

UNITED STATES

Cardinal McElroy's summa of heresies

ECCLESIA

28_02_2023



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At the end of January, Cardinal and Bishop of San Diego, Robert McElroy, sent his reflections on the current state of the Church to the Jesuit magazine *America*. The magazine published these reflections under the title Cardinal McElroy on 'radical inclusion' for L.G.B.T. people, women and others in the Catholic Church: a summa of ecclesial correctness where the key words are inclusion, sharing and discernment. An

article chock-full of stereotypes, an excellent paradigm of the progressive positions that have appeared in the synods of the past years, of the present ones and - we fear - of the future ones. In short, an effective synthesis of the heretical theories within the Church which we have already had to deal with and which we will also have to deal with shortly.

Referring to the synods of the past and the near future, the cardinal says he is in favour of the female diaconate and looks with great indulgence at access to Holy Communion for remarried divorcees, for spouses married only civilly, and for LGBT people who have not renounced their lifestyle. McElroy indicates three ways for these categories of people to have access to Holy Communion.

The first: we are all wounded by sin, he says, and therefore - this is the subtext of the cardinal's reasoning - it is not clear why some wounds are an impediment to accessing the Eucharist and others are not. Answer: some sins are so serious, so-called mortal sins, that they have the power to break the relationship of friendship with God. Therefore, first this bond with God must be rebuilt through Confession and therefore first one must repent of that sin and decide not to commit any more sins and only then can one receive Communion. Otherwise, not only adulterers and people who practise homosexuality will be able to approach Holy Communion, but also murderers, thieves, rapists, swindlers, abortionists, etc., because they too, as McElroy states, are after all people wounded by sin.

The second solution proposed by the cardinal: "While Catholic teaching must play a critical role in the decision-making process of believers, it is the conscience that holds the privileged place. Categorical exclusions undermine that privilege precisely because they cannot understand the inner conversation between women and men and their God". Translated: personal conscience comes before doctrine, because the inner dialogue between the believer and God comes first, before the Magisterium. Response: conscience is called upon to decline the principles of morality and faith in concrete situations. Therefore, hierarchically these principles, taught by the Magisterium, are more important than the workings of conscience, precisely because conscience works by referring to these principles. McElroy, moreover, forgets that conscience can also err. The subject, if they act in good faith, may not even realise they are wrong, but it is up to the Church to enlighten their errant conscience and lead them back to right thinking and right behaviour.

Third solution: "The church must embrace a Eucharistic theology that effectively invites all the baptised to the table of the Lord", writes the cardinal, because the Eucharist is a medicine for the soul. True, it is a medicine, but only for those who have

decided to heal. For everyone else that medicine will do more harm than good, as St Paul admonishes us, "for he who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord, eats and drinks his own condemnation. This is why there are many sick and infirm among you, and a good number have died" (1 Cor 11:29-30).

One must be worthy to receive the Lord, and this is purely out of basic theological logic. In fact, there is an objective incompatibility between the Holy Eucharist and the will to persevere in grave sin, between the grace that emanates from the Eucharist and those who refuse it because they want to remain in mortal sin, a state in which grace is absent. Jesus was explicit on the point. We recall his fiery words addressed to the first pope in history, St Peter: "Get behind me, Satan! You are an offence to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but of the things of men!" (Mt 16:23). Inevitably on the same wavelength was St Paul, who puts the concept of dignity at the centre of his admonition to the Corinthian community: "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Let each one therefore examine himself and then eat of this bread and drink of this cup" (1 Cor 11:27-28). First Confession and then Communion.

This argument, which is nothing but Catholic doctrine, is explicitly rejected by the American cardinal with these words: "This objection should be faced head-on". And how does he face it? Incidentally, McElroy insinuates that the doctrine on sins pertaining to the sexual sphere (but with regard to remarried divorcees and those married only civilly, the sins do not only pertain to the sexual sphere) derives from tradition. They are actually of positive divine law, see the Sixth Commandment. But the point the cardinal insists on is another: "The heart of Christian discipleship", he writes, "is a relationship with God the Father, Son and Spirit rooted in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The church has a hierarchy of truths that flow from this fundamental kerygma. Sexual activity, while profound, does not lie at the centre of this hierarchy. Yet in pastoral practice we have placed it at the very centre of our structures of exclusion from the Eucharist. This should change".

We agree that the core of the Catholic faith is the Holy Trinity, which shows its love for mankind through the incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ. But from this centre of truth flow a whole series of conducts that are dutiful precisely because they are consonant with these truths, and hence a whole series of prohibitions concerning choices that are incompatible with this nucleus of truth. That pastoral care is often concerned with LGBT issues and remarried divorcees happens for two reasons: first, because many pastors want to welcome not only homosexuals and divorcees, but

also homosexuality and divorce. Secondly, because there is nothing but talk of homosexuality and transsexuality in the media and social networks today.

Ultimately, the San Diego Cardinal's article is interesting because it summarises the strategies currently followed in Western countries to attempt to subvert doctrine on marriage, homosexuality and transsexuality, strategies that will certainly emerge at the Synod on Synodality in October 2023.