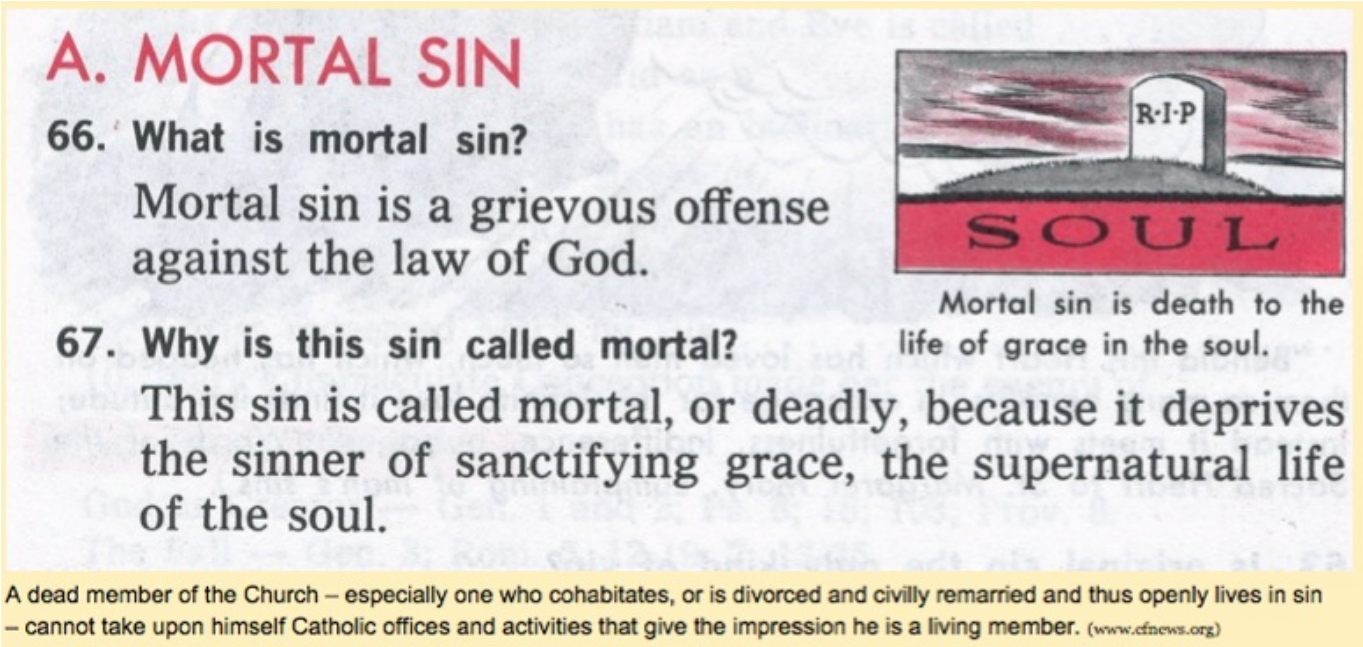



A dead member of the Church – especially one who cohabitates, or is divorced and civilly remarried and thus openly lives in sin – cannot take upon himself Catholic offices and activities that give the impression he is a living member. (www.cfnews.org)

> *"In the case of divorcees who have remarried, we posed the question, what do we do with them? … let us open the doors a bit more… Why can't they be godfathers and godmothers ? … Things need to change, our standards need to change."* – Pope Francis

The Vatican has sent a letter to the world's bishop with instructions on how to prepare the faithful for Francis' post-Synodal Exhortation. Francis' document, said to run about 200 pages, will be released this Friday.

The Letter to bishops, written by the synod's secretary general Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri, mentions two key elements to reading the document: "pastoral discernment" and "dialogue."[1]

This language tallies with Pope Francis' thematic call for "pastoral conversion."[2]

We can perhaps gain an understanding of what this new terminology entails – puzzling phrases that are nowhere found in the Catholic vocabulary of Pope Pius X, Pope Pius XI and Pope Pius XII – when we look at the continuing call for those publicly living in sin to become more active "living" members in the Church.

This indeed would be a "pastoral conversion" of practice that may not specifically "change" doctrine, but conflicts with doctrine.

