

NOTES FOR CARDINALS/8

Dubia, gays, China, corruption: 7 priorities for the new Pope

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**Luisella
Scrosati**



*In view of the forthcoming conclave, we are publishing a series of in-depth articles inspired by the document signed by **Demos II** (an anonymous cardinal), which sets out the priorities for the next conclave in order to remedy the confusion and crisis created by Francis' pontificate.*

Now that Francis' pontificate is over, the processes he has set in motion, with actions, decisions and gestures that have effectively opened new Overton windows or led to the partial realisation of those already open, are far from being shipwrecked. The purpose of this concluding article is to quickly recall the urgent "renovation and maintenance work" that must be undertaken as soon as possible to repair the scandals against the faith and the credibility of the Church that have been fuelled during this last pontificate.

1. First of all, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith - once purged of people who are clearly not up to the task and whose theological formation is more than questionable - must clarify the drift towards Communion for remarried divorcees, restoring the correct discipline: it is not possible for people who continue to live more uxorio to receive sacramental absolution and access to Holy Communion.

One way forward could be to finally respond to the famous dubia of 19 September 2016, giving an authentic interpretation of the post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Lætitia* and correcting Pope Francis' letter of 5 September 2016 to Monsignor Sergio Alfredo Fenoy. Another intervention will have to focus on correcting the new wording of n. 2267 of the Catechism of the Catholic Church on the death penalty, which seems to be in clear contradiction with the traditional teaching on the subject.

2. It is urgent to revoke the declaration *Fiducia supplicans*, as well as the press release of 4 January 2024, signed by Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández and Monsignor Armando Matteo. The document, due to the absurdity and unacceptability of its statements, and the subsequent clarification, which was even worse than the Declaration, have caused a deep division within the Church, with Episcopal Conferences and even an entire continent refusing to apply them in their areas of competence. In no way can couples living in relationships contrary to God's law receive any form of blessing from the Lord.

3. A document should be published that brings together the best of the work of the various commissions that have been set up over the years to study the question of women's ordination to the diaconate, and that clearly and definitively affirms the impossibility of ordaining women to the diaconate and to the priesthood.

4. The hierarchical order of the Church should be restored by giving the right to vote in General Synods to Bishops alone (and to all other members, provided they belong at least to the presbyteral order). The same should apply to local synods. The bishops' authority should be restored in its fullness, as well as the importance of the episcopate. The new Pontiff will have to deal with the criteria for the selection of new Bishops and their effective application; the Church, especially in the last decade, has seen the appointment to the episcopate of people who are totally unworthy of the Order they have received and the mission entrusted to them, without the slightest canonical competence, with an approximate knowledge of doctrine, eager for novelty rather than solidity, and not infrequently with a moral profile that has proved to be somewhat questionable, if not downright unacceptable.

It also seems more than appropriate to take measures to prohibit the access of lay people to positions of responsibility in the Church which, by their very nature, must be reserved for those who have received the sacred orders of the episcopate or presbyterate, or who are members of the College of Cardinals, as in the case of the presidency of the dicasteries of the Roman Curia.

5. The agreement between China and the Holy See, recently renewed for another four years (until 2028), sought by Cardinal Pietro Parolin (and for which the mediation of the former Cardinal Theodore Edgar McCarrick was decisive), the terms of which have not been made public, must be reviewed. A compromise that confirms the current situation is unacceptable, in which the Chinese government has the power to change the Catechism of the Catholic Church, to prohibit the Christian initiation of children and young people, to impose the display of images of Xi Jinping in churches, to choose bishops, with the Holy See humiliated by having to "approve" bishops already arbitrarily chosen by the regime, and even to create dioceses.

6. The Church must recover its missionary dynamism, aware that it has the right and the duty to bring the truth of the Gospel and the grace of the sacraments everywhere. The theme of inculturation deserves special attention. It is a pastorally important theme, but in its name the Vatican has even organised a pagan celebration with clear ideological connotations in honour of the pagan Inca 'deity' known as

Pachamama. Inculturation cannot be conceived and realised as a generous concession to the idols of pagan religions; it is the capacity of the Gospel to animate a culture, to purify it of what is incompatible with the truth about God and man, and to bring it to the fullness of its potential through the slow and progressive work of grace. Inculturation is and must be the evangelisation of cultures, not a metamorphosis of the Gospel and the liturgy of the Church which, after a superficial "coating" of Christianity, takes on the characteristics of paganism. In this regard, great attention must be paid to the final phase of the implementation of the "Amazon Rite".

7. The Church has a huge problem with pastors who are corrupt to the core. The Rupnik case, with all the cover-ups that have silenced the complaints and pain of the victims for decades, remains in the spotlight, not to mention other prelates still in positions of great responsibility with serious skeletons in their closets. Even what has emerged in the last few hours regarding alleged letters written by Pope Francis, signed only with his first initial, and only coming to light after his death, is proof of how dense is the web of corruption woven by many prelates, including cardinals considered "papabile".

Beyond all the considerations outlined in these articles, the great challenge facing the new Pope is the same as that faced by his predecessors over the last two centuries: to respond to the growing secularisation that is penetrating the world and has invaded the Church. There is only one remedy for this process, which seems increasingly aggressive and unstoppable; a remedy that may seem modest compared to the great speeches we are hearing these days on the agenda of the new pontificate, full of synodality, inclusiveness, care for the "common home", openness to todos, todos, todos. The remedy is to allow God to act in His Church, to manifest Himself in His Church. This path requires each of us to return to our place as poor sinners who, every time we think we have to change the Church, to modernise it, to update it, we end up obscuring the presence of God.

Sooner or later we will have to admit that faith flourishes where God is given more space and where people accept not to exaggerate. To see this, it would be enough to visit shrines, especially Marian shrines, to get in touch with monasteries and religious houses that have not abandoned their habits and rules (perhaps after a forced restyling desired by the Dicastery for Consecrated Life, under the canonical direction of Cardinal Ghirlanda), to go to parishes where the liturgy is still celebrated with great decorum, where the catechism is not watered down, and where processions and pilgrimages are not banned as obscurantist relics. These are the realities where conversions take place, where families flourish, where new vocations are born, where

the roots are deep and solid enough to withstand the aridity of our times.