

Editor's Note: The following is the full transcript of a speech given by Professor Roberto de Mattei, founder and president of the [Lepanto Foundation](#), in Seville, Spain (Mar. 2, 2019). It first appeared in the [print edition](#) of *Catholic Family News* in two parts (April and May 2019 issues). Professor de Mattei was in Seville to address a conference organized by [Adelante la Fe](#), a Spanish-language Catholic news media apostolate.

Exactly sixty years ago, on 25 January 1959, Pope John XXIII announced to the world the news of the next council of the Church, Vatican II.

Pius XII had been dead for only three months. His Magisterium was opposed with clarity to the principal systems of thought and life of the modern world. Pope Pacelli had firmly condemned both communist materialism and also the relativism and hedonism of the liberal world. The suggestions of these two ideologies were, however, penetrating into the interior of the Catholic Church itself and expressed themselves in a confused desire for doctrinal and pastoral renewal. In the three years which transpired between the announcement of the Council and its opening in Rome on 11 October 1962, the party of theologians who embraced the inheritance of modernism organized itself effectively, while the Roman Curia did not show concern for the event, thinking that it would be over in a few months with a new Syllabus of condemnation of modern errors. But things would go very differently.

The inaugural allocution of John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*[\[1\]](#) – as the Assumptionist historian Antoine Wenger observes – “defined a spirit; more than giving a program, it gave an orientation.”[\[2\]](#) More than novelty in doctrine, there was a novelty of the psychologically optimistic disposition with which the Pope formulated the relationship between the Church and the modern world: sympathy and “openness.” Those who raised doubts about this irenic and optimistic spirit were labelled as “*prophets of doom*.”[\[3\]](#)

The words of John XXIII were explicitly developed by the exponents of the central European “*nouvelle théologie*,” who gathered in Rome as “*periti*,” or theological consultants, of the Council Fathers.

The Second Vatican Council, before it was a council of bishops, was primarily a council of theologians. During the pontificate of Pius XII, many of these theologians were suspected of heterodoxy, such as Fathers Congar, Daniélou, de Lubac, Häring, Küng, Rahner, and Schillebeeckx. Among these, the name of Fr. Karl Rahner (1904-1984) of the Society of Jesus sticks out, who was the adviser of the Cardinal of Vienna, Franz König, President of the Austrian Bishops’ Conference.

Rahner took upon himself the task of modifying the doctrine of the Church while remaining within the Church, just as the Modernists had earlier tried to do. In the philosophical vision which is at the foundation of his theology, he accepts the Cartesian point of departure of the “ego” as self-awareness. Man is first of all thought, consciousness, pure spirit. As for Descartes and for Hegel, so also for Rahner it is consciousness which is the basis of being, but consciousness coincides with the will of man, and the will of man is the actuation of his ego. The ego in its own turn is not subject to anything which can condition it, because its foundation lies precisely in the absence of every objective external limitation. The consequence is the dissolution of moral value of human action, which no longer has an objective root but is based on the liberty of the individual.

The German Redemptorist Bernard Häring (1912-1998) applied to moral theology the philosophical theses of Karl Rahner. Häring attributed a dominant role to human conscience, replacing the moral law with personal conscience, understood as the “self-conscious ego.” He gave birth to moral personalism, inspired by Rahner, but also influenced by the existentialism and evolutionary theories spread by another Jesuit, Fr. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). The idea of a stable nature of man and of absolute moral laws based in human nature was abandoned. The individual conscience became the sovereign norm of morality. This was defined as the “anthropological shift” of Karl Rahner.[\[4\]](#)

When Vatican II opened on 11 October 1962, these ideas were appropriated by the progressivist current of the Council Fathers and permeated the council documents like the Declaration on Religious Liberty *Dignitatis Humanae* and the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, both promulgated on 7 December 1965 as the final documents of the Council.

