Ominous Power Grabs – Part III

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In Part I of my series under this title I reported on the creation of Pope Francis' Handy-Dandy Bishop Removal Machine via a *motu proprio* that declares any bishop can be removed for any reason Francis and his collaborators deem sufficient. That action confirms juridically a situation that has already seen the summary removal/forced retirement of *six consecutive conservative bishops* (most recentlyBishop Aldo di Cillo Pagotto of Paraiba), sacked for alleged scandals that are nothing compared with the endemic corruption, including homosexual activity, in the dioceses of liberal bishops around the world. Indeed, Francis has appointed as the very head of his papal household a notorious homosexual predator, Monsignor Battista Ricca (found trapped in an elevator with a young male object of his "affections").

In Part II of the series I reported on a rescript from the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life which in essence would block the formation of any new traditionally-oriented society of diocesan right by local bishops sympathetic to Tradition unless the Vatican was satisfied with the "originality" of its "charism," failing which any attempt to erect the society would be void and without effect.

Now it's the cloistered nuns' turn to come under the dictatorial thumb. With his apostolic constitution *Vultum Dei Quaerere* ("Seeking the face of God") (VDQ), dropped like a blockbuster bomb during his vacation, Francis mandates sweeping changes in every cloistered convent in the world, requiring the adoption of new constitutions and "forms of cloister" to be approved by the Vatican and centralizing control over all local cloisters. The liberal *La Stampa* approvingly summarizes the document as a whole, thus: "Francis mandates wide changes for contemplative women religious, requests revision of all constitutions." Catholic News Agency hails the "new norms focused on prayer, *centralization*."

VDQ also repeals all prior papal legislation mandating the strictness of the major and minor "papal enclosures" of nuns, which imposed severe penalties for leaving or admitting outsiders to the enclosure without permission and grave reason, including Pius XII's *Sponsa Christi* and *Inter Praeclara* (1950) and John Paul II's*Verbi Sponsa*(1999). Referring to further norms to be promulgated, VDQ clearly contemplates the routine coming and going of nuns from their enclosures for such things as "specific courses on formation outside their

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monastery." Also recommended is *use of the Internet by cloistered nuns* for their "formation" and "cooperation" with other convents, limited only by "due discretion," whatever that means.

VDQ further mandates that even papal enclosures be opened to the public for Eucharistic adoration, which is clearly used an as excuse to breach the ancient sanctity of the enclosures: "Each monastery, in elaborating its plan of community and fraternal life, in addition to carefully preparing its Eucharistic celebrations, is to set aside appropriate times for Eucharistic adoration, *also inviting the faithful of the local Church to take part.*"

In a devastating blow to the autonomy of the cloisters, to which VDG pays cynical lip service, the document mandates that they immediately join "federations" to be governed by Presidents and Councils. The prior papal legislation under John Paul II and Pius XII merely permitted cloisters to federate, while insisting that their individual autonomy in no way be diminished by the existence of any such voluntary federation. Most of the existing federations (new ones are to be formed where needed, evidently) are sinkholes of Modernist corruption, "social justice" enterprises aligned with liberal politics, or both. But that is precisely the point: the few holdout traditionalist convents, such as the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate, which has already been placed under a liberalizing Vatican commissariat, will be required to bend to the "spirit" of the liberalized federations they are now compelled to join, and new traditionalist orders of nuns will be smothered in their cribs.

Incredibly enough, the Pope of the Peripheries now forbids that monasteries admit candidates from other countries (such as Africa or the Philippines) in order to insure their continuation: "recruitment of candidates from other countries solely for the sake of ensuring the survival of a monastery is to be absolutely avoided." The word "solely" will have little or no meaning in practice, and thus transnational recruitment as such will *de facto* be banned. But what does the national origin of a nun have to do with her freedom to join a convent if she has a vocation? Absolutely nothing. Yet the Pope of the Peripheries, who is constantly harping on "inclusion," now insists on *exclusion* in the form of discrimination based on the national origin of candidates. The death of many cloistered convents is thus insured. Insane!

Even more incredibly, the elderly pontiff *demands age discrimination* in the cloisters, declaring: "Juridical autonomy needs to be matched by a genuine autonomy of life. This entails a certain, even minimal, number of sisters, *provided that the majority are not elderly…*" What does the age of the nuns have to do with their autonomy in cloister? Again, absolutely nothing. This is just another ploy to insure the liberalization of tradition-leaning conventual holdouts.

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If the conditions for "autonomy" are not met — including a majority of non-elderly members! — then "the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life will study the possibility of establishing an ad hoc commission made up of the ordinary, the president of the federation, a representative of the federation and the abbess or prioress of the monastery. In every case, the purpose of this intervention is to initiate a process of guidance for the revitalisation of the monastery, *or to effect its closure*."

The staid *Catholic Herald* describes this provision as "a regulation outlining the criteria needed for a monastery to retain juridical autonomy *or else be absorbed by another entity or face closure*."

So much for the Church of the Peripheries. Francis is once again consolidating all power in his own hands. Like any dictator, he preaches freedom while he practices tyranny, overturning anything his predecessors have done that stands in his way — not only here, but with respect to the teaching of his predecessors on the divorced and "remarried," especially John Paul II in *Familiaris consortio*.

Yes, of course, the Pope has plenary power in the Church. But this Pope pays no heed to the limits on that power enunciated by the very Pope he unexpectedly replaced under such mysterious circumstances:

"The Pope is not an absolute monarch whose thoughts and desires are law. On the contrary: the Pope's ministry is a guarantee of obedience to Christ and to His Word. He must not proclaim his own ideas, but rather constantly bind himself and the Church to obedience to God's Word, in the face of every attempt to adapt it or water it down, and every form of opportunism."

In Francis, God help us, we have a Pope who habitually disregards virtually every word of Benedict's admonition. May God save His Holy Church!

P.S. The Vatican advises that no similar measures are contemplated for the male orders. Don't count on it.

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