Editor's Note: On the Feast of the Chair of St. Peter (Feb. 22), CFN is pleased to reprint the following article by eminent Catholic author Aldo Maria Valli, one of the few journalists to whom Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò entrusted his initial testimony (Aug. 2018) concerning former Cardinal Theodore McCarrick and those who knew about his crimes (including Pope Francis) for publication.

Lest there be any confusion about CFN's position, we continue to maintain that Francis is the true and valid Pope (see here for a detailed treatment, which first appeared in the Sept. and Oct. 2016 issues of CFN). However, we agree with Mr. Valli that Pope Francis "does not do what the pope" should do, namely, nourish the flock of Christ with sound doctrine and a holy example — precisely what Our Lord commissioned St. Peter to do. Instead, as Mr. Valli observes, "Bergoglio has made Peter evaporate and put himself in the foreground," thus becoming "the protagonist of a process of resignation from Peter's duties." And significantly, Mr. Valli traces this "personalization of the papacy" to "the new conciliar anthropocentric formulation" — that is, to the Second Vatican Council.

Let us pray fervently throughout this Lenten season for the return of a *papa* (father) after the Heart of Christ to Rome.

*****

Rome is without a pope. The thesis that I intend to support can be summarized in these five words. When I say Rome, I am not referring only to the city of which the pope is the bishop. When I say Rome, I mean the world; I mean the present reality.

The pope, although physically present, in reality is not there, because he does not do what the pope does. He is there, but he does not perform his duty as Successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ. There is Jorge Mario Bergoglio; there is not Peter.

Who is the pope? The definitions, depending on whether one wants to highlight the historical, theological, or pastoral aspect, may be different. But, essentially, the pope is the Successor of Peter. And what tasks were assigned by Jesus to the Apostle Peter? One the one hand, "Feed my sheep" (Jn 21:17); on the other hand, "Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mt 16:19).

This is what a pope should do. But today, there is no one who carries out this task. "And you, once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers in the faith" (Lk 22:32). So says Jesus to Peter. But today Peter does not shepherd his sheep and he does not strengthen them in the faith. Why? Someone answers: Because Bergoglio does not speak about God, only about migrants, ecology, the economy, and social questions. But this is not so. Actually,

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

Bergoglio does speak about God, but what emerges from the whole of his preaching is a God who is not the God of the Bible but an adulterated God, a God, I would say, who is weakened, or better still, adapted. Adapted to what? To man and his demand to be justified in living as if sin did not exist.

Bergoglio has certainly placed social themes at the center of his teaching and, with sporadic exceptions, appears prey to the same obsessions of the dominating culture of the politically correct, but I believe that this is not the profound reason why Rome is without a pope. In wanting to highlight social themes, it is possible to have an authentically Christian and Catholic perspective. The question, with Bergoglio, is another one: it is that his theological perspective is deviated. And this is for a very specific reason: because the God of whom Bergoglio speaks is not one who forgives but rather one who removes all blame.

In *Amoris Laetitia* we read: "*The Church must accompany with attention and care the weakest of her children*" (Ch. 8, para. 291). I'm sorry, but that's not how it is. The Church must convert sinners.

Once again in *Amoris Laetitia*, we read that "*the Church does not disregard the constructive elements in those situations which do not yet or no longer correspond to her teaching on marriage*" (para. 314). I'm sorry, but those words are ambiguous. In situations that do not correspond to her teaching, there will also be "constructive elements" (but in what sense?); however, the mission of the Church is not to give validity to such elements but rather to convert souls to divine love, to which one adheres by observing the commandments.

In *Amoris Laetitia* we also read: "*Yet conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one's limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal*" (para. 303). Once again there is ambiguity. First: there is not an "*overall demand*" of the Gospel, to which one can more or less adhere. There is simply the Gospel with its very specific contents; there are the commandments with their clarity. Second: God never – I repeat, never – can ask someone to live in sin. Third: no one can claim to have "*a certain moral security*" about "*what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one's limits.*" These muddled expressions have only one meaning: legitimizing moral relativism and playing games with the divine commandments.