In the course of the third session, on 27 October 1964, the Melkite Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh (1878-1967) made an intervention in which he affirmed that the “medieval period,” the time of infancy for humanity, was over, and that the world was now entering into an epoch of “maturity.” Maximos IV was applauded for a long time by the progressivist section of the assembly. The bishop of Cuernavaca, Sergio Méndez Arceo (1907-1992), intervened to say that he agreed with Maximos, with these words:

“One of the principle signs of contemporary times is the growth of the sense of responsibility and liberty. The Church needs to appear not only as a defender of religious liberty but also as a defender of liberty in general, wherever it may be found. She needs to preach the spirit of freedom and love. [...] Many of our positions are anachronistic. Let’s review them and let’s insist on the law of the Gospel, because one has the impression that this is less important than the rest. What an ugly sight it is that we give the impression that the only way to fill our

churches is by brandishing the threat of mortal sin. Let's center everything on the essential thing, that is, on Paschal joy."[\[5\]](#)

The abolition of sin, in the name of the spirit of freedom and love, and replacing the Mystery of the Cross with Paschal joy, understood in a hedonistic and permissive way, would become a *leit-motif* of the new morality.

The constitution *Gaudium et Spes* wanted to redefine the relationship of the Church to the world, embracing "the signs of the times" (nn. 4,11). The consequence was a new relationship between the Church and the modern world. From its very beginning, Christianity opposed the Truth of the Gospel to the world. The world, according to the theology of Christian history, is the battlefield between the faithful followers of Christ and the followers of Satan. And Satan is the prince of this world, meaning the world as the complex of norms and habits which oppose themselves to Christianity. The battle between the spirit of the Gospel and that of the world will last until the end of time, and it has known and will know different moments of relative success and defeat, but it will conclude with the final victory of Christ.

Gaudium et Spes sought instead to have a dialogue with the modern world, in the conviction that the itinerary undertaken by modernity, from Humanism and Protestantism to the French Revolution and Marxism, was an irreversible process. *Gaudium et Spes* seems to be a manifesto of conversion, of *rapprochement*, the term used many times by Dom Lambert Beauduin, between the Church and the world.[\[6\]](#) But in reality, if the Church does not fight to convert the world then the world makes the Church worldly. The worldliness of the Church is the inevitable outcome of the process of the secularization of society theorized by Antonio Gramsci in the name of the Marxist primacy of praxis over doctrine.

This worldliness happened above all in the field of morality in the 1970s, through a theological reading of the documents of the Second Vatican Council in the light of the Sexual Revolution of 1968.

In Italy, the new morality was represented by authors like Don Tullo Goffi (1906-1990), founder of the *Rivista di Teologia morale*, who says that in sex man knows and realizes himself as immersed in the world. What each man has in common with other men is not a stable human nature but "becoming" in the world and in history. Goffi considers sexuality not only as a bio-physical datum, but "the privileged place in which man experiences the passage from the vital to the human;"[\[7\]](#) sexuality is proposed as "an essential human value for the personal maturation of every individual."[\[8\]](#) Sexuality places us in "communicative intimacy" with others.[\[9\]](#) And it assists the "evolution" and "maturation" of man by means of

the “knowledge” of the other, thus carrying out the teaching of *Gaudium et Spes*, which says that the human person realizes himself in dialogical relationship with others.

The Agenda of Cardinal Martini

John Paul II tried to raise up a barrier against the new morality with his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* of 6 August 1993, but these ideas were rampant in pontifical universities, in seminaries, and in Catholic bookstores, where the authoritative texts of reference continued to be those of Fathers Rahner and Häring. However, one after another, the protagonists of the *Nouvelle Théologie* disappeared. The banner of neo-Modernism was taken up in those years by a Jesuit confrere of Rahner, who was not a theologian but above all a cultural organizer, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini (1922-2012), who from his *cathedra* as Archbishop of Milan organized the resistance against John Paul II and then against Benedict XVI.



Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini (1922-2012), [leader](#) of the infamous St. Gallen Mafia that conspired to get Pope Francis elected.

Since the 1990s, a group of cardinals and bishops led by Cardinal Martini and by Cardinal Godfried Danneels, Archbishop of Brussels [NB: recently died on Mar. 14], regularly gathered in the Diocese of St. Gallen, Switzerland, as guests of Bishop Ivo Furrer in order to plan a strategy of conquering ecclesiastical power. It was this lobby that chose as its candidate for the papacy the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, who after failing in 2005 succeeded in being elected in 2013. It is therefore through Martini, a Jesuit

of the third generation, that Beroglio is linked to Rahner, who perhaps he never read but whose spirit he has breathed in. The agenda of Cardinal Martini, which is the same as Rahner, offers us the key to understanding the papacy of Pope Francis.