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## Unsettling what is Already Settled

First, in relation to the upcoming Exhortation, we look at the most controversial aspect of the Synod discussions: whether or not Francis will "allow" divorced and civilly remarried Catholics to receive the Sacraments. This issue should never have been brought up in the first place, as it is a closed question not subject to modification. Francis' recklessness in this regard is applauded by the neo-pagan, liberation theology, ex-priest Leonardo Boff who celebrates, "Through various speeches he [Francis] has given*, he has signaled that everything is up for discussion, which not long ago would have been unthinkable for any Pope to say*."[3]

The Kasper proposal of February 2014 to allow divorced and civilly remarried Catholics access to the Eucharist without amendment of life – a proposal publicly backed by Francis – ran into rocky shores at the 2015 Synod. Many Synodal Fathers resisted this radical scheme. The Final Report from the 2015 Synod did not explicitly give way to this change, though a door was left open by means of a proposed abuse of the "internal forum" (more on this another time).

However, a crucial point of revolution likely to be contained in the upcoming Exhortation – perhaps one that will be in the forefront of post-Synodal Catholic life – will be in the area of granting divorced and civilly remarried Catholics greater participation in the "active life" of the Church.[4] It is likely that divorced and remarried Catholics, under the rubric of a false inclusiveness, will be invited to become godparents, Sunday-school teachers, lay lectors, and lay-ministers of the Eucharist.

## Francis' Call for "Integration"

Pope Francis is on record calling for more "inclusion" of divorced and remarried Catholics into active positions in the Church.

In his interview to *La Nacion* in December 2014, Francis challenges:

> "We must move forward…. In the case of divorcees who have remarried, we posed the question, what do we do with them? *What door can we allow them to open?* This was a pastoral concern: will we allow them to go to Communion? Communion alone is no solution. *The solution is integration.* They have not been excommunicated, true. But they cannot be godfathers to any child being baptized, mass readings are not for divorcees, they cannot give Communion, they

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> cannot teach Sunday school, there are about seven things that they cannot do, I have the list over there. *Come on!* If I disclose any of this it will seem that they have been excommunicated in fact! *Thus, let us open the doors a bit more… Why can't they be godfathers and godmothers ? … Things need to change, our standards need to change."*[5]

This change is now underway in the Final Report of the 2015 Ordinary Synod. Here we read in #84 the proposal for this greater "integration":

> "The baptized who are divorced and civilly remarried *need to be more integrated into Christian communities in a variety of possible ways*, while avoiding any chance of scandal. *The logic of integration is the key to their pastoral care,* a care which might allow them not only to realize that they belong to the Church as the Body of Christ, but also to know that they can have a joyful and fruitful experience in it. They are baptized; they are brothers and sisters; the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts gifts and talents for the good of all."

Wrong! The writers of this text are making up aspects of doctrine as they go along. We'll explain in a minute. The document continues:

> *"Their participation can be expressed in different ecclesial services which necessarily requires discerning which of the various forms of exclusion, currently practiced in the liturgical, pastoral, educational and institutional framework, can be surpassed [overcome].* Such persons need to feel not as excommunicated members of the Church, *but instead as living members,* able to live and grow in the Church and experience her as a mother who welcomes them always, who takes care of them with affection and encourages them along the path of life and the Gospel."[6] [APRIL 8 update: This troubling wording appears *exactly* in Francis ApostolicExhortation, #299]

First of all, Catholics living in mortal sin are not "living members of the Church" but *dead* members. All catechisms prior to Vatican II teach this truth. And being a dead member (living in mortal sin) is not necessarily the same as being cut off (as in excommunication).

- A Catholic *living the life of sanctifying grace* is a *living member* of the Church.
- A Catholic *living in mortal sin* is a *dead member* of the Church.

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•A Catholic *who is excommunicated* is *cut off from membership* of the Church.

The drafters of the Final document effectively make no distinction between a Catholic living in sin and one who is excommunicated. [7] I believe this failure to make this distinction is deliberate subversion of Catholic truth for the sake of a counterfeit compassion that claims to "meet people where they are."

This brings us to a central point.

A dead member of the Church – especially one who cohabitates, or is divorced and civilly remarried and thus openly lives in sin – cannot take upon himself offices and activities that give the impression he is a living member. He cannot be godparent, for he is a dead member of the Church. He should not be a Sunday School teacher, for he is a dead member living in sin. No pastor true to his ordination would permit such an arrangement. No pastor true to his ordination would even propose it.

