On the feast of Our Lady of Ransom (Sept. 24), Cardinal Raymond Burke and Bishop Athanasius Schneider jointly issued a new statement, "A clarification about the meaning of fidelity to the Supreme Pontiff" (full text available here), in response to those "who criticize [their] expressions of concern" over "the almost general doctrinal confusion which is reigning in the life of the Church in our days." This new text appears roughly two weeks after a joint critique of the Amazon Synod's working document, including an announcement of "a crusade of prayer and fasting" for an orthodox outcome to the synod, was released by the same two prelates (Sept. 12).

"In recent times," they explain in their new text, "there has been created an atmosphere of an almost total infallibilization of the statements of the Roman Pontiff, that is to say, of every word of the Pope, of every pronouncement, and of merely pastoral documents of the Holy See. There is, in practice, no more the observance of the traditional rule of distinguishing the different levels of the pronouncements of the Pope and of his offices with their theological notes and with the corresponding obligation of adherence on the part of the faithful."

(Providentially, Dr. Taylor and I touched on this same subject during our Sept. 24 podcast, before either of us knew about Cardinal Burke and Bishop Schneider's "clarification".)

Citing Scriptural texts and historical examples, these princes of the Church rightly defend the legitimacy of resisting papal errors while also clearly affirming "in the presence of God who will judge us" their allegiance to the Petrine Office and its current occupant:

> "[W]e are true friends of Pope Francis. We have a supernatural esteem of his person and of the supreme pastoral office of the Successor of Peter. We pray very much for Pope Francis and encourage the faithful to do the same. With the grace of God, we are ready to give our lives for the truth of the Catholic faith about the Primacy of Saint Peter and his successors, should persecutors of the Church ask us to deny this truth. We look to the great examples of fidelity to the Catholic truth of Petrine Primacy, such as it St. John Fisher, a bishop and cardinal of the Church, and St. Thomas More, a layman, and many other Saints and Confessors, and we invoke their intercession."

Beware of Papolaters

Cardinal Burke and Bishop Schneider are quite right to address those who would create "an atmosphere of an almost total infallibilization of the statements of the Roman Pontiff," a

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condition summed up by the word *papolatry* (explained by Professor Roberto de Mattei here). One such group is the "Where Peter Is" blog (WPI), which purports to have been "conceived by a group of faithful Catholics who have become increasingly concerned about the attacks from within the Church on Pope Francis and his teachings."

Following the release of Burke and Schneider's "clarification", Mike Lewis, one of the founders of WPI, posted a lengthy essay in which he claims "it appears that Cardinal Burke has doubts that Francis is currently the valid pope" – an absurd and reckless assertion, given His Eminence's *explicit affirmation to the contrary* (e.g., "We pray very much for Pope Francis…"). In the same essay, Lewis grossly misrepresents the nature of the Open Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church published earlier this year, claiming the letter implies that Pope Francis has already "abdicated his office automatically" when its signatories (including Dr. Brian McCall of CFN) specifically state, "We recognise that it does not belong to us to declare the pope guilty of the delict of heresy in a way that would have canonical consequences for Catholics."

He also falsely accuses Professor Roberto de Mattei, a friend and contributor to CFN, of "advancing the possibility" that Francis' election was invalid due to corruption within the 2013 conclave. Quite the contrary, Professor de Mattei has publicly affirmed the dogmatic fact of Francis' pontificate due to his peaceful and universal acceptance as Pope by the Church's hierarchy following his election (see here for further explanation of this crucial doctrine).

Lewis and his profoundly mistaken colleagues at WPI would do well to reflect on the following words of Melchior Cano, quoted by Burke and Schneider in their "clarification":

> "Peter does not need our adulation. Those who blindly and indiscriminately defend every decision of the Supreme Pontiff are those who most undermine the authority of the Holy See: they destroy, instead of strengthening its foundations".

May the Immaculate Mother of God soon deliver the Church from "general doctrinal confusion" through her powerful intercession. *Our Lady of Ransom, pray for us!*

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