

CONFUSION

Gays in the seminary, pope eats his words

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By now it can't even be called a surprise. After the uproar caused by the remark about the 'atmosphere of faggotry' in seminaries and among priests, obviously, the gay lobby could not sit idly by. So first [a BBC report](#) broke on a young Sicilian gay man who claims he was subjected to reparative therapies resembling torture while in the seminary.

And then, above all, the letter to Pope Francis from the 'aspiring gay seminarian'

who complains of being rejected on account of his homosexuality despite feeling a strong calling to the priesthood. An email written on 28 May by 22-year-old Lorenzo Michele Noè Caruso, this is the young man's name, 'three pages in which he opened his heart to the Holy Father', explains *Il Messaggero*, which first reported the story. And with surprising timeliness, Lorenzo received a reply as early as 1 June: 'A handwritten card, scanned and attached to the email'. The content of the reply is first of all a denunciation of clericalism, evoked in the man's letter, and then goes to the point: 'Jesus calls everyone, everyone. Some think of the Church as a customs, and this is bad. The Church must be open to everyone. Brother, go ahead with your vocation'. Obviously the letter was immediately published to make it clear 'who the real Pope is, he is not the one they have made you believe'.

And yes, the question arises: who then is the real Pope? Because it is clear that there is no way to reconcile the 'faggotry' issue with this letter. It is true that 'go ahead with your vocation' could mean anything, but in this context it could only be read as a green light to enter the seminary (unless the Vatican Press Office intervenes again to rectify the statement).

But, the point is that the speech to the Italian bishops on 20 May was very clear: apart from the terminology used, the Pope's invitation to prevent candidates with homosexual tendencies from entering the seminary was not equivocal, even if **someone tried to make it such**. The *Daily Compass* has already pointed out that the speech to the Italian bishops seemed in blatant contradiction with what has been said and done in recent years to promote the LGBT agenda in the Church. And certainly confusion, ambiguity, duplicity are a characteristic of this pontificate.

But here we are clearly beyond that: the same case receiving two diametrically opposed responses is inconceivable. And let us also gloss over the seriousness of denying by hearsay the judgement of a seminary rector who must have assessed the candidate's requirements and considered him unsuitable, not necessarily only for homosexuality.

Returning to the main issue, however, one cannot evade the question: how is it possible to affirm one thing and also its opposite in the space of a week, and on such a delicate subject?

Perhaps someone will fantasise about the existence of two popes, or the falsification of the letter to the aspiring seminarian, or the interpretation of the speech to the Italian bishops. But keeping our feet on the ground, we can only think of two possibilities.

The first is that we should begin, with all possible respect, to ask ourselves some serious questions about the Pontiff's psychic stability. It is certainly not the first time that his attitudes and speeches have raised doubts, but so far Pope Francis has been able to enjoy the favour of the progressive press, which has always avoided pointing out contradictions or treading too lightly on slips. Nothing was to undermine the image of a 'revolutionary' pope turning the Church upside down, the narrative of a (good) pope fighting against the bad guys (the whole Church). But with advancing age it is normal that certain frailties become more pronounced and more difficult to hide. The problem in this case is primarily those around him, who cover up a situation that should be dealt with in another way, perhaps to take advantage of it.

The second assumption is that, regardless of what the pope really thinks about individual issues, he has to 'obey' a mandate he has received. We cannot make any inferences as to who and why, but that there is strong pressure from certain lobbies or groupings seems quite evident. The systematic promotion of blatantly pro-gay associations or prelates is a fact for all to see.

Just to give the latest example: only last week Pope Francis appointed two cardinals (José Tolentino de Mendonça and Marcello Semeraro) and Archbishop Bruno Forte, who are notoriously close to LGBT groups, as members of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith - which has jurisdiction on these issues. Tolentino de Mendonça, among other things, is a staunch supporter of the former nun Maria Teresa Forcades i Vila, famous for her 'queer theology'; Semeraro, currently prefect of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, as bishop of Albano had made his diocese the reference point for 'Catholic' LGBT groups; and Forte, already at the time of the first Synod on the Family (2014) had pushed for the recognition of same-sex unions.

Thus, even the clumsy comments on 'faggotry', which seemed aimed at putting a limit on certain tendencies in the clergy, is turning into its opposite, namely the strengthening of the pro-gay presence at the top of the Church and now also in seminaries.

In any case, whatever the issue - and let us not exclude apriori other hypotheses on this 'Francis against Francis' - the matter is very serious.