

BOOMERANG EFFECT

Belgian pro-euthanasia bishop excommunicates himself

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While the *Faim2Vie* association has organised a massive **mobilisation** (13-15 October), throughout France, from Lille to Bastia, to make the French people aware of what is at stake if the proposed legalisation on euthanasia and assisted suicide become law, just

over the north-eastern border a bishop is pulling in the opposite direction, opening a dangerous breach in the largest institution opposing the killing of the sick and frail: the Catholic Church.

Instead of supporting the 13 French professional associations, 800,000 names and surnames, which are calling on the Macron government not to proceed with an immoral and murderous law, the Bishop of Antwerp, Msgr Johan Bonny, has seen fit to show the world his personal openness to the killing of innocents.

In an interview on 28 September with the Belgian daily newspaper *La Libre Belgique*, Msgr Bonny, without any shame, revealed the wolf's fur concealed (but only partly) under his sheep's clothing. "We will always be in favour of palliative care and we will always support respect for life, but I regret that the Vatican maintains that euthanasia is always an intrinsic evil, regardless of the circumstances". A statement that flies in the face of logic, even before morality. How can one always be in favour of life and palliative care if *under certain circumstances* one agrees to inflict death?

To always be pro-life means rejecting any act that causes the death of an innocent person. Therefore, it means that procuring the death of an innocent person, cooperating with it, or approving of it is always an evil act. Exactly what Bishop Bonny rails against, contradicting himself and defying the most basic logic.

The Bishop of Antwerp continues: "All questions deserve situation-specific answers: a moral judgement must always be made in relation to the specific situation, culture, circumstances, and context". And he gives an example: "There will always be cases in which one must speak out against people's wish to die too soon. But it must also be recognised that the request of a 40-year-old for euthanasia is not the same as the request of a 90-year-old suffering from a terminal illness". Who knows why it's legitimate for 90-year-olds to be killed and 40-year-olds not.

It is clear that when Bonny speaks of a moral judgement relating to a specific situation, he does not mean this in the correct sense, i.e. that the moral life always has to do with situations characterised by a set of singular circumstances; hence the importance of the virtue of prudence. He means very clearly that there are no acts that are always to be rejected, thus fully embracing that 'situation ethics' condemned by the Holy Office in 1956 and more solemnly rejected by the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, §§ 81-82.

Archbishop Bonny is taking everyone for a ride when he claims that the condemnation of euthanasia

as an intrinsically evil act is a Vatican position; as if to say that the Secretariat of State would have issued a norm for the use of the citizens of the Vatican State... Whereas, on the other hand, that the direct voluntary killing of an innocent person is an intrinsically evil act belongs to Revelation, and is therefore *de fide credenda*. As for the condemnation of euthanasia, it is certainly *de fide tenenda*, insofar as it is a truth intimately connected with the Fifth Commandment, and must therefore be accepted fully and irrevocably.

This was explicitly clarified in the 1998 Doctrinal Note explaining the *Professio Fidei* : in the encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, "confirming that euthanasia is 'a grave violation of the law of God', the Pope declares that 'this doctrine is founded on the natural law and on the written Word of God, it is transmitted by the Tradition of the Church and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium'" (Note 11). It is because of this close connection to the revealed datum that the Note indicated this truth as belonging to the truths expressed in the second paragraph of the *Professio Fidei*, that is, those truths that require "firm and definitive assent". The Note also specified that "whoever would deny them would be assuming a position of rejection of the truth of Catholic doctrine and would therefore no longer be in full communion with the Catholic Church".

Therefore, Archbishop Bonny is simply no longer in communion with the Catholic Church. The timing he chooses for making statements that overturn moral doctrine is certainly curious. When the German Synod had entered a certain stalemate due to tension with the Roman Congregations, Msgr Bonny went to the rescue, revealing that in Belgium irregular couples are blessed and the Pope agrees; which is unfortunately true, given the content of the letter the Pope sent to the Cardinals of the *dubia*. The *Responsum* of 2021 is simply paper to be recycled.

Now, incipiente Synodo, the Bishop of Antwerp repeats his performance: there are no moral absolutes; euthanasia can be carried out, depending on the circumstances. And also this time despite the fact that the recent Letter *Samaritanus Bonus* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, approved by the Pope, clearly states "that euthanasia is a *crime against human life* because, in this act, one chooses to directly cause the death of another innocent human being". And it reaffirmed that since "the correct definition of euthanasia depends not on a consideration of the goods or values at stake, but on *moral object*" it "is an intrinsically evil act, in every situation or circumstance". And therefore, "any formal or immediate or material cooperation in such an act is a grave sin against human life (...). Euthanasia is an act of homicide that no end can justify and that does not tolerate any form of complicity or active or passive collaboration. Those who approve laws on euthanasia and assisted suicide therefore,

become accomplices of a grave sin that others will execute. They are also guilty of scandal because by such laws they contribute to the distortion of conscience, even among the faithful”.

In addition to being outside the Catholic communion, therefore, Archbishop Bonny, by formally cooperating with euthanasia, i.e. supporting its lawfulness in certain cases, is complicit in murder and scandalising the faithful. There is enough for him to be excommunicated.

As if that were not enough, Bonny chooses to pulverise the existence of the Church's Magisterium, advocating a free examination of the Scriptures; for him, the Church's definitive teaching is not definitive at all, because it is up to each person's intelligence to establish the meaning of the commandment “Thou shalt not kill”: “God relies on our intelligence to understand His Word correctly”. To which Merry's reply to Pippin at Rivendell comes to mind: “But then you exclude yourself, Pippin”.