

PAPACY

Pope in a poncho, symbol of Bergolio's pontificate

ECCLESIA

14_04_2025



**Luisella
Scrosati**



The image of Jorge Mario Bergoglio in a wheelchair, wearing a white long-sleeved vest half covered by a striped poncho, his hair dishevelled and black trousers, is perhaps the most eloquent expression of how he - and his entourage - have understood the papacy, and the umpteenth, perhaps the last, blatant contrast with Benedict XVI.

The latter was aware that Joseph had to disappear so that the Lord could protect

his Church through Benedict. He had to be totally absorbed in his ministry, he had to serve this ministry; Ratzinger knew that the Pope no longer had a private life, and even after his resignation he wanted to emphasise that he would not return to a private life. The one chosen to be the successor of the Apostle Peter must "disappear" behind the white robe; his personal thoughts and particular sensitivities no longer count: he, more than any other baptised person, must allow himself to be absorbed by the thought of Christ.

This is how Ratzinger understood his episcopate and his vocation as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; he was no longer a simple theologian - who must also place himself at the service of Revelation and not dominate it - but the guardian of a doctrine that is not his own. And this is how he understood his priestly ministry, especially in its liturgical aspect: the priest is the servant of the mystery he celebrates; his individuality is buried under the sacred vestments so that the rite is preserved and transmitted in all its holiness and purity, without any contamination of personal taste. The way he bowed his head during the celebrations, the correctness of his gestures, the precision of the rubrics, the seriousness of everything, showed the whole world what it means to be a servant of God.

Francis has always done the opposite. He has used his papacy to promote his own ideas and to sideline those he perceives as opponents of his personal agenda. The "Church of Francis" expresses itself in the same way: the priestly and episcopal ministry is mostly experienced as a catwalk for self-promotion, a role of power to impose one's own desires. The liturgical sphere is no exception: no matter which church you go to, you will find the same Mass, with priests who pour their frustrations into the sacred rite and mould sacred places and rites in their own image and likeness.

There hasn't been a month since 13 March 2013 in which Francis hasn't wanted to bend the papacy to serve him and his ideas, sometimes explicitly, sometimes implicitly. And not only the papacy: justice, doctrine, the structure of the Church, everything has been transformed to serve the project and the person of Jorge Mario Bergoglio. This presentation of himself as a simple man in a wheelchair in the Vatican Basilica - whether it was his decision or not, it doesn't matter - is just the logical conclusion of one of the most narcissistic pontiffs in the history of the Church. Benedict XVI, perhaps wrongly, wanted to keep the white cassock until the end of his life, even after renouncing the Petrine ministry, in order to emphasise that he continued to be at the service of the Church, totally united to it; Francis wanted to abandon it while he was still Pope, showing how uncomfortable he was wearing the sign of total submission to God and the

Church.

Because the beginning and the end of authority in the Church is precisely this: total submission to God. And all the more so for the Successor of Peter, who must always remember that the faith he is called to confirm does not come from flesh and blood, and that it is precisely when humanity prevails that Peter deserves to be called "Satan" by the Lord (cf. Mt 16:13-23).

If there is a sovereignist in the world, it is the Pope", Gian Franco Svidercoschi - a well-known Vaticanist, certainly not suspected of 'backwardness' - said with great clarity when he was a guest of Giovanni Minoli on the popular Italian television programme *La Storia Siamo Noi* on 2 April. Under the guise of the Synodal Church, a degenerate stepchild of conciliar collegiality, Francis has created the most absolutist pontificate in history, trampling on cardinals and bishops as if they were nothing more than a footstool. Svidercoschi also destroys another myth, answering the question of whether Francis' pontificate has led to a more inclusive Church with a resounding no. And he adds, just to dot the i's and cross the t's, that "the Church of Francis has lost a lot, a lot, a lot of moral authority". A Church that is not only less inclusive, but also more divided: "There are supposed reforms or changes that he has made that have broken the Church... Whereas before there was a division at the top, now there is a division among the people of God".

But Svidercoschi really got to Francis when he delivered the epigrammatic verdict on the pontificate now in decline: "For $\frac{3}{4}$ of his pontificate, the absolute was missing. God was missing'. Not exactly a detail for the Vicar of Christ on earth. Strong words, but true. Francis' desire to be the centre of attention has ended up obscuring God and degrading the papacy, and this new stunt of appearing in public in his "pyjamas" is further confirmation of this, after the various good mornings and good evenings, the appearances on Fazio, the little jokes about nuns being spinsters and parents having children like rabbits.

We make a plea to the Cardinals: choose a man who will serve the Papacy and not a man who puts the papacy at his personal service.