flash point.

6. While the younger clergy and seminarians are almost completely orthodox, sometimes quite conservative, the new Pope will need to be aware of the substantial changes effected on the Church's leadership since 2013, perhaps especially in South and Central America. There is a new spring in the step of the Protestant liberals in the Catholic Church.

Schism is not likely to occur from the left, who often sit lightly to doctrinal issues. Schism is more likely to come from the right and is always possible when liturgical tensions are inflamed and not dampened.

Unity in the essentials. Diversity in the non-essentials. Charity on all issues.

7. Despite the dangerous decline in the West and the inherent fragility and instability in many places, serious consideration should be given to the feasibility of a **visitation on the Jesuit Order**. They are in a situation of catastrophic numerical decline from 36,000 members during the Council to less than 16,000 in 2017 (with probably 20-25% above 75 years of age). In some places, there is catastrophic moral decline.

The order is highly centralized, susceptible to reform or damage from the top. The Jesuit charism and contribution have been and are so important to the Church that they should not be allowed to pass away into history undisturbed or become simply an Asian-African community.

8. The disastrous decline in Catholic numbers and Protestant expansion in South America should be addressed. It was scarcely mentioned in the Amazonian Synod.

9. Obviously, a lot of work is needed on the financial reforms in the Vatican, but this should not be the most important criterion in the selection of the next Pope.

The Vatican has no substantial debts but continuing annual deficits will eventually lead to bankruptcy. Obviously, steps will be taken to remedy this, to separate the Vatican from criminal accomplices and balance revenue and expenditure. The Vatican will need to demonstrate competence and integrity to attract substantial donations to help with this problem.

Despite the improved financial procedures and greater clarity, continuing financial pressures represent a major challenge, but they are much less important than the spiritual and doctrinal threats facing the Church, especially in the First World.