This God committed more than anything else to freeing man from blame, this God in search of mitigating circumstances, this God who refrains from commanding and prefers to understand, this God who "is close to us like a mother singing a lullaby," this God who is not

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

a judge but who is “closeness,” this God who speaks of human “frailty” and not of sin, this God bent on the logic of pastoral accompaniment” is a caricature of the God of the Bible. Because God, the God of the Bible, is so patient, but not lax; He is so loving, but not permissive; He is so considerate, but not accommodating. In a word, He is a Father in the fullest and most authentic sense of the term.

The perspective assumed by Bergoglio appears instead to be that of the world, which often does not reject the idea of God entirely, but rejects the characteristics of God that are less in tune with the permissiveness that is rampant. The world does not want a true father, loving in the measure in which he is also judging, but rather it wants a buddy; or better still, a fellow traveler who lets things go and says, “Who am I to judge?”

On other occasions I have written that with Bergoglio a vision triumphs that overturns the real one: it is the vision which says that God has no rights, only duties. He does not have the right to receive worship worthy of Him, nor to not be mocked, but He does have the duty to forgive. According to this vision, the reverse is true for man: man does not have any duties, but only rights. He has the right to be forgiven but not the duty to convert. As if there could be a duty for God to forgive and a right of man to be forgiven.

This is why Bergoglio, portrayed as the pope of mercy, seems to me to be the least merciful pope that one could imagine. In fact, he neglects the first and fundamental form of mercy that belongs to him and to him alone: preaching the divine law and, in so doing, pointing out to human creatures, from the height of his supreme authority, the way that leads to salvation and eternal life.

If Bergoglio has devised a “god” of this sort – which I intentionally indicate with a lower-case “g” because it is not the One and Triune God whom we adore – it is because for Bergoglio there is no fault for which man must ask forgiveness, neither personal nor collective, neither original nor actual. But if there is no fault, then there is also no Redemption; and without the need for Redemption the Incarnation makes no sense, much less the saving work of the one Ark of salvation which is the Holy Church. One wonders if that “god” is not rather the *simia Dei* – the ape of God – Satan, who pushes us towards damnation at the exact moment when he denies that the sins and vices with which he tempts us can kill our soul and condemn us to the eternal loss of the Supreme Good.

Rome is therefore without a pope. But while in Guido Morselli’s dystopian novel entitled *Roma senza papa* it was physically so, since the fictional pope went to live in Zagarolo, today Rome is without a pope in a much more profound and radical way.

I can already hear the objection: But how can you say that Rome is without a pope when

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

Francis is everywhere? He is on TV and in the newspapers. He has been on the cover of *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Rolling Stone*, and even *Forbes* and *Vanity Fair*. He is on websites and in countless books. He has been interviewed by everyone, even by *Gazzetta dello sport* [*translator's note*: the Italian daily sports newspaper that is the most widely read newspaper of any kind in Italy]. Perhaps never before has a pope been so present and so popular. I respond: that's all true, but he is Bergoglio; he is not Peter.

It is certainly not forbidden for the Vicar of Christ to concern himself with the things of the world. Quite the contrary. The Christian faith is an incarnate faith, and the God of the Christians is God who becomes man, who becomes history; thus, Christianity shuns the excesses of spiritualism. But it is one thing to be in the world, and it is quite another to become like the world. By speaking as the world speaks and reasoning as the world reasons, Bergoglio has made Peter evaporate and put himself in the foreground.

I repeat: the world, our world born from the revolution of '68, does not want a true father. The world prefers a companion. The teaching of a father, if he is a true father, is laborious, because it points out the way of freedom in responsibility. It is much more convenient to just have someone next to you who simply keeps you company, without pointing anything out. And this is just what Bergoglio does: he shows a "god" who is not a father but a companion. It is no coincidence that Bergoglio's "church of going out" likes the verb "accompany" – just like all Modernism. It is a church that is a companion on the road, that justifies everything (by means of a distorted concept of discernment) and, in the end, relativizes everything.

