



A journal for restless minds

## TRUTH IS NOT RELATIVE

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Colloquī is a Deacon's Corner weekly journal. Its mission and purpose: to encourage serious discussion, to promote reasoned debate, and to provide serious content for those who hope to find their own pathway to God.

Each week Colloquī will contain articles on theology, philosophy, faith, religion, Catholicism, and much more.

Be forewarned! Articles may and often will contain fuel for controversy, but always with the express intent to seek the Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help us God.

## Truth Is Not Relative

*Half-truths are heresy*

Luke is alone among all New Testament writers in associating the preaching of John the Baptist with a call from God: *"the word of God came to John, the son of Zechari'ah in the wilderness"* (Luke 3:2), referring to the words of the prophet Isaiah, *"A voice cries out: In the desert prepare the way of the Lord! Make straight in the wasteland a highway for our God!"* (Isaiah 40:3).

Luke alone equates John to the long line of prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the twelve minor prophets included in Hebrew Scripture) sent by God to his people Israel. This is significant, especially since a prophet is someone who is regarded as an inspired teacher or proclaimer of the will of God. A true prophet speaks the Word of God, and God's Word is Truth. A false prophet speaks in half-truths and sugar-coated equivocations.

While we rarely acknowledge or recognize prophets subsequent to John the Baptist, prophets (both true and false) have continued to come among us throughout the ensuing millennia. In a sense, each of us is a prophet, called by Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh, to preach the gospel by the manner in which we live our lives. And then there are those, who have more clearly been called by God to be heralds of his Word, preaching to all the world, to be another voice crying out in the desert.



Prophets are seldom appreciated, often reviled and ridiculed, despised and even hated, for the message they proclaim is seldom welcome or easy to the ear. John preached *"a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins"* (Luke 3:3), certainly not what most people were clamoring to hear.

How many of us hunger for *"repentance?"* How often do we hunger for the Sacrament of Reconciliation? If

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## Ten Minutes To Give

*Creating an attitude of gratitude*

**E**ach year, when we arrive at the period of time we call Lent, I am reminded of the refrain from a song by the rock band Chicago, *"Does anybody really know what time it is? Does anybody really care? If so, I can't imagine why. We've all got time enough to cry."*

Lent, it seems to me, always conjures up similar questions, even engendering much the same apathetic responses. Who cares? What's the big deal? What is Lent, anyway?

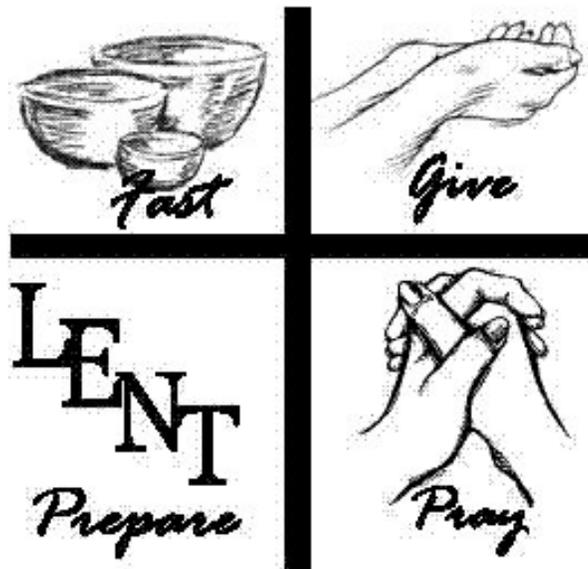
Most often, Lent is thought to be a time for *"giving up,"* of depriving yourself of something you enjoy, most often such things as desserts, candy, alcohol, heavy meals or ... choose your favorite.

But, while *"giving up"* something good is ... well good ... does *"giving up"* really change anyone, help anyone, or improve anyone's life?

Isn't *"giving up"* something for Lent just another way of getting a second chance to make good on those New Year's resolutions you managed to keep for what: a day, or two, or three? Or, for those who might be thinking of *"giving up"* Facebook for Lent, do you really believe that that is on par with being nailed to a cross? How does *"giving up"* stuff bring us closer to God? How could *"giving up"* candy or alcohol possibly compare to what Jesus gave up for all of us?

