

According to Stanze Vaticane, the blog for [the Italian TV channel TGCom24](#), Card. Gerhard Ludwig Müller has rejected any correction of Pope Francis concerning those explosive sections of *Amoris Laetitia* (especially Chapter 8, ¶¶ 302-305) which prompted the four cardinals to present their *dubia* to Pope Francis. Those passages of *Amoris* clearly open the door to Holy Communion for the divorced and “remarried” in “certain cases” — as bishop after bishop is now declaring — while appearing to reduce exceptionless negative precepts of the natural law (including “Thou shalt not commit adultery”) to “general rules” and mere “objective ideals” rather than divine commands from which no one can claim an exemption.

But Müller’s choice of words is very curious. As reported by Stanze Vaticane, during an interview with TGCom 24 (translations mine), Müller stated:

“Everyone, above all the cardinals of the Roman Church [sic], have the right to write a letter to the Pope. I was astonished, however, that this became public, almost constraining the Pope to say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’. I do not like this. Also, a possible fraternal correction of the Pope seems to me very far off. It is not possible at this moment because it does not involve a danger to the faith as Saint Thomas has said. We are very far from a correction and I say that it harms the Church to discuss these things publicly.

“*Amoris Laetitia* is very clear in its doctrine, and we can make out the whole doctrine of the Church on matrimony, all the doctrine of the Church in 2000 years of history. Pope Francis asks for discernment of the situation of those persons who live in an irregular union, that is, not according to the doctrine of the Church on matrimony, and he asks for aid of these persons to find a path for a new integration in the Church according to the conditions of the Sacraments, of the Christian message on matrimony. But I do not see any contraposition: on the one hand we have the clear doctrine on matrimony, and on the other the obligation of the Church to concern herself with these persons in difficulty.”

First of all, why is Müller “astonished” that the *dubia* became public? The four cardinals state clearly in their accompanying letter that while their *dubia* were first submitted privately to Francis, “The Holy Father has decided not to respond. We have interpreted his sovereign decision as an invitation to continue the reflection, and the discussion, calmly and with respect. And so we are informing the entire people of God about our initiative, offering all of the documentation.”

That is their right as cardinals, and indeed it is the right of any member of the faithful:

“According to the knowledge, competence, and prestige which they possess, they have the right and even at times the duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church *and to make their opinion known to the rest of the Christian faithful*, without prejudice to the integrity of faith and morals, with reverence toward their pastors, and attentive to common advantage and the dignity of persons.” (Canon 212, § 3)

Secondly, why is a “possible fraternal correction” deemed “very far off” — meaning that there is a potential for one — when Müller says at one and the same time that *Amoris* presents the Catholic doctrine on matrimony and that there is no opposition to that doctrine in the call for “discernment” of the situation of people in “irregular unions”? If *Amoris* were really so clear, and there were really no contradiction between Catholic doctrine on the indissolubility of marriage and Francis’ call for “discernment,” Müller would say simply that a correction of Francis is unnecessary. He would not say a correction is “not possible *at this moment...*”

I am afraid Müller’s statement falls into the category of so much of what has come out of the Vatican over the past fifty years: artfully worded doubletalk that tries to have it both ways.

Now let us be serious. Cardinal Müller knows very well that *Amoris* is not only problematic, but a veritable H-bomb targeted on the foundations of Christian life. As the four cardinals note in their presentation to a stonily silent Francis, different bishops interpret *Amoris* differently — some pro, some con — regarding the admission of public adulterers in “second marriages” to the sacraments (in “certain cases”) without a prior amendment of life. Müller also knows well that Francis has sided with the pro faction. In his letter to the bishops of Buenos Aires regarding their “guidelines” for the “implementation” of *Amoris*, Francis declared there is “[no other interpretation](#)” of *Amoris* than their guidelines, which provide as follows:

“If it is acknowledged that, in a concrete case, there are limitations that mitigate responsibility and culpability (cf. 301-302), especially when a person believes he/she would incur a subsequent fault by harming the children of the new union, *Amoris laetitia offers the possibility of having access to the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist* (cf. footnotes 336 and 351).”

Accordingly, the four cardinals rightly note with alarm (while Francis stays silent) that interpreters of *Amoris* “come to different conclusions... due to divergent ways of

understanding the Christian moral life.” Thus, as they conclude:

“In this sense, what is at stake in *Amoris Laetitia* is not only the question of whether or not the divorced who have entered into a new union can — under certain circumstances — be readmitted to the sacraments.

“Rather, the interpretation of the document also implies different, contrasting approaches to the Christian way of life. Thus, while the first question of the *dubia* concerns a practical question regarding the divorced and civilly remarried, *the other four questions touch on fundamental issues of the Christian life.*”

Indeed, the fifth question presented asks the Roman Pontiff, of all people, if following *Amoris* “does one still need to regard as valid the teaching of St. John Paul II’s encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, n.56, based on Sacred Scripture and on the Tradition of the Church, that excludes a creative interpretation of the role of conscience and that emphasizes that conscience can never be authorized to legitimate exceptions to absolute moral norms that prohibit intrinsically evil acts by virtue of their object?” In short: Is Francis — the Pope — authorizing departures from the natural law?

Müller knows all of this. And he knows the whole Catholic world is in turmoil following the publication of *Amoris*, as some dioceses now regard as “mercy” what others still regard as a mortal sin: the reception of Holy Communion while living in adultery. There is no way he cannot know what is happening. Yet he has chosen to put on a blindfold in order to be able to say that a correction of Francis “is not possible at this moment because it does not involve a danger to the faith...”

Really? If not now, when? After thousands and perhaps millions of souls have put their eternal salvation at risk by receiving Holy Communion while engaging in adulterous sexual relations? After the already weakened faith in Holy Matrimony is completely destroyed in many by the spectacle of people who are not married being treated as if they were? After the very concept of mortal sin is *de facto* abolished by the subversive notion, promoted by Francis in *Amoris* (¶ 303), that conscience can properly counsel the continuation of gravely sinful conduct as “what for now [!] is the most generous response which can be given to God... while yet not fully the objective ideal”?

What a sad day for the Church when the very head of its doctrinal congregation blinds himself to what is perhaps, as [Bishop Athanasius Schneider has observed](#), the greatest

doctrinal crisis since the Arian heresy. How sad as well that, in contrast to the four cardinals who confront the crisis with eyes wide open, we must say of Müller what Our Lord said of the Pharisees: “Let them alone: they are blind, and leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the pit.” (Matt 15:14)