Jesus is quite explicit in this matter. "Woe, when all men speak well of you" (Lk 6:26). "Blessed are you when men hate you and when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man" (Lk 6:22).

Every now and then a rumor surfaces that says that Bergoglio is also thinking of resigning, just like Benedict XVI. I believe that he has nothing like this in mind, but the problem is something else. The problem is that Bergoglio has become *de facto* the protagonist of a process of resignation from Peter's duties.

I have already written elsewhere that Bergoglio has now become the chaplain of the United Nations, and I believe that this choice is of unprecedented gravity. However, even more serious than his adherence to the agenda of the UN and what is politically correct is that he has given up speaking to us about the God of the Bible and that the God at the center of his preaching is a God who clears people of blame, not a God who forgives.

The crisis of the father figure and the crisis of the papacy go hand in hand. Just as the father, rejected and dismantled, was transformed into a generic companion without any

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

claim to the right to point out the way, in the same way the pope stopped being the bearer and interpreter of the objective divine law and preferred to become a simple companion.

In this way, Peter evaporated just when we most needed him to show us God as an all-around Father: a loving Father: not because He is neutral, but because He is judging; a merciful Father: not because He is permissive, but because He is committed to showing the way to the true good; a compassionate Father: not because He is relativist, but because He is eager to show the way to salvation.

I observe that the protagonism in which the Bergoglian ego indulges is not a novelty, but goes back in large part to the new conciliar anthropocentric formulation, beginning with which popes, bishops, and clerics placed themselves before their sacred ministry, their own will before that of the Church, their own opinions before Catholic orthodoxy, and their own liturgical extravagances before the sacrality of the rite.

This personalization of the papacy has become explicit ever since the Vicar of Christ, wanting to present himself as "one like us," renounced the use of the *plural humilitatis* with which he demonstrated that he was speaking not in a personal capacity but together with all his predecessors and the same Holy Spirit. Let's think about it: that sacred "We" which made Pius IX tremble in proclaiming the dogma of the Immaculate Conception as well as Saint Pius X in condemning Modernism, could never have been used to support the idolatrous cult of the Pachamama, nor to formulate the ambiguity of *Amoris Laetitia* or the indifferentism of *Fratelli Tutti*.

Concerning the process of personalization of the papacy (to which the advent and development of mass media gave an important contribution), we must recall that there was a time in which, at least up to and including Pius XII, it did not matter much to the faithful who was the pope, because in any case they knew that whoever he was he would always teach the same doctrine and condemn the same errors. In applauding the pope, they applauded not so much the one who was on the holy throne at that moment but rather the papacy, the sacred regality of the Vicar of Christ, the voice of the Supreme Pastor, Jesus Christ.

Bergoglio, who does not like to present himself as the Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, and who has put the title "Vicar of Christ" into the background in the *Annuario Pontificio*, implicitly separates himself from the authority that Our Lord has conferred on Peter and his successors. And this is not a mere canonical question. It is a reality whose consequences are very serious for the papacy.

When will Peter return? How long will Rome remain without a pope? It is useless to ask. The

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.

designs of God are mysterious. We can only pray to the heavenly Father, saying: "Your will be done, not ours. And have mercy on us sinners."

First published in Italian at radioromalibera.org (Feb. 20, 2021). English translation first appeared at Stilum Curiae. Reprinted here with the permission of the author.

UPDATE (2/26/2021): Following the publication of his article (above), Mr. Valli clarified in a follow-up text that he does not advocate for the rejection of Francis as the Roman Pontiff. He also apologized if the headline of his original article, "Rome Is Without a Pope," gave that impression (see here for a summary of his clarification).

Copyright © catholicfamilynews.com. All rights reserved.