



Boston Catholic Journal



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The Iron Fist of Francis



The Pope who Lavishes Mercy on all ... but Critics of His Radical Agenda

What happens when you disagree with Pope Francis — especially about things historically engraved in the Church and clearly enunciated in the Gospels? We present you with a vignette. On the 31st of July 2016 **Father Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap.** — a learned advisor to the *US Bishops Advisor Committee* — presented Francis with the following letter which must first be read in the context that

prompted him to write it: <http://www.catholicerald.co.uk/news/2017/11/01/us-theologian-tells-pope-many-are-losing-confidence-in-you/>

July 31, 2017

Feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola

Your Holiness,

I write this letter with love for the Church and sincere respect for your office. You are the Vicar of Christ on earth, the shepherd of his flock, the successor to St. Peter and so the rock upon which Christ will build his Church. All Catholics, clergy and laity alike, are to look to you with filial loyalty and obedience grounded in truth. The Church turns to you in a spirit of faith, with the hope that you will guide her in love.

Yet, Your Holiness, **a chronic confusion seems to mark your pontificate. The light of faith, hope, and love is not absent, but too often it is obscured by the ambiguity of your words and actions.** This fosters within the faithful a growing unease. It compromises their capacity for love, joy and peace. Allow me to offer a few brief examples.

First there is the disputed Chapter 8 of *Amoris Laetitia*. I need not share my own concerns about its content. Others, not only theologians, but also cardinals and bishops, have already done that. The main source of concern is **the manner of your teaching.** In *Amoris Laetitia*, **your guidance at times seems intentionally ambiguous, thus inviting both a traditional interpretation of Catholic teaching on marriage and divorce as well as one that might imply a change in that teaching.** As you wisely note, pastors should accompany and encourage persons in irregular marriages; but ambiguity persists about what that “accompaniment” actually means. **To teach with such a seemingly intentional lack of clarity inevitably risks sinning against the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth. The Holy Spirit is given to the Church, and particularly to yourself, to dispel error, not to foster it.** Moreover, only where there is truth can there be authentic love, for truth is the light that sets women and men free from the blindness of sin, a darkness that kills the life of the soul. Yet **you seem to censor and even mock those who interpret Chapter 8 of Amoris Laetitia in accord with Church tradition as Pharisaic stone-throwers who embody a merciless rigorism. This kind of calumny is alien to the nature of the Petrine ministry.** Some of your advisors regrettably seem to encourage, particularly during the two past synods, all persons, especially bishops, to speak their mind and not be fearful of what the pope may think. But **have you noticed that the majority of bishops throughout the world are remarkably silent? Why is this?**

Bishops are quick learners, and what many have learned from your pontificate is not that you are open to criticism, but that you resent it. Many bishops are silent because they desire to be loyal to you, and so they do not express – at least publicly; privately is another matter – the concerns that your pontificate raises. **Many fear that if they speak their mind, they will be marginalized or worse.**

I have often asked myself: “Why has Jesus let all of this happen?” The only answer that comes to mind is that **Jesus wants to manifest just how weak is the faith of many within the Church, even among too many of her bishops. Ironically, your pontificate has given those who hold harmful theological and pastoral views the license and confidence to come into the light and expose their previously hidden darkness.** In recognizing this darkness, the Church will humbly need to renew herself, and so continue to grow in holiness.

Holy Father, I pray for you constantly and will continue to do so. May the Holy Spirit lead you to the light of truth and the life of love so that you can dispel the darkness that now hides the beauty of Jesus’ Church.

Sincerely in Christ,

Thomas G. Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap.

The Aftermath embodies Francis’s typically iron-fisted, autocratic, and paranoid response to *any* criticism of him or what he utters — even if it is contrary to the teaching of the Church:

The Pope’s Response:

The US bishops’ conference has announced that Fr Thomas Weinandy has resigned (sic) as an advisor to their Committee on Doctrine **after he published a letter strongly critical of Pope Francis.**

“After speaking with the General Secretary of the Conference today, Father Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M., Cap., has resigned, effective immediately, from his position as

consultant to the USCCB Committee on Doctrine,” the bishops said in a statement.

“The work of the committee is done in support of, and in affective collegiality with, the Holy Father and the Church in the United States,” they added. “Our prayers go with Father Weinandy as **his service to the committee comes to a close.**”

In a separate statement, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo of Galveston-Houston, president of the US bishops’ conference, appeared to suggest that **Fr Weinandy’s letter was not sufficiently charitable towards the Pope.**

“As bishops, we recognize the need for honest and humble discussions around theological and pastoral issues. We must always keep in mind St Ignatius of Loyola’s ‘presupposition’ to his Spiritual Exercises: ...that it should be presumed that every good Christian ought to be more eager to put a good interpretation on a neighbor’s statement than to condemn it.”

“This presupposition should be afforded all the more to the teaching of Our Holy Father,” the cardinal added.

The announcement came the same day that **Fr Weinandy published his letter saying many Catholics are losing confidence in Francis’s pontificate.**

He accused the Pope of fostering a “growing unease” and “chronic confusion” through guidance that seems “intentionally ambiguous”, especially regarding *Amoris Laetitia*.

He also said Pope Francis was promoting bishops who “seem not merely open to those who hold views counter to Christian belief, but who support and even defend them.”

<http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2017/11/02/us-bishops-part-ways-with-priest-who-criticised-pope-francis/>

This is the typical response of Francis to *any* criticism of every type and in every form: “fire him”, “demote him”, “belittle him”, “banish him”, “silence him”, “suppress him”, “punish him”, “remove him from any position of influence” (<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/open-persecution-of-faithful-catholics-now-underway-in-francis-pontifi>). No famous “*mercy*” here. No vaunted “*dialogue*” with informed (largely Traditional) Catholics that he extends to every religious group *outside* the Church. Lutheran female Archbishop of the

Church of Sweden (which accepts homosexuality, abortion, contraception, and female priestesses) Antje Jackelén is warmly greeted by Francis — Traditional Catholics are angrily and dismissively relegated to outer darkness. “But”, you say, “the *pope* did not force Father Weinandy’s resignation. The *US bishops* did!” Right. And the moon is made of green cheese.

Much more of this **rancorous intolerance toward those *in his own House*** that he may abolish all distinctions with those without — and who will not enter — and which is increasingly evident in Francis's papacy remains to unfold, we fear, to the great detriment of the Church and to the salvation of souls — for which She exists.

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