

The Deceptive Tactics of the Silent Revolution

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The Catholic Church has experienced, over two thousand years, virtually everything that can befall an institution: bad popes, corrupt bishops, heresies, schisms, revolutions, persecutions, decadent monasteries, dissolute clergy, and theologians so determined to be original that ultimately only they themselves understood what they meant.

And yet the Church endures. Not because Catholics have always been wise — that would be a rather audacious historical hypothesis. The Church survived because one peculiar phenomenon kept recurring: after the smoke, the quarreling, and the intellectual acrobatics, **Catholic orthodoxy proved to have extraordinary staying power.** Arius disappeared; Nicaea remained. The [Cathars](#) disappeared; the Creed remained. Jansenism, Modernism, and dozens of other fashions arrived presenting themselves as the future and ended as footnotes. Catholicism has a fairly simple litmus test: continuity. **Hence the importance of Tradition, of the inherited deposit of faith.**

This does not mean that nothing may ever change. The liturgy has developed, canon law has changed, ecclesiastical disciplines have been modified, and theological formulations have been refined. An oak tree looks different after five hundred years than when it was an acorn. But when that acorn suddenly produces a tulip, "development" is no longer the right word. That

is where the problem of the current ecclesial crisis lies. For there is no spectacular storming of the Vatican. At first, the doctrine remains unchanged. The modern ecclesial formula runs roughly as follows: **"The doctrine does not change, of course, but our pastoral approach must change."** That sounds reassuring — until the pastoral practice communicates, over the course of years, precisely the opposite of the doctrine that is supposedly intact.

Consider Germany. The German Synodal Path did not merely discuss administrative reforms or improved oversight of episcopal power. On the official agenda were sexuality, homosexuality, the position of women in ecclesial office, and the structure of ecclesial authority. In 2023, the Synodal Path even adopted a resolution calling for official blessing ceremonies for, among others, homosexual and remarried couples, complete with liturgical forms to be developed.

Rome itself identified the problem. In 2022, the Holy See declared explicitly that the German Synodal Path was not competent to impose new forms of governance or new directions in doctrine and morality, since doing so could constitute "a wound to ecclesial communion" and a threat to the unity of the Church. That is quite a statement. When Rome is compelled to issue a public warning to a bishop-led process that it may not introduce a new morality, we are clearly not speaking of a minor liturgical irregularity.

And yet the process continued. In April 2025, representatives of the German Bishops' Conference and the ZdK published a handbook explicitly encouraging the practice of blessing divorced and remarried persons, couples of all sexual orientations, and other non-ecclesiastically married couples. And once again: not "the old doctrine is wrong," but "we accompany people." Not "morality is changing" — this is "pastoral closeness." Anyone who objects is readily assigned the curious role of Pharisee. The innovator possesses love; the orthodox Catholic

apparently possesses only the law book. That is rhetorically very convenient.

The same problem became visible with *Fiducia Supplicans*. That 2023 document formally and explicitly maintains Catholic marriage doctrine. It even states that homosexual unions may not be confused with marriage, and that the blessings in question may not take on a liturgical form resembling marriage. At the same time, it permits same-sex couples to be blessed spontaneously. One would have to be extraordinarily naive to believe that symbolic acts carry no message.

One day after the document's publication, the American Jesuit James Martin blessed a homosexual married couple in New York, with the press present. Formally, one could say: no marriage was performed. In practice, half the world saw two men who live as a couple receiving a blessing together from a Catholic priest.

And there the curious distinction reappears: "**What you see is not what we mean.**" That is, over time, a difficult pastoral strategy. The sacramental language of the Church consists precisely of visible signs. When we have been taught for years that **gestures carry meaning**, we cannot suddenly insist that a church blessing is to be understood only through the footnotes of a Roman document.

And then there is Bishop Johan Bonny of Antwerp. In March 2026, he declared that he is working toward the ordination of married men as priests in Antwerp in 2028 — after an extremely brief preparatory period; the priesthood genuinely requires considerably more years of formation. He even formulated it in such a way as to suggest that the question is no longer whether this will happen, but when. Candidates are already being prepared, even though the actual ordination still requires Rome's permission. And that is precisely what illustrates the new ecclesial style of governance. First, one creates the expectation. Then one organizes the practice. Then one asks Rome to regularize the reality that has in the meantime come into existence. **The**

question is not "What does the Church permit?" but "What can we do now so that the Church will find it difficult to reverse later?" That is not synodality. That is *fait accompli* theology.

And that brings us to Pope Francis. His pontificate promoted a culture in which ambiguity was remarkably consistently interpreted in a progressive direction. The formula was always roughly the same: the doctrine remains intact, but the concrete case is complex; norms still exist, but discernment is required; the doctrine is clear, but pastoral application may vary. In itself, there is nothing un-Catholic about this. Thomas Aquinas also knew that *prudencia* must be applied to concrete circumstances. But when virtually every exception points in the same direction, it becomes legitimate to ask whether we are still dealing with exceptions.

There is reason to be concerned about this. Why? Read Church history. Ecclesial upheavals rarely begin with the announcement: "As of Monday, we are abolishing two thousand years of Catholic tradition." It happens differently. **First it is said that a doctrine is being misunderstood. Then that the terminology is "hurtful." Next that no one wishes to change the doctrine, but that "pastoral space" is needed. Local experiments then arise. The experiments become practice. The practice creates expectations. The expectations become "lived reality." And finally, those who defend the original doctrine are asked why they cling so rigidly to a formulation that has by now been superseded. That is the silent revolution.**

Not the denial of dogma, but its evaporation. Not: "This is no longer true," but "We must speak about this with more nuance nowadays." Not: "The sixth commandment no longer applies," but "We must avoid burdening people with rules." Not: "The priesthood is changing," but "The needs of the local community call for new forms." In this way, a doctrine can remain

formally in the Catechism for years while it functions pastorally less and less.

Sometimes the Church must find new words to proclaim the same truth in a comprehensible way. But that is precisely why the decisive question is not: Is something changing? The question is: Is what is changing recognizable as an organic development of what preceded it, or is there a rupture with what came before? That is why continuity is not the hobby of nostalgics. It is a Catholic criterion. The Catholic question is never only: "Is this kind?" "Is this inclusive?" "Does this work pastorally?" The decisive question remains: **Is this the same faith that we have received?** The faith of Paul, of Augustine, of Thomas, of Trent, of Newman, of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

Perhaps the greatest irony of the current situation is that progressive reforms have been sold for sixty years as necessary to make the Church more attractive to modern man. And all the while, in the most heavily secularized countries, the churches are emptying. **Perhaps modern man is after all less impressed by a Church that tells him what he already read in yesterday's newspaper. Why would anyone get up early on a Sunday morning to hear in a church building the same morality he received free of charge at a television talk show the previous evening?** One who sees no one around him after a time may conclude that the prophetic vanguard has been reached. But there is another possibility: he has taken a wrong turn.

The Church possesses only one genuinely revolutionary product: the Gospel. And that product is unfortunately not adaptable to the marketing department. Christianity did not begin because twelve apostles decided to align themselves more closely with the Roman spirit of the age. They proclaimed something that their contemporaries sometimes found beautiful, sometimes insane, and sometimes offensive. For

this they were not invited to the synodal dialogue table. They were killed for it.

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