Lent is meant to be a time of reflection, a time to refocus our lives, to look outside ourselves, to search for and make time of fasting, almsgiving, and prayer.

So, what if, instead of giving up, we look at Lent as a marvelous opportunity to change our attitude to one of gratitude. What if we changed our view of Lent and call it a *"Retreat,"* a time for reflection and prayer, a time to be completely immersed in the loving Presence of God?



**T**hat is not to suggest that we should spend every moment of Lent hidden away in a retreat center, but what about taking a few minutes out of each day to give your life over to God in gratitude for all you have received?

For instance, consider setting aside just ten minutes each day in silent reflection and prayer, creating space within you for God.

And ask yourself: how much do I pray? More specifically, do you pray at all? I have often posed this question to

young adults and far too often, their response has been a resounding *"no."* We find ourselves too busy, too distracted, or too involved in the world around us to pray. As Henri Nouwen once observed, *"We want to be great saints, but we also don't want to miss out on all the sensations that sinners experience."*

**L**ong ago, the Greek philosopher Aristotle observed that *"Two contraries cannot co-exist inside the same subject."* In other words, something can't be light and dark at the same time. While this may be true in most cases, within our souls contraries can coexist. Within each of us, light and darkness, sincerity and hypocrisy, selflessness and selfishness, virtue and vice, grace and sin, saint and sinner can and often do coexist.

Our souls are a battleground where selflessness and selfishness, virtue and sin, vie for dominance. It is a war that requires constant vigilance and effort to overcome the forces of evil. If we aren't diligent eventually one or the other will begin to dominate and overcome the other.

What weapons do we have to combat the evil within us? Prayer, regular, frequent prayer. If we make prayer a constant in our lives eventually sincerity will overcome insincerity, selflessness will overcome selfishness, and grace will eliminate sin. Prayer will keep our eyes open to our own sin. Prayer brings a genuine presence of God into our lives which cannot co-

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exist with selfishness, sin, rationalization, self-delusion, and hypocrisy.

**W**e have a choice to either stop praying or stop sinning; we cannot long live with both. We cannot always avoid temptation nor are we capable of never falling into sin. There are some things which are beyond our ability. But there is something that we can control, something beyond the wild horses of emotion and temptation.

We are beset by many things, but we can willfully, deliberately, with discipline and resolve, choose to regularly pray. We can make prayer a normal and necessary part of our lives. We can commit ourselves to the habit of daily prayer. If and when we do, irrespective of the fact that we may have to work through long periods of dryness and boredom, over time regular prayer will empower us to break bad habits, strengthen our ability to resist temptation, and avoid the occasions to sin.

Two contraries cannot co-exist inside the same subject. Eventually we will either stop praying or we will give up our sin and rationalization. Nobody can genuinely pray on a regular basis and remain blind to their sinfulness.

Our task then is to develop the habit of prayer. What comes into our lives through prayer, often more imperceptible than visible, will eventually weed out ("cauterize", in John of the Cross' words) both our sin and our rationalizations about it.

This is akin to what Ronald Knox once taught about the Eucharist. For

him, the Eucharist was the singular, vital, sustaining ritual within Christian life. Why? Because Knox believed that, as Christians, we have never really lived up to what Christ asks of us. We have never really loved our enemies, turned the other cheek, blessed those who cursed us, lived fully just lives, or forgiven those who hurt us. But we have been, he submits, faithful to Christ in one major way: We have been faithful in celebrating the Eucharist, to that one command.

Just before he left us, Jesus gave us the Eucharist and asked us to continue celebrating it until he returned. For two thousand years, awaiting that return, we've been faithful in doing that, no matter how unfaithful we have been in other ways. We have continued to celebrate the Eucharist and, in the end, more than anything else, that has been the one thing that has called us back, again and again, to fidelity.

**T**he habit of prayer will do the same. Since two contraries cannot co-exist inside the same subject, eventually either we will stop praying or we will stop sinning and rationalizing. The greatest moral danger we will ever face will be if and when we stop praying!

Amen.

