

VATICAN

Burke case puts faith at stake

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**Luisella
Scrosati**



The indiscretion concerning Pope Francis' willingness to punish US Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke by taking away his emolument and house, [reported exclusively by the Daily Compass](#), has circulated the globe. Some writers have tried to correct the trajectory of the news. According to a [Reuters](#) source, the Pope allegedly said that Cardinal Burke was 'working against the Church and against the papacy'. According to [Associated Press](#),

the Pope accused Burke of being 'a source of disunity' and of wanting to take away his salary because he was guilty of using his 'privileges against the Church'. Yesterday evening, **Austen Ivereigh issued a confirmation from the pope**, whom he contacted directly: 'Burke has used his privileges against the Church', so I am taking away his house and salary. An eloquent expression that indicates the pope considers himself the Church.

The world, however, reads these matters applying its own categories, which are evidently not those flowing from faith, but those by those who seek to justify Pope Francis, not because they care about the pope, but because they have an interest in supporting his sad agenda.

Thus one of Italy's foremost commentators on Vatican matters, Massimo Franco, in Italy's leading daily newspaper, *Corriere della Sera*, presented the affair as the inevitable outcome of a clash between the poor pope and "that chain", of which Cardinal Burke is said to be none other than the "leader", and which "for years, in the USA has been directing criticism at him [the pope] that is considered excessive even by Jorge Bergoglio's adversaries". Massimo Franco, however, does not even devote a paragraph to analysing the content of these 'excessive criticisms'.

Better therefore to use the strategy of raising smoke screens, sowing nonsense and allusions here and there. As when Franco states that 'Burke has never denied his reputation as an ultra-conservative hostile to the pope'. Franco evidently missed the countless times when the former Prefect of the Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura rejected any accusation of hostility towards the Pope and clarified that it is one thing to oppose questionable and even mistaken positions by the Pontiff and another to resent his person or, worse, the ministry he has taken on.

Or as when, shortly afterwards, Franco decides to adopt the genre of thriller novels: 'Behind Burke and his "culture war" one glimpses the silhouette of characters and institutions that consider Francis a danger. Among these silhouettes is the trite reference to Steve Bannon (and Donald Trump). Franco knows that Burke 'has defended himself several times' against this accusation, but insists on repeating the same old story ad nauseam.

Yet, there's still worse to be found in another Italian newspaper, *Open*, the creation of one of the best known TV journalists, Enrico Mentana. No Bannon and Trump this time. For him, the real 'silhouette' behind Burke is the Mexican 'populist' Eduardo Verástegui, 'great personal friend of the new president of Argentina, Javier

Gerardo Milei'. The proof? Here it is: "Several times in recent years Cardinal Burke, who in La Crosse, Wisconsin (USA) founded a shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe, has hosted Verástegui, often reciting the rosary with him and participating in public conferences". Without doubt, these are subversive and dangerous activities.

Therefore, according to *Open*, Bergoglio's radar is not on the United States, but on "that populist axis between Central and South America (...) considered particularly irritating to Pope Francis"; a fact that, in his opinion, would contribute "even more to putting Cardinal Burke in his crosshairs". Theories that border on the comical.

However, no one seems to have bothered to address the underlying problem: what did the disputed American cardinal say and write? Had they done so, they would have had a better chance of understanding and enabling people to realise that what is at stake is not the opposition between 'political' alignments, or cultural currents; it is not even the settling of personal scores, but is the very identity of the Church and Catholicism.

Cardinal Burke - as we too at the *Daily Compass* - does not care about labels, the Catholic Church matters, faith matters, fidelity to Jesus Christ matters. And when issues on which the Church has already pronounced itself definitively and consistently are questioned again, in order to preserve its covenant with the Lord and pass it on uncorrupted, it is not only a right, but a grave duty of a bishop to take a public stand to ask questions and provide clarity. That the Pope confirms the faith is not the irreverent demand of Burke, Strickland or Zen: it is the constitutive sense of his office as Jesus Christ instituted it. And that the Pope is doing exactly the opposite is demonstrated by the unprecedented confusion - at least in modern times - among Catholics.

In the last ten years of his pontificate, fixed points of Church discipline, rooted in dogma, have been blown up either directly by the Pope or by people he has placed in key positions and who he has been very careful not to rebuke. What was clear has become confused, what was certain has become questionable, what was sacred has been desecrated. Let us recall some: the possibility for those who continue to live more uxorio to receive sacramental absolution and Holy Communion; same possibility for those who publicly support abortion and other serious sins; insistence that priests always absolve, without verifying sincere repentance; possibility of resorting to contraception and even homologous assisted fertilisation; possibility of resorting to euthanasia; possibility of blessing unmarried couples and even homosexuals; affirmation that God wills the plurality of religions; revision of compulsory celibacy; possibility of an ordained female diaconate and openness to the female priesthood;

reversal of Church teaching on the death penalty; possibility of revising Church teaching on homosexuality; possibility for Protestants to receive Holy Communion; revolutionising the hierarchical structure of the Church by introducing lay people with voting rights at a synod of bishops.

To oppose these serious drifts is not to be an enemy of the papacy or to divide the Church; the tragedy is that there is a pope who proposes them, supports them and considers an enemy who instead is doing nothing more than his duty. And about enemies, Francis has decided to take no prisoners, accelerating the dangerous absolutist drift: Ego sum Petrus, ergo sum Ecclesia.