Renowned historian and scholar Professor Roberto de Mattei is currently in the United States, to address the "Weapons of Our Warfare" *Catholic Family News c*onference (April 6-8) in Deerfield, Illinois. *CFN* speaks with Professor de Mattei regarding the "Catholic Church, Where Are You Going?" conference held today (Saturday, April 7, 2018) in Rome.

Dr. de Mattei, today the "Catholic Church, Where Are You Going" conference was held in Rome, concerning the crisis in the Church. The conference saw the participation of several Cardinals. What can you say about this?

Being in the United States this weekend, I could not participate in the Rome conference, but I appreciated the recent interview in which Raymond Cardinal Burke affirmed that we find ourselves faced with an intolerable situation, and it is licit to criticize the Pope when he propagates errors and heresies. It seems to me that this follows along the lines of the *Filial Correction* which many are still awaiting, but unfortunately has not come out of the Rome conference. I hold that this act of correction on the part of the Cardinals is necessary, but we must not think that this gesture, by itself, will resolve the crisis in the Church. Pope Francis is not its cause, but rather the product of a process of auto-demolition which has its roots in modernism, in the *Nouvelle théologie*, in the Second Vatican Council, and in the post-conciliar era. Only a serious analysis of the nature of this crisis will allow us to find the right solution, without forgetting that the situation is so grave that only an extraordinary intervention of Grace can resolve it.

Many think that at this point there's nothing left to do, but wait for this Divine intervention…

Certainly it is God, and Him alone, Who guides and changes history. But God requires the cooperation of men and if men cease working, Divine Grace will also cease to act. In this sense, I consider one of the greatest dangers a certain "catacombism" which is being diffused in Catholic circles.

What do you mean by "catacombism?"

As I explain in my talk today, "*Tu es Petrus*: True Devotion to the Chair of Saint Peter," catacombism is the attitude of those who retreat from the battlefield and hide themselves in the illusion of being able to survive without fighting. Catacombism is the refusal of the militant conception of Christianity. If one rejects this militant concept, one accepts the principle of irreversibility of the historic process, and from catacombism one inevitably passes to progressivism and modernism. The catacombists oppose the Constantinian Church to the minority, persecuted Church of the first three centuries. But Pius XII in his address to

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Catholic Action on December 8, 1947, refutes this theory, explaining that the Catholics of the first three centuries were not catacombists, but conquerors.

There are vocations to silence, like those of many contemplative monks and nuns; but Catholics, from Pastors to the last of the faithful, have the duty of testifying to their Faith, with words and example. Saint Athanasius and Saint Hilary did not remain silent against the Arians, nor did Saint Peter Damian against the corrupt prelates of his time. Saint Catherine of Siena did not keep silent before the Popes of her time In recent times, these did not keep quiet but spoke up, instead: the bishop of Münster, Clemens August von Galen faced with Nazism, and Cardinal Josef Mindszenty, primate of Hungary, confronted by communism.

You also speak of a strategy of silence…

Yes. Today there is a political strategy of silence, as an alternative to fighting. A silence which predisposes us for dissimulation, hypocrisy and final surrender. Day after day, month after month, year after year, the politics of silence has become a jail which imprisons many conservatives. In this sense, silence is not only a sin of today, but is also a chastisement for yesterday's sins. Today, those who for too many years remained silent, are prisoners of silence. However, he is free, who in the course of the last 50 years has not kept silent, but has spoken openly and without compromises, because only the Truth makes us free. (John 8:32).

Then, how must we speak?

To speak means, above all, to witness publicly with one's own fidelity to the Gospel and to the immutable Catholic truths, denouncing the errors which counteract it. In times of crisis, the rule is that which Benedict XV in the encyclical *Ad beatissimi Apostolorum Principis* of November 1, 1914 declared against the modernists: "It is Our will that the law of our forefathers should still be held as sacred: "Let there be no innovation; keep to what has been handed down" – *nihil innovetur nisi quod traditum est*. Sacred Tradition remains the criterion for discerning that which is Catholic and that which is not, causing the visible marks of the Church to shine. Tradition is the faith of the Church that the Popes have maintained and transmitted throughout the course of the centuries. But Tradition comes before the Pope and not the Pope before Tradition.

