

OPEN LETTER OF PROFESSOR JOSEF SEIFERT TO CARDINALS AND BISHOPS

April 30 Feast of St. Catherine of Siena

Eminences, Revered Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of the Catholic Church,

I wrote the following letter two and a half years ago to a cardinal with whom I have been on friendly terms for years and who, shortly before that, like many other bishops and cardinals, said in an interview, which was also published, that criticism of Pope Francis is a great evil that should be eradicated. The cardinal addressed answered my letter extremely affectionately, but to my knowledge no action has been taken.

In view of the death of Pope Benedict XVI and the news that Pope Francis has already signed a letter of resignation from his office to take effect in the event of a significant deterioration in his health, and therefore in view of a conclave that may soon be convened, I think that the contents of this letter concern all cardinals and also archbishops and bishops. Therefore, I address this letter, from which I have removed all signs as to which Cardinal it was originally written, as an open letter to all Cardinals, indeed to all who bear responsibility in various degrees in the Church. May the Holy Spirit grant that all the contents of this letter, which correspond to the truth and God's will, may be fruitful for the good of St. Church and many souls, and that not a word in it may harm the Church, the Bride of Christ. I choose the feast of St. Catherine of Siena for its publication because she uniquely combined the most intimate reverence for the Pope as Vicar of Christ on earth with an unsparing criticism of two very different Popes. Now to the text of the letter, which each of you may read as addressed personally to him.

Eminence, Reverend Cardinal ...

I must confess that I am concerned and saddened by a statement allegedly coming from you about criticism of Pope Francis. You said in an interview, if the media are to be trusted, that criticisms of the Pope are a "decidedly negative phenomenon that should be eradicated as soon as possible" and you stress that the Pope is "the Pope and guarantor of the Catholic faith".

How can you say that criticism of the pope is an evil? Didn't the apostle Paul already criticize the first pope Peter strongly and publicly? Did not St. Catherine of Siena criticize two popes even more harshly?

You don't seem to understand why many Catholics can criticize Pope Francis, even though he is "the Pope". Conversely, I don't understand how, to all appearances, all the cardinals except the four Dubia cardinals remain silent and do not ask critical questions of the pope. For there is much that Pope Francis says and does that should elicit not only critical questions but also loving criticism. Let us remember the Declaration on the Fraternity of All People signed by Pope Francis together with Grand Imam Ahmad Mohammad Al-Tayyeb, which states:

"The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, ethnicity and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings." (Even more annoying is the English version: "The pluralism and the diversity of religions, color, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings.")

Wouldn't it be a heresy and a terrible confusion to claim that God - just as he willed the difference of the two sexes - i.e. with his positive will - also directly willed the difference of religions and thus all idolatry and heresies? Yes, isn't the Abu Dhabi Declaration far worse than heresy, namely apostasy? How can God, with His positive creative will, have wanted religions that reject Jesus' divinity, deny the Most Holy Trinity, reject baptism and all sacraments and the priesthood? Or how could He even have wanted polytheism or the cult of the idol Baal or Pachamama? Doesn't this totally contradict the message of the prophet Elijah and all other prophets and the words of Jesus?

Shouldn't all of you cardinals and bishops speak your firm "*non possumus*" when Francis demands that this "document" be the basis for the formation of priests in all seminaries and theological faculties?

God cannot have ever directly and positively willed or approved even heretical Christian confessions, rather than merely allowing them, since these deny pillars of the biblical and Catholic faith such as the biblical teaching that our eternal salvation is not wrought by God's grace alone, but requires our free cooperation and good works. How then can he, with his direct and positive will, want religions that reject the whole foundation of the Christian faith and Christ himself?

True as it is in itself "that the pope is the pope and guarantor of the faith," this statement cannot be applied to a pope who signed the Abu Dhabi Declaration and spread it around the world, and who has said and done many other things contrary to the consistent teaching of the Church.

His statement that one should promote civil alliances/civil unions of homosexuals directly contradicts the clear statements of the Church's Magisterium (cf. the considerations on the drafts of a legal recognition of cohabitation between homosexual persons of June 3, 2003, published under the pontificate of St. Pope John Paul II), but above all the Holy Scripture and the entire Church tradition! Shouldn't all of you Cardinals, as Bishop Athanasius Schneider did wonderfully, perform a true act of love for the Pope and express this publicly and as clearly as he did, with all due clarity?

Pope Francis - I say this with a bleeding heart - is not the "guarantor of the faith", but is constantly increasingly destroying the foundations of faith and morals with this and many other statements and pronouncements. As far as I know, there has never been a Pope in the history of the Church who has asserted similar monstrosities? How should I answer a dear and deeply believing Lutheran friend, for whose conversion I have been praying for years, when he writes to me that with this Abu Dhabi Declaration the Catholic Church has left the soil of Christianity?

Is it not clear that a next Pope must condemn as apostate this Abu Dhabi teaching that Francis sends to all seminaries of priests and Catholic faculties? How can the Church justify anathematizing Pope Honorius for an infinitely lesser deviation from the Faith and condemning him if she does not condemn such outrageous statements? Wouldn't all the cardinals have to write to the Pope like one man and ask him to withdraw this apostatic declaration?