Homily for the  
The First Sunday of Lent (B)  
Genesis 9:8-15  
1 Peter 3:18-22  
Mark 1:12-15

## Deacon's Diner

*Food for a restless mind*

**F**or those restless minds that hunger and thirst for more. Each week this space will offer a menu of interesting and provocative titles, written by Catholic authors, in addition to those referenced in the articles, for you to feed your restless mind.

### BOOKS

**On Conscience**  
*Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger*  
Ignatius Press  
2007, 82 pages.

**Society and Sanity**  
*Frank Sheed*  
Sheed & Ward, New York  
1953, 270 pages.

**Strangers in a Strange Land**  
*Charles J. Chaput*  
Henry Holt and Co.  
February 21, 2017, 288 pages.

### PERIODICALS

**First Things**  
Institute on Religion and Public Life  
Editor: R. R. Reno  
Ten Issues per year.  
[www.firstthings.com](http://www.firstthings.com)

**Touchstone**  
A Journal of Mere Christianity  
Editor: James M. Kushiner  
Bi-Monthly.  
[www.touchstonemag.com](http://www.touchstonemag.com)

**Catholic Answers Magazine**  
Share the Faith, Defend the Faith  
Editor: Tim Ryland  
Bi-Monthly.  
[www.catholic.com](http://www.catholic.com)

asked to choose between attending a concert or going to confession which one appeals to you the most?

**O**bfuscation has become the *de rigueur* mode of speech for public figures. Clarity of thought is studiously avoided so as not to offend overly-sensitive sensibilities. Thus, objective truth, moral certitude, serious debate, reasoned argument, clarity of thought, and greater understanding are vilified, criticized for being racist, xenophobic, discriminatory, hateful, mean-spirited, cruel, disparaging, denigrating, uncaring, and more. The human mind is rapidly devolving—rationality and truth lost among the weeds of tenderized feelings and jellied emotions.

And then there are those whose words and phrases are so carefully put; so smooth, couched in smiles for purposes of deceit and evasion; and truth pays the price. Half-truths are no better than lies; and trust is lost when truth will out. Yet, those who routinely serve up half-truths, lies, and obfuscations are deaf to the truth; adept at deflection, adroit at redirecting the focus from themselves by attacking the character of those who would dare speak with clarity and truth.

In an article for the *National Catholic Register*, Rome Correspondent Edward Pentin writes of Bishop Athanasius Schneider, auxiliary bishop of Astana in Kazakhstan, “*who is becoming one of the leading voices of fidelity, continuity and tradition in the Church today.*”<sup>1</sup> To this, Pentin cites the bishop’s older sibling, Claretian Sister Teresa Schneider who said people mar-

vel at the fact that he is someone so devout and so human. For him, “*Truth is always the best way, not half the truth, but the authentic truth. He has always said that truth is not relative. It’s all or nothing; half-truth is heresy.*” But, she added, that doesn’t mean one is not compassionate and merciful, because the bishop also believes “*to be compassionate and merciful is to say the truth.*”

As Pentin reports, “*Recently, Bishop Schneider took the lead in issuing a ‘Profession of Immutable Truths About Sacramental Marriage’ in a bid to resolve the confusion over interpretations of Pope Francis’ 2016 post-synodal apostolic exhortation Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love), which some bishops have read as opening the door to Holy Communion for some civilly-divorced-and-remarried Catholics. The document, published Dec. 31, states such interpretations are ‘alien’ to the entire faith and weaken the Church’s teaching on the indissolubility of marriage.*”

**T**he statement is unusual in its clarity of thought and adherence to magisterial tradition and teaching.

To date, the profession has been signed by nine bishops and one Cardinal:

- Archbishop Tomash Peta, Archbishop Metropolitan of the Archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana
- Archbishop Jan Pawel Lengua, Archbishop-Bishop of Karaganda
- Bishop Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana
- Cardinal Janis Pujats, Emeritus Archbishop Metropolitan of Riga, Latvia
- Archbishop Carlo Vigano, the former papal nuncio to the United States
- Emeritus Archbishop Luigi Negri of Ferrara-Comacchio in northern Italy
- Bishop Andreas Laun, Emeritus Auxiliary Bishop of Salzburg, Austria
- Bishop Rene Gracida, Bishop emeritus of Corpus

Christi, Texas, USA

- Bishop Marian Eleganti, Auxiliary Bishop of Chur, Switzerland
- Bishop Elmar Fisher, Bishop emeritus of Feldkirch, Austria

**I**n the prior issue<sup>2</sup>, Pentin outlined the rationale for the “*Profession*” originally issued by the three ordinaries, all from Kazakhstan, who had made a point of signing their profession on December 31, 2017, the feast of the Holy Family in the ordinary form of the Roman rite, and within the centenary year of Our Lady of Fatima.