In his final interview given to Father Georg Sporschill and Federica Radice Fossati on 8 August 2012, Cardinal Martini left a “spiritual testament” in which, recalling the teaching of his maestro Karl Rahner, he gave three pieces of counsel to the future pope:

“The first is conversion: the Church should recognize its own errors and should undertake a radical path of change, beginning with the Pope and the bishops. The pedophilia scandals push us to undertake a path of conversion. The questions about sexuality and all of the themes which involve the body are only one example. These are important for each person but at times perhaps they have become too important. We must ask ourselves whether people still listen to the teaching of the Church in sexual matters. In this area, is the Church still a respected authority, or is it only a caricature in the media?”[\[10\]](#)

The pedophilia scandals, according to Cardinal Martini, are a consequence of the moral rigorism of the Church, which ought to change her position on sexuality.

The second piece of counsel offered by Martini is “the Word of God”:

“The Second Vatican Council restored the Bible to Catholics. [...] Neither the clergy nor church law can substitute for the interior spirit of man. All of the external rules, laws, and dogmas are data to clarify the internal voice for the discernment of spirits.”

Rules, laws, and dogmas are super-structures from which the true believer ought to free himself in order to establish a direct relationship with God, who can unite people of different religions, establishing a relationship of “brotherhood” between them, as happened during the recent journey of Pope Francis to Abu Dhabi.

The third piece of counsel, which Cardinal Martini defined as the third “instrument of healing,” is a wider distribution of the Eucharist, giving it also to sinners:

“The sacraments are not an instrument of discipline, but rather a help for people

in the moments of their journey and in the weaknesses of life. Do we bring the sacraments to people who are in need of new strength? I think of all the divorced people and of remarried couples, of enlarged families. These have need of special protection. [...] The question of whether the divorced can take Communion ought to be turned on its head. How can the Church come with the strength of the sacraments to the aid of those who have complex family situations?"

Pope Francis' Post-Synodal Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* is entirely contained in these words.

Then there was the final affirmation of Cardinal Martini, which summed up everything: "The Church is 200 years behind the times." To say that the Church is two hundred years behind history means affirming that the Church ought to be on the cutting edge of history which goes forward. The Church therefore must not judge history but ought to receive her truth from history rather than from Jesus Christ.

How many times have we heard it expressed, perhaps with different words, this core idea: "The Church is 200 years behind the times!" The Catholic Church, it is said, is behind the times, and the march of history cannot be stopped. If the Church refuses to give Communion to the divorced and "remarried", if it condemns contraception and the use of condoms, if it denies recognition to *de facto* civil unions, if it insists on respect for the traditional liturgical norms, if it holds on to the monarchical structure of its constitution, if it affirms that there is no salvation outside the Church, the Church is not keeping up with changing times. It needs to adapt its language, its teachings, its religious practices to the world, which it is two hundred years behind.

Why two hundred years? Because this is the distance which separates us from the era of the French Revolution, which is considered to be a decisive phase in the social evolution of humanity. If the Church is behind the times with regard to what has happened in the last two centuries, this means that human society has completed since then a journey which is fundamentally positive, a journey of progress which the Church has not known how to understand and make its own.

But what happened after the Revolution of 1789? Until then, the Church held a primary role in society, her authority was publicly recognized and her faith and morals permeated customs. After the fracture of the Revolution, society was emancipated from the Church and undertook an itinerary of distancing from God that was so radical that it necessitated a divine appeal calling for repentance and conversion, which happened in 1917 with the words of the Blessed Virgin to the three shepherd children of Fatima. Society became secularized, but secularization coincided with immersion in sin, which changed from being

private to being public and social. At this point there was a choice: Should we evangelize and Christianize modern society or should we dialogue with it in order to absorb its laws and customs? Is the criterion of judgment the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, or is it History with a capital “H”, which in its ascensional movement towards progress redeems humanity?

We are dealing with two diametrically opposed visions of the world: the first is transcendent and authentically Catholic, the second is immanent, profane, and secular. Between them no dialogue is possible, but rather there is an incompatibility which can be resolved only with a conversion, either the world to the Church or the Church to the world.