Limiting ourselves, then, to a generic denunciation of the errors which oppose the Tradition of the Church, isn't enough. It is for us to call out by name, all those who inside the Church profess a theology, a philosophy, a morality, a spirituality, in contrast with the perennial Magisterium of the Church, no matter what office they

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may occupy. And today we must admit that the Pope himself promotes and propagates errors and heresies in the Church. We need to have the courage to say this, with all the veneration which is due to the Pope. True devotion to the Papacy expresses itself in an attitude of filial resistance, as happened in the *Filial Correction* addressed to Pope Francis in 2017.

In the crisis of our days, every profession of faith and declaration of fidelity which disregards the responsibility of Pope Francis, lacks strength, clarity and sincerity. We need to have the courage to say: "Holy Father, you are the first one responsible for the confusion which exists today in the Church;" "Holy Father, you are the first one responsible for the heresies which are circulating in the Church today." The first one, but not the only one who is responsible. The responsibility has to be extended to him who adorns himself with the title of "Pope Emeritus," to him who claims continuity between this pontificate and the preceding one, to him who is the cause of this pontificate: Benedict XVI.

What are your thoughts regarding the "Pope Emeritus?"

We need to thank Sandro Magister and other Vaticanistas for having unmasked the media manipulation carried out by Msgr. Dario Viganò, to give credence to a non-existent endorsement of Pope Francis by Benedict XVI. An imbroglio in which the victim (Benedict XVI) is presented by some ultra-progressivist commentators as being guility of "interference" in papal affairs.

Graver still than the so-called "Lettergate," is the fact that public opinion and the mass-media which molds it, accepts as a normal fact the parallel cohabitation of two Popes. The greater responsibility of this unprecedented situation, in my view, is held by Josef Ratzinger who, as Cardinal Brandmuller oberved after the announcement of the resignation, should have renounced the name of Benedict XVI, the title of "Pope Emeritus," the white cassock, and living in the Vatican, whose presence has today created objective confusion, leading us to believe the existence of two simultaneous Popes is possible, while only one can be the Vicar of Christ on earth.

The choice of Benedict XVI was derived from the progressivist roots of his ecclesiology, which emphasizes the power of Orders, in itself indelible, surpassing that of jurisdiction, which is, instead, revocable. In reality, the Papacy does not represent the fourth level of [the Sacrament of Holy] Major Orders (following the diaconate, priesthood and episcopacy), but an office of governing, the unitary nature of which was defined by Jesus Christ Himself.

Can we be surprised by the fact, that in this situation, Francis does not stake a strong claim to his *munus*, and oblige Benedict to leave the Vatican, which he could very easily do? If this

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does not occur, the explanation is not found in the necessity of Francis receiving support on Benedict's part, but in the fact that Bergoglian ecclesiology goes a step further than Ratzingerian ecclesiology; because it desires the existence of a pontifical college formed by two Popes, perhaps three or four in the future, and these would dialectically carry out different functions. The inevitable consequence would be the disappearance of the Petrine Primacy. I fear that this is the "conversion of the Papacy" wished for by Pope Francis.

What do you think we should we do, at this point?

As I say in my talk, I think that we must reduce to the indispensable minimum, ecclesiastical cohabitation with those Pastors who demolish, or favor the demolition of the Church. In my conference I give the example of matrimonial separation. If a father exercises illicit physical or moral violence toward his wife and children, the wife – although recognizing the validity of the marriage itself, and without requesting an annulment, to protect herself and her children, can request a separation. The Church permits it. Giving up living habitually together means distancing oneself from the teachings and practices of the evil Pastors, refusing to participate in the programs and activities promoted by them.

But we must not forget that the Church cannot disappear. Therefore, it is necessary to support the apostolate of those Shepherds who remain faithful to the traditional teachings of the Church, participating in their initiatives and encouraging them to speak, to act and to guide the disoriented flock.

It is time to separate ourselves from evil Pastors, and to unite ourselves to the good ones, inside the one Church in which also live, in the same field, the wheat and the cockle. (Matthew 13:24-30), remembering that the Church is visible, and cannot save herself outside of her legitimate Pastors.

And yet, even if the Vicar of Christ would betray his mission, the Holy Ghost would never cease to assist – not even for a moment – His Church, in which, even in times of defection from the Faith, a remnant, even a small one, of Pastors and faithful will continue to always keep and hand on Tradition, trusting in the Divine Promise: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matthew 28:20).

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