One of the symptoms indicating the unprecedented severity of the current ecclesial crisis is the astounding level of prolixity in Church documents as compared with the declarative simplicity of pre-Vatican II Church teaching.

Even the very longest pre-conciliar encyclicals (e.g. Pius XII's *Mystici corporis* or Saint Pius X's *Pascendi*) run to about 20,000 words, including extensive footnotes, and their texts are models of clarity and precision. Today, however, we are routinely burdened with book-length manifestos such as *Laudato si'*, *Evangelii Gaudium* and, of course, *Amoris Laetitia*, which are more than twice as long but say little or nothing about the actual contents of the Faith, while in many cases appearing to undermine it with studied ambiguity. We also read page after page of musings about "visions" of the Church and assorted observations and mere opinions having nothing to do with the Deposit of the Faith which is the true object of the authentic Magisterium. Consider just these two paragraphs from *Laudato si'*:

> "The replacement of virgin forest with plantations of trees, usually monocultures, is rarely adequately analyzed. Yet this can seriously compromise a biodiversity which the new species being introduced does not accommodate. Similarly, wetlands converted into cultivated land lose the enormous biodiversity which they formerly hosted. In some coastal areas the disappearance of ecosystems sustained by mangrove swamps is a source of serious concern.
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> "Oceans not only contain the bulk of our planet's water supply, but also most of the immense variety of living creatures, many of them still unknown to us and threatened for various reasons. What is more, marine life in rivers, lakes, seas and oceans, which feeds a great part of the world's population, is affected by uncontrolled fishing, leading to a drastic depletion of certain species. Selective forms of fishing which discard much of what they collect continue unabated. Particularly threatened are marine organisms which we tend to overlook, like some forms of plankton; they represent a significant element in the ocean food chain, and species used for our food ultimately depend on them."

Quite simply: Is this a joke? What does this kind of thing have to do with the duty of a Pope to teach, govern and sanctify the flock in order to lead them to Heaven?

And now the American bishops complain that they are drowning in a sea of wordy "catechetical texts" they cannot adequately review. As the linked article reports:

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> "We have seen a dramatic increase in the variety of and number of such texts," Caggiano said Nov. 14 during the U.S. bishops' fall general assembly in Baltimore.
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> "Archbishop Leonard P. Blair of Hartford, Connecticut, chairman of the bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, said earlier that typically, 5,000 pages of material would be sent to the subcommittee for review. But, noted Caggiano, 'a single publisher sent a single series that was consisting of 10,000 pages. With only two full-time staff members overseeing the review process for religious education in the entire country, it's simply becoming unmanageable.'
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> "And that's just from the traditional print format in English."

The Gospel of Our Lord is luminous in its simplicity, which is only in keeping with His injunction "But let your speech be yea, yea: no, no: and that which is over and above these, is of evil" (Matt. 5:37). That injunction was uttered, ironically enough, in the same Sermon on the Mount during which He affirmed the truth about the indissolubility of marriage now under attack thanks to what appears to be the single wordiest papal document in Church history: *Amoris Laetitia,* which runs to a staggering 58,000 words.

To the bishops of America, I would say that the prolixity crisis has a very simple solution: abandon your useless "catechetical texts," bring back the simpler catechisms of the pre-conciliar epoch, and return to preaching and teaching about the Ten Commandments, the Four Last Things, and the eternal consequences of sin. Preach and teach as well the simple truth about the "joy" you are always evoking without ever explaining it clearly: the joy of the freedom that comes with conformity of the will to the truth of Christ, as opposed to the misery — all around us — that comes with rejection of the Truth that makes us free.

In short, give us back the Faith of our Fathers. The Faith that Our Lady of Fatima came to defend at the very moment in human history when the Adversary was beginning his final assault on the citadel of the Church. Only when that Faith is restored in all its simplicity will the crisis in the Church be over. But only when the requests of Our Lady of Fatima are heeded will that restoration be possible.

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