Pope Francis seems to have embarked on the second path. In order to make the Church up to date with the world, he affirms that we ought to journey towards “a Church that goes out,” which overcomes a defensive attitude in the face of the present world. In an interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro, Francis proposes a Martinian vision of the direction of history, affirming that “God reveals Himself in an historic revelation, in time. [...] And He is present in the processes of history.”[\[11\]](#) The final objective of Pope Francis, according to what he said to Eugenio Scalfari, would be “the realization of the goal prescribed by Vatican II and in particular those of the encounter of the Church with modernity.”[\[12\]](#)

The Chilean scholar José Antonio Ureta, who has traced out an [accurate analysis](#) of the first five years of the governance of Pope Francis, concludes that “his pontificate seeks to realize the definitive *ralliement* of the Church with the Revolution and with its secularized humanism, precisely in the moment in which she finds herself at an impasse because of the fact that in its final steps the evil and ugliness of the Revolution’s final goal can no longer be hidden.”[\[13\]](#)

The New Sexual Morality

The Sexual Revolution within the Church is part of the “*camino*” [way] of opening up to the world undertaken by Pope Francis, who said in speaking with the French writer Dominique Wolton:

“There is a great danger for preachers, and that is to condemn only those sins which are – forgive me for saying this – ‘under the cincture’ [or ‘below the belt’]. But concerning other sins that are more serious, hate, jealousy, pride, vanity, killing another person, taking someone’s life – about these sins they speak little. Entering the mafia, making secret agreements... ‘Are you a good Catholic? Then pay me the kickback.’”

Further on Pope Francis added:

“The sins of the flesh are the lightest sins. Because the flesh is weak. The most dangerous sins are the sins of the spirit. I am speaking of angelism: pride and vanity are the sins of angelism. Priests have the temptation – not all but many – to focus on sins of sexuality, what I call morality under the cincture. But the most serious sins are elsewhere.”

To the objection of Wolton, “But what you say is not understood,” the Pope responded:

“No, but there are good priests....I know a cardinal who is a good example. He told me, speaking of these things, that whenever someone comes to him to speak about these sins under the cincture, he immediately says: ‘I have understood, let’s pass on to the next thing.’ He stops him, as if to say to him: ‘I have understood, but let’s see if you have something more important to talk about. Do you pray? Do you seek the Lord? Do you read the Gospel? He makes him understand that there are faults more important than this one. Yes, it is a sin, but... He says to him, ‘I have understood,’ and he passes on to something else. On the other hand, there are those who, when they hear a confession of a sin of that nature demand, ‘How did you do it, and when did you do it, and how many times?’ ... And they make a ‘film’ in their head. But these ones need a psychiatrist.”[\[14\]](#)

For Pope Francis, the scrupulous confessor needs to see a psychiatrist. Yet many other theologians and saints express themselves the same way, such as St. Alphonsus Liguori, who in his book *The Practice of the Confessor* teaches that good confessors ought to question the penitent with precision in order to investigate the circumstances, the places, times, persons, and the kind and number of the sins. Only thus will they be able to correct and absolve the penitent, imparting grace to his spiritual life.[\[15\]](#)

The affirmations of Pope Francis seem to forget, however, that for a Catholic there exists both a divine law as well as natural law, impressed by God with fire on the conscience of every man and restated in the Ten Commandments. The violation of any commandment constitutes a grave sin destined to have catastrophic consequences. All mortal sins, according to the *Catechism* of the Church, if they are not followed by repentance and confession, carry the soul to hell, which is the place of eternal suffering, beginning with the

worst suffering of all, which is the privation of God.

Finally, with regard to the Sixth Commandment, the matter is always grave. The Madonna of Fatima, after having shown the children a vision of Hell, was able to say to little Jacinta “the sins which carry most souls to Hell are the sins of the flesh.” Certainly there is a gradation in punishment, but all mortal sins, if they are not confessed and absolved, lead to Hell, even only one, whether it is committed above or below the cincture.



The three seers of Fatima (from left): Lucia dos Santos, Francisco Marto, and Jacinta Marto.

Among the sins which violate the Sixth Commandment, the sin of sodomy is considered one of the most grave, one of the sins which cry out to God for vengeance. The majority of acts

of pedophilia are linked to the sin of homosexuality. It thus represents a true scandal that the summit of the presidents of the world's bishops' conferences which gathered in Rome with Pope Francis from Feb. 21-24 ignored this sin, despite the fact that cardinals, bishops, and lay people continue to ask the Church to reaffirm the condemnation of homosexuality.

