

INTERVIEW

## Persecution, gender, wokism, science and faith: Archbishop Cordileone speaks out

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ECCLESIA

03\_01\_2025



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When Archbishop Cordileone arrived in the Diocese of San Francisco in 2012, some commented on his appointment as "a bombshell by the Bay." *The New York Times* marked in particular the inappropriateness of his nomination to San Francisco "the city

which had helped give rise to the gay rights movement," here it noted, "this bishop doesn't quite fit in. "Guilty of defending the institution of marriage against any ideology that seeks to weaken or distort it, and of having revised, practically the day after his appointment, the contract for Catholic school teachers by including adherence to certain doctrinal points—namely those related to sexual morality, contraception, and the use of stem cells—in 2015, he became the subject of a petition asking the Pope to remove him. But the referendum was a flop.

**He also made headlines for launching a project** (trusted to the [Benedict XVI Institute](#)) to commemorate the martyrs of communism. And he gained international media attention two years ago when he declared that Nancy Pelosi—the Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives until 2023—would not be admitted to Holy Communion unless she renounced her pro-abortion stance. Just a few days ago, the former Speaker, a self-professed Catholic, stated in an interview with the *National Catholic Reporter* that she continues to receive Communion despite the ban imposed by the Archbishop of San Francisco.

**The *Daily Compass* interviewed the Archbishop** on some of the most significant events that have impacted Catholicism around the world during 2024.

**Monsignor Cordileone, the Paris 2024 Olympics marked a summer during which the message conveyed to the world was that Christianity must be done away with (see the blasphemous Last Supper and the decapitation of Marie Antoinette; the future is despotic (see the closing ceremony). Eminence, do today's ideologies have no rivals?**

The opening ceremony of the Olympics was nothing but blasphemous, as well as grotesque. The French Revolution beheaded Marie Antoinette and, to the applause of the crowd, many priests and nuns as well. Is this what the motto *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité* should represent? Is this the light of the Enlightenment? If the French Revolution taught us that opponents are executed, the American Revolution was different in that it saw the need for a robust religious freedom, seeing religion as helping to install virtue. The truth is that a society that seeks to erase the Judeo-Christian ethos loses the ability to correct its wrongs. Conscience is replaced with a desire to wield power, and that is what we are seeing today.

**The communist regime of Ortega in Nicaragua continues to stifle religious freedom, with priests and consecrated persons disappearing or being arrested. In your opinion, why does the Church no longer denounce communism or inform people about the dangers inherent in many Western political parties, which, though rarely using the name, are expressions of it?**

During the Second Vatican Council, it was decided not to explicitly condemn communism in the hope of building bridges. This approach has not worked. However, although the Church could speak more about the evils of communism, last year, Pope Francis, commenting on the 26-year prison sentence for Bishop Rolando, said, “It’s something beyond reality; it’s as if we were going back to the communist dictatorship of 1917 or the Hitlerian dictatorship of 1935.” That is quite a strong condemnation. When people say communism is a thing of the past, they should be cautious. Young people, in particular, are the most vulnerable to the alienating teachings of marxism.

**On the other side of the world there is Jimmy Lai, the Catholic hero of freedom. His explicit criticism of the communist regime is costing him a lifetime in prison. The Church has a secret agreement with the communist regime. Do you think it is bearing fruit?**

No one knows the details of the agreement, but it’s clear that there are significant challenges for the Church in China that need to be addressed. The Archdiocese of San Francisco is very active in supporting both Cardinal Zen and Jimmy Lai: we gather the faithful for holy hours of adoration dedicated specifically to them.

**And then there is Africa where several bishops denounce that the West avails itself of NGOs under humanitarian pretences which engage in activities that have little to do with charity and even promote abortion and LGBT rights. How do you judge these political and ideological pressures?**

I have personally heard these complaints in conversations with African bishops. The West must stop imposing ideologies for its selfish purposes. It’s abhorrent.

**What are the main threats to the Catholic Church in these times?**

I believe one of the greatest threats in today’s world is the so-called gender ideology. Recently, the Pope called it the “ugliest danger” of our time because it cancels out all differences that make humanity unique. I agree.

