

Fr. Perozich comments —

It would be short sighted not to see that those leading the church today intend to change its teachings via the synodal process. While, for example, a few comments on homosexuality may come from a diocesan synod, the final result brings it out as if it were a major theme of all of the participants.

The result of the changes will be that people will follow whatever the leaders say.

This phenomenon is part of following the social construct. Just as many Americans drifted to pro choice views before the recent Dobbs decision, now the thinking is shifting to pro life, simply because of the social construct brought about by the Supreme Court decision.

Once something becomes law, whether the law is true, moral, just, good or not, most people believe and follow that law.

Lawrence Kolberg offered a theory of moral development. Here are two presentations of Kolberg's theory.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/kohlbergs-theory-of-moral-development-2795071>.

<https://www.thoughtco.com/kohlbergs-stages-of-moral-development-4689125>

At level one is fear of punishment which shapes the action of the person.

At level two is if I do this for you, you will do something for me.

At level three is peer praise, doing what everyone else does.

At level four is the social construct, where folks follow the law be it good or bad to maintain order in society.

At level five, the person begins to look and judge for himself what is right or wrong and acts accordingly.

At level six, the person brings this to others as well.

If the church leaders deconstruct morality, most Catholics will follow their lead as the Catholic church will shrink as has done the episcopal church.

While not perfect, I have discovered the treasure in the field and have bought the whole field in order to possess the treasure. I have sold everything for the pearl of great price.

I will not be immune to the forces of moral development in the new church, but I will not give up my treasure which gives me eternal life, and which impels me to teach the eternal truths regardless of novelties in morality being established in the new church.

The Splendor of the 'Splendor of Truth'

By [Stephen P. White](#) THURSDAY, JULY 28, 2022

August of next year marks the 30th anniversary of the promulgation of Pope St. John Paul II's magisterial encyclical on moral theology, *Veritatis Splendor*. The approach of this anniversary presents an opportunity to rediscover an encyclical that provides a powerful antidote to much of the moral and doctrinal confusion in the Church today.

It's precisely for this reason that not a few Catholics would like nothing better than to see *Veritatis Splendor* demolished, root and branch.

The 30th anniversary of *Veritatis Splendor* will arrive just a few months before the opening of the Synod on Synodality in Rome. It's no secret that many Catholics see the synod as an opportunity to hold a referendum on certain, entirely predictable, aspects of the Church's moral teaching. The Synod's Relator General, Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich, SJ, has recently indicated that the Church needs to rethink its opposition to homosexual acts in order to account for new "sociological-scientific" advancements.

Set aside, for the moment, the ridiculous claim that the Church's understanding of the nature of human sexual acts is contingent upon "sociological-scientific" anything. One of the great refrains of *Veritatis Splendor* is St. Paul's admonition to the Church of Rome: "Do not be conformed to this world." This is not only a moral warning, though it is that. It's also a warning against a worldly view of man, which forces a separation between freedom and truth, obedience and love.

A culture that combines radical notions of individual autonomy with a Gnostic rejection of the built-in meaning of material (and,

therefore, bodily) reality is a culture in need of conversion, not indulgence. Such a culture, like the one that dominates the West today, is not simply corrosive of the moral life; it's a culture inoculated against the reality of the Incarnation.

In an interview from earlier this year, Spanish theologian, Julio Martinez, S.J., candidly laid out the project he and other moral theologians are engaged in. "It is fundamental to untie the knots '*Veritatis Splendor*' made in Catholic morals." Those knots, he insisted, originated in the failure of *Humanae Vitae* to discern the circumstances of family life "in an accurate way."

Only by moving beyond *Veritatis Splendor* and *Humanae Vitae*, can *Amoris Laetitia* be reinterpreted in ways that revolutionize Catholic moral theology. Such a revolution would free moral discernment from the constraints placed on human conscience by the moral law and the Church's insistence on the objective moral character of certain acts.

Just this month, a kerfuffle arose at the Pontifical Academy of Life over the publication of a volume of essays on various bioethical issues which seemed to contradict (you guessed it) *Humanae Vitae* and *Veritatis Splendor*. One member of the academy Dr. Mónica López Barahona, who also serves on its Board of Directors, insisted that the text did not reflect the consensus of the academy and the way it was published and presented caused "scandal and embarrassment."



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What does all of this add up to? That's difficult to say. There are some rumors that Pope Francis might be working on a new encyclical on bioethics, one which might revisit certain themes of *Humanae Vitae*. Those are just rumors at this point, liable to exaggeration according to one's hopes or fears for such an encyclical.

Perhaps the growing sense that this pontificate is drawing to a close has created a heightened sense of urgency among those who see Pope Francis – rightly or wrongly – as their last, best hope to eradicate the interpretation of the Second Vatican Council provided by his predecessors and, with it, the moral/theological project embodied most definitively in *Veritatis Splendor*.

Underlying many of the criticisms of *Veritatis Splendor* is the belief that it is not mercy about sin we require, but liberation from the yoke of the moral law itself. Such a mindset completely obscures the reality that the moral law is the surest path to true freedom. Instead of seeing the moral law as a means of our liberation and salvation, the new dispensation reduces the moral life to precisely the sort of small-

minded legalism that concerns itself primarily with the question, “What is the least I can do and be saved?”

Such an approach relies on conscience and discernment – both essential to the moral life – but denies them the tools and formation necessary for their proper operation. Vice chains us to sin, dulling the conscience and clouding our discernment. In fact, it is precisely because our refusal to obey the moral law blinds our conscience and distorts our faculties of judgment that the Church insists our culpability for even heinous sins may be partly mitigated. Are we to boast that our moral decrepitude has been dipped in the healing waters of mitigated culpability?

Obedience to the moral law is the surest path to freedom – the freedom to become who we were made to be, to love God and neighbor as we ought. That’s why God engraves the law on our hearts, reveals it to us in Scripture, and then give us the Church to safeguard and pass on the same. And that’s why *Veritatis Splendor* can insist, “human freedom finds its authentic and complete fulfilment precisely in the acceptance of that law.”

Our Lord says to his disciples, “If you love me you will keep my commandments.” That’s not a test; it’s a promise.

Many Catholics today seem to think that freedom exists in the “spaces between” the moral teachings of the Church. They seem to think freedom exists in being allowed the most possible wiggle room. This is a childish, and indeed, legalistic, view of morality that makes us slaves to the law. When satisfying the requirements of the law becomes an end in itself, mercy becomes nothing more than lowering the threshold by which the minimum requirements of the law are satisfied.

Veritatis Splendor is a powerful corrective to such thinking, and an ever-timely reminder of the moral life to which we are called, for which we were made, and by which, through grace, we are saved.

***Photo:** *John Paul II* by Gabriel Bouys [AFP via Getty Images]