In the press conference held on Feb. 21 to open the meeting of bishops, journalist Sandro Magister asked Archbishop Charles Scicluna, one of the spokesmen for the meeting:

"In the introduction of the Pope, in the 21 points of reflection, in his address and in the address of Cardinal Tagle, there is one word that is completely absent, the word 'homosexuality.' And yet we know from all of the abuse that has been documented that the major portion of this abuse occurs between people of the same sex and moreover with persons who have attained the age of puberty. I ask why is there this absence of the word 'homosexuality'? Is it an involuntary, casual absence or is it a deliberate absence?"

Monsignor Scicluna replied:

"My instinct is to look at each case in itself. In my opinion, making generalizations about a category of persons is never legitimate. We have single cases, we do not have categories of persons. [...] I would *never* [emphasis in his intonation] dare to single out a category of people as having a propensity for sinning."

Thus, for Mgr. Scicluna, it would not be legitimate to condemn homosexuality, because this word indicates a generic category and it is not permitted to generalize about a "category" of persons. But then why would it be legitimate to speak about "pedophilia," or "abortion," or "theft"? Would these terms not also signify making generalizations about a "category of persons"? Or is pedophilia in itself a sin while homosexuality is not? Is the same thing that was condemned by Saint Paul, by the Fathers of the Church, by Popes and Saints over the course of centuries, which also merits the Biblical punishment given to Sodom and Gomorrah, now a behavior which is admissible for the Church?

The greatest evil which afflicts the Church, for Pope Francis, is pedophilia, which, in his opinion, has nothing to do with homosexuality. Its cause is said to be the abuse of power by the clergy, which the Pope calls "clericalism." Against this evil, he says there is the need to

secure transparency and the collaboration of the civil authorities to investigate it. In this way, he says, the Church can become credible in the eyes of the world.

The Relationship Between the Church and the World

The theme of the “credibility” of the Church, “wounded” and “strongly placed in discussion” is at the center of the [Letter to the American Bishops](#) issued by the Pope on Jan. 1, 2019, and it has become a recurring slogan.

But what is the criterion for the credibility of the Church? The law of the Gospel or that of the world? It seems that for Pope Francis, the Church, if it wants to be credible, needs to be judged positively by the world and, in order that this may happen, it needs to adapt itself to the values of the world more than opposing itself to the world.

In reality, the Church does not need to demonstrate her credibility to anyone: She is credible because she is true, and she is true because she was founded by Jesus Christ, and she has her mission of procuring the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It is not the Church that needs to become credible but rather the men of the Church, and in order to be credible these men ought to be coherent with the faith and morality which they profess, observing the precepts of the divine law, of which the Church is the guardian. This moral law does not only condemn pedophilia but also homosexuality and many other sins against the Sixth Commandment.

In contrast, for the world there does not exist any moral law. The rule of civil cohabitation is summed up in Article 4 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the citizen of the French Revolution, which says: “Freedom consists in being able to do anything which does not harm others.” The point of reference is not a superior law common to all men but the “other,” considered as the one limit to the expression of one’s own will to power. The State is seen as the supreme regulator of individual selfishness, and offenses such as pedophilia are condemnable not because they violate the moral law but only because they represent violence towards our neighbor. Whoever practices homosexuality or concubinage with a consenting adult does not seem to harm their neighbor and is thus completely free to satisfy his own desires, however disordered they may be.

The Magisterium of the Church is very different, for in its view crimes and sins are considered such because they violate Church law, divine law, or natural law. The distinction between crimes (delicts) and sins is an important one. According to the Code of Canon Law, the Church “has the innate and proper right to coerce offending members of the Christian faithful with penal sanctions” ([can. 1311](#)). The Catholic Church, as a visible society, is

endowed with a penal law, which is the law she possesses in order to sanction the faithful who have violated her law. A crime (delict) is an external violation of the juridical order of the Church, as distinct from sin, which is a violation of the moral order. Thus, the Church, “by proper and exclusive right”, has the right to judge the violation of Church laws and the right to sanction crimes with canonical penalties (can. 1401 §2).

