

APPEAL

## Cardinal Sarah pleads like Solženicyn: "Don't give in to lies!"

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Fifty years ago, on 12 February 1974, on the day of his arrest and the prelude to his expulsion from the then Soviet Union, the Russian Nobel Prize winner, Aleksandr Solženicyn, penned a powerful appeal to unhinge the totalitarian system, in all its

disparate forms.

**A powerful, concrete plea**, far from the damaging and nauseating rhetoric of wanting to overthrow the system, on the basis that it is always everyone else who has to change: "Not every day nor on every shoulder does violence bring down its heavy paw: from us it only demands docility to the lie, daily participation in the lie: nothing else is needed to be loyal subjects. And it is precisely here that lies the key to our liberation, a key we have neglected and yet which is so simple and accessible: the refusal to participate personally in the lie. Even if the lie covers everything, even if it dominates everywhere, on one point we are inflexible: let it not dominate by my doing!".

**For in the end the lie lives in men**, grows in men, blazes through men; Solženicyn had the realistic realisation that 'if men repudiate the lie, it simply ceases to exist'.

**So, from cold Russia, the appeal of a white, bearded man**, still in his prime, is repeated fifty years later, in the hot and humid climate of a country almost touching the equator, by a black, beardless man, now in his eighties, this time trying to recruit the living forces within the Church, and in particular the episcopate: 'We must not give in to the lie! The essence of fluid atheism is the promise of an accommodation between truth and lies. It is the greatest temptation of our time! We are all guilty of accommodation, of complicity with this great lie that is fluid atheism! (...) Fluid atheism lives and feeds on all our small weaknesses, all our capitulations and compromises with its lie. But each of us can decide today: the lie of atheism will find no more room in me. I no longer want to renounce the light of faith, I no longer want, out of convenience, laziness or conformity, light and darkness to cohabit in me'.

**This is the how Cardinal Robert Sarah**, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for Divine Worship, addressed his confreres during a recent visit to the episcopate of Cameroon (his speech [here](#)), on 9 April. It is a denunciation of what he calls 'fluid atheism', or that relativism characteristic of contemporary culture, which has penetrated the Church everywhere; and penetrated it because - the Cardinal speaks like a Cardinal - 'many Western prelates are paralysed by the idea of opposing the world. They dream of being loved by the world. They have lost the will to be a sign of contradiction. Perhaps excessive material wealth leads them to compromise with the affairs of the world'. The fear of being a sign of contradiction.

**Fluid atheism, unlike intellectual and militant atheism, is insidious:** "It never says its name but infiltrates everywhere, even ecclesiastical discourse. Its first effect is a form of drowsiness of faith. It anaesthetises our ability to react, to recognise error,

danger'. In essence, it deceives the Christian's 'immune system', presenting its own alluring and benevolent side, such as dialogue, communion, openness to all, obedience to the 'spirit'.

**Sarah recalled the courageous opposition of the African bishops**, and in particular those in Cameroon, to the Declaration *Fiducia supplicans*, a document unabashedly criticised by the Guinean cardinal himself (see [here](#)). He emphasised that the African episcopate's opposition had been dismissed as a question of cultural backwardness: 'Some in the West have wanted to make people believe that you have acted in the name of an African cultural particularism. It is false and ridiculous to attribute such intentions to you! Some have claimed, in a logic of intellectual neo-colonialism, that Africans were 'not yet' ready to bless same-sex couples for cultural reasons. As if the West was ahead of the backward Africans'.

**The same strategy is likely to be used**, according to the cardinal, when at the next Synod an attempt will be made to further overturn important points of Christian doctrine and morality: "They would like to allow the female diaconate in Germany, married priests in Belgium, the confusion between ordained priesthood and baptismal priesthood in the Amazon. Some recently appointed theological experts do not hide their plans. And they will tell you with false politeness: 'Rest assured, in Africa, we will not impose this kind of innovation on you. You are not culturally ready'". It was also no different at the Synod on the Family in 2014, when it was the African bishops, led by Sarah and the combative Cardinal Wilfrid Fox Napier, who opposed attempts to permit Communion to remarried divorcees and revolutionise doctrine on intrinsically evil acts, especially homosexual ones. At the time they were mocked by Cardinal Walter Kasper, who came out with the statement that with African bishops one cannot talk about homosexuality, because for them it is a taboo subject.

***Fiducia supplicans* was a 'providential' document**, according to that Providence that allows evil to bring about greater good. It somehow brought out the features of the divine plan, always active in history, but always little considered by men. That plan that loves to thwart the wisdom of the world through what is considered foolish by that very 'wisdom': "The Church of Africa will soon have to defend the truth of the priesthood and the unity of the faith. The Church of Africa is the voice of the poor, the simple and the small. It is up to her to proclaim the Word of God in the face of the Christians of the West who, because they are rich, believe themselves to be evolved, modern and wise in the wisdom of the world. But 'the foolishness of God is wiser than men' (1 Cor 1:25)".

**At the next Synod, it will be especially up to the representatives of the Church of Africa**

to make their voices heard; in the knowledge that it will be most likely that "despite promises to listen and respect them, their warnings will not be heeded, as we already see today". That the Synod will be 'instrumentalised by those who, under cover of listening to one another and 'conversation in the Spirit', serve a worldly reform agenda' is a real danger. Cardinal Sarah's words.