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NEW CONSULTANTS

Fernandez appoints progressive theologians to change Church teaching on morality

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The new Consultors of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith have been appointed, and lists predominantly progressive theologians. The backbone of the new Consultors is made up of theologians who have always contested John Paul II's encyclical *Veritatis splendor*; prepared and supported the novelties of *Amoris laetitia*; want to change what the Church says about marriage and sexuality; affirm that *Humanae vitae* is reformable; understand love in a broad sense and as a process that welcomes everyone, taking into account that some may be further ahead and others further behind, but no one can be excluded. They are perfectly in line with the synodal demands of the neo-Church, they talk a lot about conscience and discernment assigning to it the same importance that natural and divine law plays in moral life, they reject the concept of natural law thinking of it at most as a sedimentation of the many historically successive acts of discernment.

Some are historical figures of theological progressivism especially in moral theology, such as Aristide Fumagalli. Also mentioned is Maurizio Chiodi, who in 2022 in

an article published in a Dehonian journal had said that the teaching of *Humanae vitae* could be changed. Chiodi's name is very significant because it is closely connected with the events at the John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family Studies, where he moved to teach from Milan to Rome. It can be said that he is like the emblem of this operation by Pope Francis and **Bishop Vincenzo Paglia** (President of the Pontifical Academy for Life) aimed at definitively liquidating John Paul II's teaching on these topics, transforming at the root the physiognomy of the Institute he brought about and which bore his name.

Those who have been following events were certainly not surprised by Chiodi's appointment as Consultor of the Prefect Fernández's Dicastery. Then there are the others, from Pier Davide Guenzi, a moralist theologian who presides over the trade association, to **Antonio Staglioni** who instead presides over the Pontifical Academy of Theology, to Giacomo Canobbio who would like a democratic Church in the sense of political democracy, and even some historical glories such as Basilio Petrà. We do not intend to make a list, but it is clear that great care was taken in deciding who would be chosen. Moreover, it's possible to know in advance that a substantial number of the Consultors are for changing Church doctrine on contraception, on homosexuality, on marriage, on conjugal love, on the theology of the body, and for substantially changing Catholic morality in general. We know this because they have already done so and put it in writing.

Each of us, hearing the expression Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, imagines something that resembles the old Holy Office. Of course, everyone knows that it is no longer called that, nor is it even called a Congregation, but we presume that it has retained something to do with tradition and authority, something connected to the defence of doctrine, denouncing deviations, and warning the faithful against adulterations of the truth both in the field of natural law and revealed truth.

Take for example the life of this Dicastery during the pontificate of John Paul II and under the leadership of Cardinal Ratzinger. There were few direct condemnations compared to the past, but many official documents of clarification on sensitive issues were produced. In fact the faithful still think something like this: never mind the condemnations of theologians and publications that differ from doctrine, but at least the doctrinal clarifications should continue to be there. Now, however, this is no longer the case, and those who still think it is are mistaken. The sense of this former Congregation has been altered, it has now been transformed into a stimulus for theological research devoted to change.

Pope Francis had stated this in the personal letter sent to Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández

on the occasion of his appointment as Prefect of the Dicastery: it was necessary to avoid the 'immoral methods' of condemnation used in the past, no longer to pursue doctrinal errors but to promote theological research, to stimulate the charisma of theologians not according to a 'desk theology', to use all philosophies excluding none. No one, therefore, should expect a final word on a controversial issue from the Dicastery any more, rather the opposite: the recusal of certainties and the opening up of controversial issues. In fact, if we examine all the documents signed so far by Fernández (and by Francis) we see that they are intended to displace and no longer confirm, they are provocative and sometimes scandalous. The new Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith invites not to believe what it says but to dissent, and to do so it appoints as Consultors those who until yesterday were the theologians of dissent. It seems that the protests of the 1970s have risen to the Palace of the Holy Office and from there claim to be (contradictorily) normative.

We do not believe that the Consultors are not important. They are more important than the Members themselves, just as the theologians were more important than the Council Fathers at Vatican II. Of course, not all the Consultors, but those who know what happens behind closed doors, know that there are Consultors who are not consulted and those who are consulted. There is no doubt that the latter is the case with the group of progressive theologians who have just been appointed.