A crime (delict) is always a sin, but a sin is a crime only when it has canonical relevance. Among the many canonical delicts listed by the Code, there are apostasy, heresy, and schism (can. 1364), the *communicatio in sacris* (can. 1365), the profanation of sacred things (can. 1376), and also a series of grave violations against the Sixth Commandment (can. 1395). Among these are included, not only the abuse of minors but also other sins such as concubinage and the scandalous situation which comprises homosexuality. Concubinage and sodomy are not considered crimes by the majority of contemporary nations, which actually promote them, but they remain grave delicts for the clergy who perform them and thus they are sanctioned by canon law.

This distinction does not seem clear to Pope Francis, who has proclaimed “zero tolerance” against civil crimes such as pedophilia, but who invokes “forgiveness” and mercy for the “sins of youth” such as homosexuality, forgetting the presence of this delict in the law of the Church.

For the laws and the common sentiment of the majority of Western countries, pedophilia is considered, like rape, as a disgraceful crime, not however because of the act in itself but because of violation of rights which takes place in these crimes, in the case of children in the one case and women in the other. By contrast, homosexuality is considered a right which even children are taught to respect, in the name of the absolute liberty which every person is said to have to choose their own sexual “orientation.” Following the example of modern States, the ecclesiastical authorities seem to have declassified certain sins and crimes against morality to mere crimes against the person. Sin is said to consist, not in the violation of the natural law, but in forcefully impeding any individual from following his own instincts and tendencies.

Today, the Vatican authorities treat crimes like sodomy as if they were simply private sins, limiting themselves, in cases that become public, to asking simply for penitential expiation, without applying the penal sanctions that the crimes demand. The only crimes which they recognize as such are those sanctioned by secular States. But regarding these sorts of crimes, such as pedophilia, the ecclesiastical authorities today simply follow the judgments of guilt and innocence carried out by civil trials, refusing to investigate and hold ecclesiastical trials, except when these are made necessary in order not to lose “credibility,” such as happened with the “McCarrick case.” And yet the reduction to the lay state of

former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick was the fruit, not of a judicial process (and trial) but rather only of an administrative process.

The Church, however, has the duty of opening a regular penal process in the face of accusations of pedophilia, without violating the fundamental rights of the accused. There are not only rights of those who say they are victims but also rights of those who are accused by the victims. They ought to be judged according to the norms of canon law, and also possibly first by the secular State, in order to ascertain the truth of the facts. Once this truth has been ascertained, if they are found guilty, they ought to be subjected to just penalties, and if they are found innocent, they ought to be defended before the civil authorities as well. Yet this does not happen.

Sandro Magister has [written on his blog](#):

“The same Msgr. Charles J. Scicluna, who for many years was the Promoter of Justice for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, has indicated that only in two out of ten cases is there a true and proper canonical process, whether judiciary or, as is more often the case, administrative. All the other cases are resolved in an extra-processual way. [...] It as if the phenomenon of pedophilia is perceived by the Church as a state of permanent emergency, to which it is considered correct to respond with a set of emergency norms, which are the most intransigent possible.”[\[16\]](#)

The Church, which has its own criminal law and tribunals, must carry out her investigations independently of secular tribunals, jealously defending the seal of Confession. She must have the courage to challenge the judgment of the tribunals of the world, in the conviction that it is not the world that judges the Church but the Church that judges the world.

The fundamental problem remains that of the relationship between the Church and the world. The history of the Second Vatican Council and of its consequences teaches us that it is not the Church which ought to listen to the world, but the world which ought to listen to the voice of the Church. And the voice to which we ought to listen is not the voice of Cardinal Martini and his disciples but rather the prophetic voice of a great Spanish thinker, Juan Donosa Cortés, who in his speech before the Spanish Parliament on Jan. 4, 1849, addressing the Left bank, exclaimed:

“The foundation, Sirs, of all your errors consists in not knowing what is the

direction of civilization and the world. You believe that civilization and the world are going forward, when in fact they are regressing. The world, Sirs, is walking in rapid steps toward the constitution of the most gigantic and devastating despotism of which there is any memory in men.”[\[17\]](#)

It is true, a despotism never known before in history seems to be the result of two hundred years of religious and moral regression in society. But in history it is not the world which advances. It is the Church which progresses amid the storms, which faces them and overcomes them, even when she is attacked from without and betrayed from within.

And if the Pastors do not speak about this truth to their flock, it will be the simple baptized who will affirm it with all their strength while trusting in the help of God, Who never abandons His Church. The only response of the Church to the world is holiness, which presupposes integrity of doctrine: a Christianity professed and lived with integral coherence.