**Why?**

Men and women are different and at the same time complement each other. The body is composed of a whole series of systems that are complete unto themselves in that they obtain the ends for which they are designed—all except one, that is the reproductive system. To achieve its ends, it needs the reproductive system of the opposite sex. In this way, the image of God is reflected in the male-female life-giving complementarity that is the communion of persons, because God is a life-giving communion of persons—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The love between the Father and the Son sends forth the Holy Spirit to draw us into the communion of His love. So, to

wipe that out is to wipe out the image of God from the face of the earth.

### **But wasn't fatherhood already erased before gender ideology?**

Another great threat in these times is the decline of fatherhood and its consequences. For the past 50 years, social science studies have demonstrated this reality. We often hear community leaders speaking about "getting to the root of the problems" of homelessness, domestic abuse, drug addiction, poverty, and mass shootings, but we don't see them really wanting to get there. The problem is rebuilding fatherhood, which means rebuilding a healthy marriage culture. Studies show that the very presence of a father in the family makes all the difference.

### **What can be done?**

Many young men today are disconnected from their families and seduced by a culture that does not offer them a clear pathway to achieve a healthy masculine identity, one that is protective and productive. TV programs, video games, advertisements, movies, and other venues are littered with examples that portray men as either powerful villains or immature imbeciles, but not as loving fathers.

### **What is the Church's stand on this matter?**

The Pope, referring to the figure of Saint Joseph, spoke of spiritual fatherhood beyond merely being parents. I believe that, like Saint Joseph, men today are called to sacrifice lust to love, ambition to service, and strive to be the hero for the people in their lives. It also means serving and sacrificing in everyday ways, such as showing up for work, turning down a night with the boys to stay home with the family and turning off video games.

### **How can a man today embrace this change?**

The ordinary way a man can achieve this transformation is through the sacrament of marriage. Only the sacrament commits one to be faithful, protective, and nurturing to raise boys who can become men worthy of the name. In a society torn apart by family fragmentation, men are called to greater heroism.

### **What can be done for young people today who hear the overwhelming voice of woke ideology, among other things?**

I believe it is important, first of all, for young people not to fall into the myth that science conflicts with religion. Often, those who attack religion are the same ones who deny basic scientific realities, such as: what is a man? Who is a woman? When does human life begin? One of the most popular myths is that the Catholic Church rejects science based on the persecution of Galileo for abandoning the geocentric (earth-at-the-center) view of

the solar system for the heliocentric (sun-at-the-center) view, which was originated by Nicolaus Copernicus, an ordained cleric. The facts are quite different. Many scientific advances during Galileo's time were made by Catholic priest-scientists or resulted from Church funding. Nicolaus Copernicus, for example, dedicated his famous heliocentrism work, *On the Revolution of the Celestial Orbs*, to Pope Paul III. Why would Copernicus dedicate his work to the Pope if the Catholic Church is opposed to science?

**Good point.**

In Galileo's case, the problem was that he presented it as scientific fact when there was not yet enough evidence to move from theory to fact.

**The Church simply asked him to wait. That said, Catholicism has always produced scientific discoveries.**

Exactly. Many of the greatest scientists in history were Catholic, and among them, many were priests. A fellow bishop, Robert Barron, shared some examples from a long list of priest-scientists, asking: "Do you know Father Giovanni Battista Riccioli, the first to measure the speed of free-falling bodies? Father George Searle, a Pauline priest from the early 20th century who discovered six galaxies? Father Benedetto Castelli, a Benedictine monk who made important studies on hydraulics and magnetism; Father Francesco Grimaldi, a Jesuit priest who discovered the diffraction of light? Perhaps you know Father Gregor Mendel, the Augustinian monk who invented modern genetics, or Father Georges Lemaître, who formulated the Big Bang theory of cosmic origins?"

That is just a brief list of priest-scientists that should make people reflect. God is the author of science, and that is why science and religion are complementary and essential in the search for truth in this world. The real divide is not between science and religion; it's between science and politics. When science isn't convenient for a political goal then science is denied.