Within days, the former apostolic nuncio to the United States, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, added his name to the profession of truth about sacramental marriage, as had Italian emeritus Archbishop Luigi Negri of Ferrara-Comacchio.

As Pentin reported, “*Archbishop Vigano served as nuncio in Washington, D.C., from 2011 until 2016. Benedict XVI appointed him to the position after two years as secretary of the Governate of Vatican City State, where he used his reputable administrative skills to uncover corrupt financial practices — something that caused other Vatican officials to elbow him out. Ordained a priest March 24, 1968, he was appointed nuncio to Nigeria in 1992.*”

*Archbishop Negri led the Archdiocese of Ferrara-Comacchio from December 2012 until June 2017. Ordained a priest June 28, 1972, he is known as a vigorous pastor, theologian and philosopher.*”

As of January 6, 2018 the Profession of Truth About Sacramental Marriage had added two more signatories: Cardinal Janis Pujats of Riga, Latvia and Bishop Andreas Laun of Salzburg,

# Profession of the Immutable Truths about Sacramental Marriage

December 31, 2017

**A**fter the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation “*Amoris laetitia*” (2016) various bishops issued at local, regional, and national levels applicable norms regarding the sacramental discipline of those faithful, called “*divorced and remarried*,” who having still a living spouse to whom they are united with a valid sacramental matrimonial bond, have nevertheless begun a stable cohabitation *more uxorio* with a person who is not their legitimate spouse.

The aforementioned rules provide *inter alia* that in individual cases the persons, called “*divorced and remarried*,” may receive the sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion, while continuing to live habitually and intentionally *more uxorio* with a person who is not their legitimate spouse. These pastoral norms have received approval from various hierarchical authorities. Some of these norms have received approval even from the supreme authority of the Church.

The spread of these ecclesiastically approved pastoral norms has caused a considerable and ever increasing confusion among the faithful and the clergy, a confusion that touches the central manifestations of the life of the Church, such as sacramental marriage with the family, the domestic church, and the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist.

According to the doctrine of the Church, only the sacramental matrimonial bond constitutes a domestic church (see Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium*, 11). The admission of so-called “*divorced and remarried*” faithful to Holy Communion, which is the highest expression of the unity of Christ the Spouse with His Church, means in practice a way of approving or legitimizing divorce, and in this meaning a kind of introduction of divorce in the life of the Church.

The mentioned pastoral norms are revealed in practice and in time as a means of spreading the “*plague of divorce*” (an expression used by the Second Vatican Council, see *Gaudium et spes*, 47). It is a matter of spreading the “*plague of divorce*” even in the life of the Church, when the Church, instead, because of her unconditional fidelity to the doctrine of Christ, should be a bulwark and an unmistakable sign of contradiction against the plague of divorce which is every day more rampant in civil society.

**U**nequivocally and without admitting any exception Our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ solemnly reaffirmed God’s will regarding the absolute prohibition of divorce. An approval or legitimization of the violation of the sacredness of the marriage bond, even indirectly through the mentioned new sacramental discipline, seriously contradicts God’s express will and His commandment. This practice therefore represents a substantial alteration of the two thousand-year-old sacramental discipline of the Church. Further-

more, a substantially altered discipline will eventually lead to an alteration in the corresponding doctrine.

**T**he constant Magisterium of the Church, beginning with the teachings of the Apostles and of all the Supreme Pontiffs, has preserved and faithfully transmitted both in the doctrine (in theory) and in the sacramental discipline (in practice) in an unequivocal way, without any shadow of doubt and always in the same sense and in the same meaning (*eodem sensu eademque sententia*), the crystalline teaching of Christ concerning the indissolubility of marriage.