Conclusion

On July 14, 1958, three months before his death, Pius XII published an encyclical entitled [Meminisse](#), in honor of the Assumption of Mary, in which he affirmed:

“Have confidence, therefore; be brave and steadfast soldiers. We wish to counsel you in the words of St. Ignatius, martyr, although We know you do not require such counsel: ‘Serve Him for whom you fight. . . May none of you desert Him! Your baptism must be a shield; your faith a helmet; your charity a lance; your patience a suit of armor. Your works should be your credentials, so that you may be worthy to receive your reward.’”[\[18\]](#)

And the beautiful words of Bishop St. Ambrose should give you sure hope and unwavering courage: ‘Hold on to the tiller of faith so that the rough winds of this world may not bandy you. The sea is vast and large, but do not fear; *for he has established it (the earth) upon the water, and set it firmly upon the rivers* (Ps. 24: 2). And so, it is understandable that the Lord’s Church stands unmoved among the waves of this world, for she is built on the apostolic rock and holds fast to her foundation, unmoved by the onslaughts of the raging sea (Matt. 16:18). She is battered by the surf, but is not shaken. The physical elements of this world crash with thunder about her, but she provides a safe port for those who toil on the deep.’”[\[19\]](#)

The invitation to fight and to resist given by Pius XII resounds in our hearts 60 years later. On Feb. 4, 2019, in Abu Dhabi, Pope Francis [said](#) that there is a need to “demilitarize the heart of man.” I believe, on the contrary, that there is a need to militarize hearts and transform them into an [Acies Ordinata](#), like that army which in a peaceful and respectful yet militant way, has revealed the existence of a Catholic resistance to the process of the self-destruction of the Church.

It is the resistance of those who respect the laws and authority of the Church but do not renounce the promises of their Baptism, by which they have renounced Satan and his works and given themselves entirely to Jesus Christ, taking up the blood-covered banner of the Cross and making this Standard an instrument of battle and victory.

Translated by Giuseppe Pellegrino.

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Notes

[1] Cf. John XXIII, Allocution *Gaudet Mater Ecclesiae*, 11 Oct. 1962, in AS, I/1, pp. 166-175.

[2] Antoine Wenger, *Vatican II*, Centurion, Paris 1964-1966, vol.I, pp. 38-39.

[3] John XXIII, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesiae*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

[4] Cornelio Fabro, *La svolta antropologica di K. Rahner*, Rusconi, Milan 1974.

[5] AS, III/5, pp. 609-612.

[6] Cf. Cesar Alves, S.J., *Parauma hermeneutica apropiada do Vaticano II. O de Joao XXIII*, in “Gregorianum”, 94/1 (2013), pp. 5-34.

[7] Tullio Goffi, *Sessualità e celibato oggi*, in *Problemi e prospettive di teologia morale*, edited by Tullio Goffi, Queriniana, Brescia 1976, p. 397.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 393.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 400.

- [10] *Chiesa indietro di 200 anni*, Interview of Cardinal Martini with Georg Sporschill, S.J. and Federica Radice Fossati Confalonieri, in “Corriere della sera”, 1 Sept. 2012.
- [11] Interview with Fr. Antonio Spadaro, S.J., *Civiltà Cattolica*, 19 Sept. 2013, p. 468.
- [12] Interview with Eugenio Scalfari, *La Repubblica*, 25 Oct. 2015.
- [13] José Antonio Ureta, *Il “cambio di paradigma” di papa Francesco. Continuità o rottura nella missione della Chiesa?*, Istituto Plinio Correa de Oliveira, Rome 2018.
- [14] “Settimo Cielo”, 28 Jan. 2019.
- [15] Cf. S. Alfonso de’Liguori, *Pratica del confessore per bene esercitare il suo ministero*, Casa Mariana, Frigento 1987, pp. 9-10.
- [16] Sandro Magister, “‘Tolleranza zero.’ La parola d’ordine di una Chiesa senza misericordia,” *Settimo Cielo* blog, 15 Feb. 2019.
- [17] *Obras completas*, BAC, Madrid 1970, vol. I, p. 316.
- [18] St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Polycarpum*, VI, 2: PG 5, 723-726.
- [19] St. Ambrose, *Ep.* II, PL, 16, 917.