Francis' proposal of "integration" turns the Church into a lurid carnival of make believe – a pantomime where fallen Catholics are invited to take upon themselves public offices that openly contradict their lives.

How could a divorced and remarried Catholic serve as godparent, when the Baptism ceremony asks the godparent "*Do you renounce satan?*" The godparent who responds, "*I do renounce him*," must be in a state where he honestly makes this renunciation. A "godparent" cannot recite these crucial words as if they are a meaningless formula or dialogue from a play – words he obviously does not mean – and then return to his adulterous life (not exactly renouncing satan). Such an action makes a mockery of the Sacrament of Baptism.

Further, a Catholic living in sin, and treated by Churchmen as a "living member of the Church," may come to regard his state as not so bad, and further delay or disregard his necessary conversion.

And of course, there is the principle of gradualism once more at work, wherein a heterodox pastoral practice may lead to even further deviancy. "Once public adulterers are serving as godparents, lectors and religious instructors," notes Chris Ferrara, "what would stand in the way of Holy Communion? The questions answer itself."[8]

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## Subversion of Doctrine via Pastoral Practice

Francis' call for a new kind of "integration" is yet another novel "pastoral practice" that conflicts with dogmatic reality. This is, as Professor de Mattei notes repeatedly, "the primacy of the pastoral over the doctrine," which was a key error manifest at Vatican Council II and its subsequent orientation.[9] *The effect of false "pastoral practice" is the undermining of doctrine, without the formal announcement of a change in doctrine.* This has been a neo-modernist's operational method for over 50 years.

For example, the so-called "pastoral practice" of Communion in the hand did not come on the scene pronouncing a denial of the Real Presence, but its effect undermines and destroys belief in the Real Presence among Catholics.

The new liturgical practice of removing the tabernacle from the center of the sanctuary to the side sends the signal that the "Presider," not the Eucharist, is the centerpiece of the Mass, even though no such "doctrinal change" was announced.

Today's ecumenical practice may not be accompanied by an outright denial that conversion to the Catholic Church is necessary for salvation, but the practice undermines the doctrine; it gives the impression that non-Catholics praying publicly with the Pope are part of religious systems that are good enough for salvation.[10]

We see a similar aberration in Francis' proposal of integration of divorced and remarried Catholics into the Church's public life. It sends the signal that doctrine doesn't really matter, which will further undermine the integrity of the Sacrament of Matrimony.

In fact, regarding the divorced and civilly remarried, there is one central reminder needed: those Catholics living in sin are still obliged to attend Sunday Mass, though they are not free to receive the Eucharist. These fallen souls should be treated with kindness, helped by our prayers, counseled to Marian devotion, and lovingly encouraged to rectify their lives in accord with Christ's teaching. This is the only "integration" possible, integration the Church long recognizes.

## Bracing for Revolution

We close by quoting some of the few prelates who have spoken up against this unrealistic separation of pastoral practice from doctrine. We also note regretfully that we never hear Cardinal Kasper or Pope Francis reaffirm these common-sense principles.

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Francis' proposal of "integration" turns the Church into a lurid carnival of make believe – a pantomime where fallen Catholics are invited to take upon themselves public offices that openly contradict their lives.

Archbishop Aldo di Cillo Pagotto, Bishop Robert Vasa and Bishop Athanasius Schneider deal with the false separation of doctrine and pastoral practice in their superb booklet, *The Preferential Option for the Family*. They explain, "Just as a body cannot be separated from the soul that informs it, so also pastoral practice cannot be completely separated from the moral doctrine that justifies it.*Therefore, a change in the pastoral policy can easily result, at least implicitly, in a change of the implied doctrine.*"[11]

Velasio Cardinal Velasio De Paolis affirms that pastoral care "is an art based on dogmatics, morality, and the right to act prudently according to a concrete case. There can be no pastoral ministry that is not in harmony with the truths of the Church and her morality. *A pastoral care in contrast to the truth believed and lived by the Church easily becomes a harmful arbitrariness*."[12]

Robert Cardinal Sarah, Prefect for the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, confirms the same reality: "The idea of placing the Magisterium in a beautiful reliquary detaching it from pastoral practice that *could evolve according to circumstance, fashions and passions is a form of heresy, a dangerous schizophrenic pathology*."[13]

If we look to the Final Synod document of 2015 – as well as all the related documents leading up to it – we have reason to expect further rupture between doctrine and pastoral practice, and the approval of new pastoral practices that open the door to greater

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"integration" of the divorced and remarried into the "active life" of the Church.