Because of its Divinely established nature, the discipline of the sacraments must never contradict the revealed word of God and the faith of the Church in the absolute indissolubility of a ratified and consummated marriage. “*The sacraments not only presuppose faith, but by words and objects they also nourish, strengthen, and express it; that is why they are called ‘sacraments of faith.’*” (Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 59). “*Even the supreme authority in the Church may not change the liturgy arbitrarily, but only in the obedience of faith and with religious respect for the mystery of the liturgy*” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1125).

The Catholic faith by its nature excludes a formal contradiction between the faith professed on the one hand and the life and practice of the sacraments on the other. In this sense we can also understand the following affirmation of the Magisterium: “*This split between the faith which many profess*

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practice of the sacraments on the other. and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age.” (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 43) and “Accordingly, the concrete pedagogy of the Church must always remain linked with her doctrine and never be separated from it” (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 33).

In view of the vital importance that the doctrine and discipline of marriage and the Eucharist constitute, the Church is obliged to speak with the same voice. The pastoral norms regarding the indissolubility of marriage must not, therefore, be contradicted between one diocese and another, between one country and another. Since the time of the Apostles, the Church has observed this principle as St. Irenaeus of Lyons testifies: “The Church, though spread throughout the world to the ends of the earth, having received the faith from the Apostles and their disciples, preserves this preaching and this faith with care and, as if she inhabits a single house, believes in the same identical way, as if she had only one soul and only one heart, and preaches the truth of the faith, teaches it and transmits it in a unanimous voice, as if she had only one mouth” (*Adversus haereses*, I, 10, 2). Saint Thomas Aquinas transmits to us the same perennial principle of the life of the Church: “There is one and the same faith of the ancients and the moderns, otherwise there would not be one and the same Church” (*Questiones Disputatae de Veritate*, q. 14, a. 12c).

The following warning from Pope John Paul II remains current and valid: “The confusion, created in the conscience

of many faithful by the differences of opinions and teachings in theology, in preaching, in catechesis, in spiritual direction, about serious and delicate questions of Christian morals, ends up by diminishing the true sense of sin almost to the point of eliminating it” (Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 18).

The meaning of the following statements of the Magisterium of the Church is fully applicable to the doctrine and sacramental discipline concerning the indissolubility of a ratified and consummated marriage:

- “For the Church of Christ, watchful guardian that she is, and defender of the dogmas deposited with her, never changes anything, never diminishes anything, never adds anything to them; but with all diligence she treats the ancient doctrines faithfully and wisely, which the faith of the Fathers has transmitted. She strives to investigate and explain them in such a way that the ancient dogmas of heavenly doctrine will be made evident and clear, but will retain their full, integral, and proper nature, and will grow only within their own genus — that is, within the same dogma, in the same sense and the same meaning” (Pius IX, Dogmatic Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*)
- “With regard to the very substance of truth, the Church has before God and men the sacred duty to announce it, to teach it without any attenuation, as Christ revealed it, and there is no condition of time that can reduce the rigor of this obligation. It binds in conscience every priest who is entrusted with the care of teaching, admonishing, and guiding the faithful” (Pius XII, Discourse to parish priests and Lenten preachers, March 23, 1949).

- “The Church does not historicize, does not relativize to the metamorphoses of profane culture the nature of the Church that is always equal and faithful to itself, as Christ wanted it and authentic tradition perfected it” (Paul VI, Homily from October 28, 1965).

- “Now it is an outstanding manifestation of charity toward souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ” (Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, 29).

- “Any conjugal difficulties are resolved without ever falsifying and compromising the truth” (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 33).

- “The Church is in no way the author or the arbiter of this norm [of the Divine moral law]. In obedience to the truth which is Christ, whose image is reflected in the nature and dignity of the human person, the Church interprets the moral norm and proposes it to all people of good will, without concealing its demands of radicalness and perfection” (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*, 33).

- “The other principle is that of truth and consistency, whereby the church does not agree to call good evil and evil good. Basing herself on these two complementary principles, the church can only invite her children who find themselves in these painful situations to approach the divine mercy by other ways, not however through the sacraments of penance and the eucharist until such time as they have attained the required dispositions” (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 34).

