

Fr. Perozich comments —

The problems:

- *What do I do if what the pope says does not seem to be Catholic to me?*
- *Is everything that the pope says part of the magisterium?*
- *Do I have to believe everything from the lips of the pope in order to be Catholic?*
- *I feel bad when I criticize what the pope says. Am I sinning?*
- *How can I be Catholic and separate myself from a pope's comments?*
- *How can I obey a pope when my conscience does not believe what he says or at least the way he presents it?*
- *If a pope says doctrine does not change, why does he say things that seem to undermine the doctrine?*
- *If a pope says his teachings are in continuity with other popes and the church, why do they seem not to be so to me?*
- *How can I reconcile the bible and tradition with some papal comments that seem irreconcilable?*
- *How can I give assent to a pope's comments that seem different from his predecessors?*

This article from Settimo Cielo given by Sander Magister offers a link to Cardinal Müller's response to Cardinal Fernandez, Müller's most recent successor to the position of the former Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, now the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

There is a huge gap of wisdom between the two men because Müller is an accredited theologian while Fernandez is an activist appointee and cannot compete with the Truth that Müller shares.

For the real studious reader, the links in blue will bring you to the source texts.

For the rest of us, this simple response by Professor Leonardo Lugaresi will offer clarity.

In His Letter to Duka, Müller Also Teaches How to Remedy the Ambiguities of Francis. A Commentary



> [All the articles of Settimo Cielo in English](#)

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*(s.m.) The goodness of recourse to “dubia” to protect the faith of the simple, highlighted by the **previous post**, finds immediate confirmation today in this brilliant commentary on the **letter** of Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller to his confrere Dominik Duka, published October 13 by Settimo Cielo.*

The author of the commentary is Professor Leonardo Lugaresi, an illustrious scholar of the first Christian centuries and of the Fathers of the Church.

In his view, Müller’s letter to Duka also has the merit of pointing out the escape route from Francis’s deliberate, systematic ambiguities on some points of doctrine that he, the pope, insists on declaring unchanged but at the same time treats as if they were in a fluid state.

And it is a simple and safe way out. If in fact doctrine is deemed unchanged, and has come to us in a clear form, it is on it that we must rely, should the words and actions of the reigning pope be ambiguous and imprecise.

Lugaresi’s turn.

Dear Magister,

I believe that the letter with which Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller has made public his evaluation of the response that the dicastery for the doctrine of the faith has given to the “dubia” presented

by Cardinal Dominik Duka, on behalf of the bishops of the Czech Republic, regarding the interpretation of “Amoris laetitia,” is a document of great importance.

It is so not only for the high quality of its theological content, but also and above all because it contains an indication of method valuable for helping many good Catholics to get out of the difficult condition of **aporia** [*An insoluble contradiction or paradox in a text's meanings-rp*] in which **they currently find themselves, hemmed in as they are between the sincere desire to continue to obey the pope and the deep disquiet, not to say the suffering, that certain aspects of his magisterium elicit for their conscience, due to what appears to them as a clear discontinuity, if not indeed a real and proper contradiction of the previous magisterium of the Church.**

In a certain sense, Cardinal Müller’s text in fact represents a turning point in the dynamics of that process of formulating questions, “dubia,” with which a small but not on that account insignificant group of cardinals has sought, in the course of the last few years, **to remedy what appears to many as a peculiar defect in Pope Francis’s teaching, that is, its ambiguity.**

Stating that the pope’s teaching is often ambiguous does not mean being hostile toward him or lacking in respect: I would say that it is, more than anything else, the attestation of an evident fact. As you yourself, Magister, recalled in introducing Müller’s letter, there is no counting anymore the cases in which the pope has made statements that are equivocal (in the sense that they lend themselves to opposing interpretations) and/or mutually contradictory in that the one is inconsistent with the others, and every time he has been asked to specify their meaning in an unequivocal way, he has **either avoided answering or has done so, often by an indirect route, in a way just as ambiguous and elusive.**

In this “modus operandi,” the ambiguity therefore seems to be not accidental but essential, because it corresponds to a fluid idea of truth that abhors any form of

conceptual definition, considering this as a rigidification that drains the life out of the Christian message. The axiom that “realities are more important than ideas,” to which pope Jorge Mario Bergoglio has appealed a number of times, is in fact used in such a way as to crush the principle of non-contradiction, and the consequent claim that one cannot affirm an idea and at the same time also its contrary.

The novelty of Cardinal Müller’s position statement consists, in my opinion, in the fact that for the questions posed by his fellow bishops to the prefect of the dicastery for the doctrine of the faith (and therefore ultimately to the pope who appointed him), the response has come from him, Müller, and he has responded as his current successor in that office should have done, that is, in a clear, rationally argued way **in keeping with the data of Revelation as sacred Tradition and sacred Scripture have transmitted them to us.**

But doesn’t this mean usurping a function that does not pertain to him and undermining the pope’s authority? In answering this question one must keep in mind that, **in all the magmatic fluidity of the current “new magisterium,” there is however a fixed point, always reaffirmed and never denied by the pope and all his colleagues without exception, and it is that of the asserted full continuity between the teaching of Francis and that of his predecessors, in particular Benedict XVI and John Paul II. “Doctrine does not change,” it has been repeated a thousand times, like a mantra, to doubtful and alarmed Catholics.**

It is precisely here that Müller’s argument comes in, with the disarming simplicity of a “Columbus’s egg,” showing us a way: **if regarding any problem the magisterium of John Paul II and Benedict XVI is clear and unambiguous, and instead that of Francis appears ambiguous and susceptible to being interpreted in a direction opposite to theirs, from the principle of continuity it ensues that when we faithful do not understand (and the pope does not explain himself), we can calmly turn to his predecessors and follow their teaching as**

if it were his, since he himself guarantees us that there is no discontinuity. In fact, the religious assent of intellect and will can only be given to what we understand correctly: we cannot assent to a statement whose meaning is not clear to us.

In essence, Cardinal Müller's contribution shows us the direction in which to direct our gaze: **we Catholics possess a very rich heritage that comes to us from twenty centuries of development of Christian doctrine**, and that in recent years has been extensively explored, articulated, and applied to contemporary situations and problems, thanks above all to the work of great popes such as those mentioned above. **We can find the answers we need there. Let's follow that and we won't go wrong.**

What today chooses instead to remain ambiguous also remains irrelevant to conscience, precisely by reason of its equivocality in comparison with what was clearly defined in the past. It is, if I may say so, kept in custody by the principle of continuity. **Only at such time as the pope should declare, without ambiguity, that one need no longer give assent to the magisterium of his predecessors because it has been abrogated by his own, then indeed such custody would fall.** But at that point much else would fall. And we can trust that this will not happen.

Leonardo Lugaresi