Must you cardinals not tremble before the moment when Christ will ask you how you could fulfill Jesus' solemn missionary mandate if you did not protest against the Abu Dhabi Declaration, which says the diametrical opposite of Jesus' words?

"Last of all, as the eleven sat at meat, he manifested himself ... And he said unto them: Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:14).

How could you all also remain silent on the more than justified *dubia* of Cardinal Caffarra - who still called me on the eve of his death and to whom I had to promise to continue defending the truth - and of the other three cardinals after *Amoris Laetitia*, or even criticize these *dubia*? Of the cardinals, only the four *dubia* cardinals have formulated polite questions about the moral-theological heresy in *Amoris Laetitia* of denying implicit intrinsically bad actions. The splendor of the good and the existence always and everywhere (*ut in omnibus*) of bad acts has been recognized as a cornerstone of all ethics since Socrates and was taught by St. Pope John Paul II as the immovable ground of ethics and Church moral teachings.

Should not all the Cardinals have agreed with Cardinal Carlo Caffarra and the other three *Dubia* Cardinals and demanded this clarification, thereby helping the Pope to proclaim the truth? Should not all the cardinals have stood up like one man and supported the *fraterna correctio* that Cardinal Burke announced but never carried out?

Just because the announcement of Cardinal Burke that the 4 cardinals will practice a "*correctio fraterna*" on the pope in case of the pope's silence on this central moral question, but this *fraterna correctio* has not been done now for years neither on the part of Cardinal Burke nor on the part of other cardinals, a few laymen and priests have criticized this perversion of doctrine in various declarations and have, so to speak, stepped into the breach for you cardinals to defend the truth and the depositum fidei, as laymen have already done in the face of the Arian heresy, which Pope Liberius and the majority of the bishops were soft on, along with St. Athanasius and other few still faithful cardinals. Athanasius and other few bishops who remained faithful.

But instead of us *miseri laici* (us miserable laity), as (then still Monsignor) Carlo Caffarra called me in affectionate humor (with a true core), is it not incumbent on you, cardinals who should be ready to give their blood for the true faith, to raise your voice against the heresies of which critics of the Pope have proved that Pope Francis has committed a number of them or at least suggested them? Instead of a prohibition against criticizing statements of the Pope, is there not rather a commandment of fraternal or filial rebuke?

And now you raise your voice not for *defensio fidei*, but to silence these critics, indeed to want to "eradicate" all criticism?

Wouldn't all cardinals have to protest in many other cases, e.g. when the Pope arbitrarily introduces a theologically and ecclesiastically wrong change into the Catholic Catechism, which contradicts the clear words of God in the Holy Scripture (already in the Book of Genesis) and many doctrinal statements of popes about the death penalty formulated in uninterrupted tradition and also historical facts, or when - against many forceful words of Jesus and dogmas of the Catholic Church - he talks about empty hell or even, like Jehovah's Witnesses, claims that the souls of incurable sinners do not go to hell but are destroyed?

Dear friend, this scenario of a Pope who denied the existence of the one true Church and the faith in *unam sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam ecclesiam*, if not explicitly then certainly implicitly in Abu Dhabi, and behaves as lord over the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Church, and so many silent Cardinals, is an annoyance to many believers like me, endangers our faith, and causes immeasurable harm to the Church and souls.

I ask you, however, to raise your voice for the unvarnished truth and also to move other cardinals to speak the truth opportune-importune, even if this might reveal the terrible crisis and schism in the Church in the midst of which we find ourselves and even if some *pusillae animae* might mistakenly see in it a *scandalum*.

This is not a cultural issue of a Latin American pope. It is not a question of taste, style or temperament. No, it is the yes or no to Christ who told us to preach the Gospel to all people and nations; whoever believes in him will be saved, but whoever does not believe in him will be condemned? Can the Pope de facto abrogate this missionary mandate through the Abu Dhabi Declaration?

Can he appoint and even personally honor and award moral theologians who contradict the core of biblical and Church moral teaching and the encyclicals *Humanae Vitae*, *Evangelium Vitae* and *Veritatis Splendor* to the Pontifical Academy for Life? How can you cardinals (and especially you, who for many years worked under St. Pope John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI served the Church so faithfully) remain silent on this and many other "desolations of the sanctuary" instead of doing much more than the critical laity and theologians to do everything possible to proclaim those many truths of the faith that the Pope openly or tacitly contradicts by words and also deeds (such as the celebration of the Reformation, the erection of the statue of Luther in the Vatican, the stamp celebrating the Reformation, the Pacha Mama cult in the Vatican Gardens and St. Peter's Basilica, etc.), and to implore him to find the sure compass of his doctrine only in the truth of the Holy Scripture and the unchanging dogmas of the Church, and not to allow himself to change even one iota of them, let alone the substance of the faith?

In deep sorrow for the many wounds of the Church, the Bride of Christ, and in love for Jesus and for the Church founded by Him on the rock of Peter.

In Christ
Your Joseph

P.S.: I hope from the depths of my soul for your response in word and deed, which would be an act of love for Jesus, for Mary, for the Most Holy Trinity, for the Church, for the soul of the Pope and for many other souls. With St. John Paul I call out to you: coraggio! Fight courageously and without reserve for the truth, for Christ and the Church, and for the souls, including those of Pope Francis, and for the unity of all Christians, which is only possible in the truth!

Deeply united to You in Christ,
Your Joseph

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