- *“The Church’s firmness in defending the universal and unchanging moral norms is not demeaning at all. Its only purpose is to serve man’s true freedom. Because there can be no freedom apart from or in opposition to the truth”* (John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 96).
- *“When it is a matter of the moral norms prohibiting intrinsic evil, there are no privileges or exceptions for anyone. It makes no difference whether one is the master of the world or the ‘poorest of the poor’ on the face of the earth. Before the demands of morality, we are all absolutely equal”* (emphasis in original) (John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 96).
- *“The obligation of reiterating this impossibility of admission to the Eucharist is required for genuine pastoral care and for an authentic concern for the well-being of these faithful and of the whole Church, as it indicates the conditions necessary for the fullness of that conversion to which all are always invited by the Lord”* (Pontifical Council for Legislative Texts, Declaration on the admissibility to the Holy Communion of the divorced and remarried, 24 June 2000, n. 5).

**A**s Catholic bishops, who—according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council—must defend the unity of faith and the common discipline of the Church, and take care that the light of the full truth should arise for all men (see *Lumen Gentium*, 23) we are forced in conscience to profess in the face of the current rampant confusion the unchanging truth and the equally immutable sacramental discipline regarding the

indissolubility of marriage according to the bi-millennial and unaltered teaching of the Magisterium of the Church. In this spirit we reiterate:

- Sexual relationships between people who are not in the bond to one another of a valid marriage — which occurs in the case of the so-called “divorced and remarried” — are always contrary to God’s will and constitute a grave offense against God.
- No circumstance or finality, not even a possible imputability or diminished guilt, can make such sexual relations a positive moral reality and pleasing to God. The same applies to the other negative precepts of the Ten Commandments of God. Since *“there exist acts which, per se and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object”* (John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 17).
- The Church does not possess the infallible charism of judging the internal state of grace of a member of the faithful (see Council of Trent, session 24, chapter 1). The non-admission to Holy Communion of the so-called “divorced and remarried” does not therefore mean a judgment on their state of grace before God, but a judgment on the visible, public, and objective character of their situation. Because of the visible nature of the sacraments and of the Church herself, the reception of the sacraments necessarily depends on the corresponding visible and objective situation of the faithful.

- It is not morally licit to engage in

sexual relations with a person who is not one’s legitimate spouse supposedly to avoid another sin. Since the Word of God teaches us, it is not lawful *“to do evil so that good may come”* (Romans 3, 8).

- The admission of such persons to Holy Communion may be permitted only when they with the help of God’s grace and a patient and individual pastoral accompaniment make a sincere intention to cease from now on the habit of such sexual relations and to avoid scandal. It is in this way that true discernment and authentic pastoral accompaniment were always expressed in the Church.
- People who have habitual non-marital sexual relations violate their indissoluble sacramental nuptial bond with their life style in relation to their legitimate spouse. For this reason they are not able to participate *“in Spirit and in Truth”* (see John 4, 23) at the Eucharistic wedding supper of Christ, also taking into account the words of the rite of Holy Communion: *“Blessed are the guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb!”* (Revelation 19, 9).
- The fulfillment of God’s will, revealed in His Ten Commandments and in His explicit and absolute prohibition of divorce, constitutes the true spiritual good of the people here on earth and will lead them to the true joy of love in the salvation of eternal life.

Being bishops in the pastoral office, who promote the Catholic and

Apostolic faith (*"cultores catholicae et apostolicae fidei,"* see *Missale Romanum, Canon Romanus*), we are aware of this grave responsibility and our duty before the faithful who await from us a public and unequivocal profession of the truth and the immutable discipline of the Church regarding the indissolubility of marriage. For this reason we are not allowed to be silent.

**W**e affirm therefore in the spirit of St. John the Baptist, of St. John Fisher, of St. Thomas More, of Blessed Laura Vicuña and of numerous known and unknown confessors and martyrs of the indissolubility of marriage:

***It is not licit (non licet) to justify, approve, or legitimize either directly or indirectly divorce and a non-conjugal stable sexual relationship through the sacramental discipline of the admission of so-called "divorced and remarried" to Holy Communion, in this case a discipline alien to the entire Tradition of the Catholic and Apostolic faith.***

By making this public profession before our conscience and before God who will judge us, we are sincerely convinced that we have provided a service of charity in truth to the Church of our day and to the Supreme Pontiff, Successor of Saint Peter and Vicar of Christ on earth.

