



Boston Catholic Journal

Nihil autem nisi Jesu



Dedicated to Mary, Mother of God

www.boston-catholic-journal.com

Pope Francis Entertains Term Limits on Papacy



Abandoning the Children ... *twice*

The title *Pope* is from the Latin *papa*, which, in turn, is derived from the Greek *pappas*, or *Papa* — specifically (and *significantly*) a *child's* name for the more formal “father”. The Pope has always been understood as the *Father* to all Catholics.

This is especially significant to me (and countless others in America and elsewhere), for my father abandoned me and my brothers in our infancy. We have never seen him. We have never heard from him. Ever.

We grew up wondering what it was like to have a father, unclear of what a father did or was supposed to do. We had, in a word, no *example*. The only men we ever called “Father” were priests, and among them was one exalted, the priest of priests, called “the Holy *Father*”. All other fathers left ... but, surely, the *Holy* Father would never leave.

And then, in February 2013, the unimaginable happened: Pope Benedict XVI became the first pontiff to “resign” his sacred office in 600 years. This Father left ... too ...

While still reeling from the significance of what Benedict had done, the next blow to the children came quickly on 4 July (*Independence* Day! ... from who? The children?) 2015 when our present Pope Francis stunningly told Catholics that,

“There are no life-time leaders in the Church” and what is more, that, “There should be a time limit to positions in the Church, which in reality are positions of service.”

Furthermore, in speaking with the Mexican television station *Televisa* in March 2014 Francis ominously suggests, that what Pope “Emeritus” Benedict did,

“should not be considered an exception, but an institution”.

This would clearly be a rupture in the historical continuity of the Church, and open the papacy itself to the sort of machinations that, according to disgraced Cardinal Danneels of Belgian, the leader of the notorious St. Gallen “Mafia-Club” — which sought to undermine Pope Benedict's election and subsequently force him from the seat of Peter in order to elect “*their* man” (Bergoglio, now Pope Francis) — resulted in the nomination of the same Bergoglio to further their own disgraceful agenda in the Church.

And *Francis repaid the favor* — by respectively inviting the two top members of the St. Gallen Club, Walter Kasper — a vociferous dissident — as *number one*, and Danneels — *retired* — as *number two*, to the Synod on the Family! Remember that Danneels *openly* boasted of accomplishing *his* end by subterfuge via what had been referred to as “*Team Bergoglio*” in the St. Gallen Group.

This is openly at odds with what Francis proclaims:

“Let's be clear. The only one who cannot be substituted in the Church is the Holy Spirit.”

This is true — despite the types of conspiracies that presume to put in place those whom the Holy Ghost Himself ultimately chooses, *to ends known only to God*. However, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity has certainly been given short shrift in light of the backroom dealings of disaffected cardinals who presume to steer the Church *themselves, apart from any divine influence*. It is, after all, apparently a matter of "service" ... to a flagrantly dissident agenda contrary to established Church teaching and the Gospel itself.

"Service" ... not Holy Example

Is *that* a father's sole, or even preeminent role: to be "*of service*" to his children ... and that, *only* for a period of time ... *of his own choosing*? Are there "term limits" for fatherhood? Is that even a conceivable notion? Not to me, a father of four. I had already learned the consequences of "term-limits" to fatherhood first-hand ... and they were not pretty. This is understanding fatherhood as a "policy" and not a "person". I am not a policy to my children. Politicians have policies. Bureaucracies have policies. Corporations have policies. And policies change. But not fatherhood.

Moreover, does this, then, apply to *all* fathers? Does it apply to priests? To Religious? Of course their *vows* (in the case of Religious) and *promises* (in the case of diocesan priests), are binding. Priesthood confers an eternal character on the soul of the priest. This cannot be eradicated, no matter what the priest does. And the Pope is a priest and will always remain one, even if he chooses to "resign" as the Vicar of Jesus Christ on Earth. But even the simplest priest is called "Father".

Politicians are supposed to be "of service" to their constituents. Police, firefighters, the military (*servicemen*)... even the numerous Fraternal Organizations, the Rotary, the Elks, etc. are supposed to be "of service" to the nation or the community. Is that the level of the spiritual leadership and episcopal dignity to which the Church is reduced: simply that of "service" to the people. Do not even prostitutes provide a "service"?

What cuts most is that it applies to two *presently living* popes who many children, and even adults see —or for the past 2000 years *had* seen — as surrogate fathers: we find Pope Francis's recent openness to stepping down as a father and imposing term limits on it, and most sadly, Pope Benedict's having done so. Pope Benedict in a stunning and incomprehensible move, simply resigned his fatherhood — and now, following suit, his successor holds this sword of Damocles over the head of the same children whose spiritual father had just left them. Remarkably, for Francis it is, apparently, a commendable precedent: "I may stay or I, *too*, may go."

What does this tell children in their littleness who depend on the father for guidance ... and most importantly *for example*? That *the children* are not important in this relationship. "*I am*." And in a twist of Jesus words ("*exemplum enim dedi vobis*" — "*I have given you an example*." St. John 13.15) it implies to the children, "As I have done, you may, too." When the going gets tough or the vocation inconvenient, just leave ...

It is not worthy of a father

Can a father of children simply resign his fatherhood or become a “father-emeritus” — the equivalent of an absentee father — and leave his children to the care of another?

Whatever his shortcomings, Pope John Paul II *stayed ... refused to walk out the door ...* even while excruciatingly debilitated. Who can forget the photographs of Pope John Paul II in his final weeks and days? Yet he did not jump ship. He did not leave the children because he was overwhelmed, or ill, or because the pressure was too great ... or because it would have been convenient. Why? Because *no father does!*

Abandoning the children — *for whatever claimed reason* — is *never* right. Let me repeat that: *Never*. A father does not abandon his children ... no matter what ... he does not (as so many fatherless children in America have come to realize) simply “resign” his responsibility as father. *He cannot! Must not!* He is their father! He cannot *at will* relegate or simply pass on that responsibility to another. They were given to *him!* Not to some other to come.

How many must come to the sad conclusion that their Father in Heaven is the only Father Who will never leave them — for every other father-figure has proven false ...