We also have reason to expect the upcoming Exhortation will contain an attempt to discard natural law, call for "new language," contain proposals that call for national bishops conferences to decide some of these matters independently, open the door for abuse of the internal forum, encourage ecological awareness and more.

The key themes of "dialogue" (learning to "meet people where they are" in order to "walk with them" *as* they are) and "pastoral discernment" (a "pastoral conversion" that allows those living in sin to take active roles in the Church in the name of inclusive "integration") are likely to be manifest more clearly once we read the upcoming Exhortation.

Sister Lucia of Fatima warned of the "diabolic disorientation" of various members of the upper hierarchy. This disorientation has intensified over the past three years.

The radical Cardinal Walter Kasper rejoiced that Francis' Exhortation "will mark the start of the greatest revolution experienced by the Church in 1500 years."[14] He also said the document will "ignore past formulas." We fear the post-Synodal Exhortation will prove every bit as revolutionary as Cardinal Kasper pledges.

Our duty remains to respectfully resist any destructive new program harmful to souls and to the Church, no matter who may be its advocate.[15]

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Notes
[1] "Verso 'Amoris Laetitia', le indicazioni per i vescovi," acistampa.com, April 2, 2016.
[2] "Friday's Exhortation will be a Landmark in Church's 'pastoral conversion'," Austin Ivereigh, cvcommment.org, APril 5, 2016.
[3] *Francis of Rome and Francis of Assisi*, Leonardo Boff, [Maryknoll: Orbis, 2014], p. 130.
[4] Even though priests on a large scale have been allowing in this abuse for years.
[5] "The Synod on the Family: 'The divorced and remarried seem excommunicated,'" *La Nacion*, Dec. 7, 2014.
[6] On this and all other quotations, emphasis added by author.
[7] Pope Francis, in his *La Nacion* interview, fails to make this distinction as well.
[8] "Who 'Won' the Battle of the Synod? Seven Things to Know and Share," Christopher Ferrara, *Catholic Family News*, November, 2015.
[9] "Vatican II: The Primacy of Pastoral over Doctrine," (Summary of speech by Professor de Mattei), J. Vennari, *Catholic Family News*, May, 2014.
[10] Though there have been various statements, both implicit and explicit, that indicate

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modern Popes do not look to conversion of the non-Catholic as necessary for unity or salvation.
[11] *Preferential Option for the Family, 100 Questions and Answers Relating to the Synod*, authors cited above, (Edizioni Supplica Filae, 2015), p. 27 (emphasis added).
[12] *Remaining in the Truth of Christ: Marriage and Communion in the Catholic Church,* Edited by Robert Dodaro, OSA [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2015], p. 202 (emphasis added).
[13] "Detaching 'pastoral practice' from Catholic doctrine is a 'dangerous schizophrenic pathology': Vatican Cardinal," *Lifesitenews*, Feb. 23, 2015 (emphasis added).
[14] "Post-synodal document to be published after Easter: It will be revolutionary, Kasper says," *Vatican Insider*, March 17, 2016.
[15] As we have often repeated in *CFN*, we recall the words of Juan Cardinal de Torquemada (1388-1468) the revered medieval theologian responsible for the formulation of the doctrines that were formulated at the Council of Florence. Cardinal Torquemada, explaining that it is possible for even a Pope to err, teaches: "Were the Pope to command anything against Holy Scriptures, or the articles of faith, or the truth of the sacraments, or the commands of the natural or divine law, he ought not to be obeyed, but in such commands he is to be disregarded. Citing the doctrine of Pope Innocent III, Cardinal Torquemada further teaches: "Thus it is that Pope Innocent III states (*De Consuetudine*) that it is necessary to obey the Pope in all things as long as he, himself, does not go against the universal customs of the Church, but should he go against the universal customs of the Church, "he need not be followed" on these points. *Summa de ecclesia* (Venice: M. Tranmezium, 1561). Lib. II, c. 49, p. 163B. The English translation of this statement of Juan de Torquemada is found in Patrick Granfield, *ThePapacy in Transition* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), p. 171. And in Father Paul Kramer, *A Theological Vindication of Roman Catholic Traditionalism,* 2nd ed. (Kerala, India), p. 29. Emphasis added.



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