31 December 2017, the Feast of the Holy Family, in the year of the centenary of the apparitions of Our Lady at Fatima.

1. Edward Pentin, "How Bishop Athanasius Schneider Became a Leading Voice for Catholic Truth", National Catholic Register, February 4-17, 2018, p. 9.

## Three Notes

### *On the Kazakhstan 'Profession'*

**T**he presentation of Catholic teachings on marriage and morality set forth in the brief statement from Kazakhstan Bishops Peta, Lenga, and Schneider is quite sound. Indeed, in contrast to, for example, the ambiguous statement from the Argentines the Kazakhstan profession is a model of clarity; set against the disastrous statements by, among others, the Bishops of Malta and German episcopal conference the Kazakhstans are withering. I offer three notes for those reading on the Kazakhstan profession.

First, while the Kazakhstans address only sacramental marriage (that is, marriage between two baptized persons) much of their message applies to any marriage, for all marriage is, as canonists say, intrinsically indissoluble.

Second, when the Church talks about "marriage", she always means marriage valid in her eyes and not necessarily marriage in the state's eyes or marriage as many people use the term in common speech. It is, of course, far too cumbersome to include *every* qualifier that the Church assumes in regard to marriage *every* time the word "marriage" is used, but these qualifiers must be recalled when one composes and analyzes technical texts closely.

Thus, third, with regard to the Kazakhstans' assertion that "Unequivocally and without admitting any exception Our Lord and Redeemer Jesus Christ solemnly reaffirmed God's will regarding the absolute prohibition of

*divorce"*, two important qualifiers (briefly indicated later, but easy to miss in this first assertion) are necessary for this statement to stand, namely, we must be talking about sacramental marriage (else, the Pauline and Petrine Privileges fall), and second, we must be talking about consummated Christian marriage (else, papal dissolution of *ratam-non-consummatum* marriages falls). These three exceptions to the permanence of marriage comprise, to be sure, a minuscule percentage of the divorce-and-remarried cases actually faced by pastors, but sweeping language must account for legitimate exceptions to its terms, however rare such exceptions are in real life.

These comments originally appeared on "[In the Light of the Law](#)" A Canon Lawyer's Blog, the personal blog of Edward N. Peters, JD, JCD on canon law issues in the news. Dr. Peters has doctoral degrees in canon and common law. Since 2005 he has held the Edmund Cardinal Szoka Chair at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit.



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Austria.

"In November last year," Pentin reports, "the cardinal, 87, told an interviewer that 'it is necessary to clarify' *Amoris Laetitia*, adding that the document is 'too liberal' in its outlook. Pope St. John Paul elevated Archbishop Pujats to cardinal in peccatore (in secret to avoid persecution) in 1998. His cardinalate was made public at the consistory in February 2001.

Bishop Laun is a member of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales and had served

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as auxiliary bishop of Salzburg since 1995.

A professor of moral theology at the Philosophical-Theological Faculty of Heiligenkreuz, Austria, in December 2016 he said he shared the concerns of the four dubia cardinals over certain passages of *Amoris Laetitia*.

*'I have read the concerns of the four cardinals, and I agree with them,' he said. 'Additionally, I know personally especially Cardinals Meisner and Caffarra and know how competent they are. With them, I am in the best company.'*

In a conversation with Life Site News reporter Diane Montagna, Bishop Schneider offered these comments on the "Profession": *"God decides the time, and the time will come when the Pope and the episcopacy again will proclaim, with all clarity, unambiguity and beauty, the sanctity of marriage, and of the family, and of the Eucharist."*<sup>3</sup>

He stated that the "Profession" was in response to certain pastoral norms which had been issued by a number of bishops' conferences aimed at implementing chapter 8 of Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation on the family, *Amoris Laetitia*, norms which gave permission for "divorced and remarried" Catholics to receive absolution and Holy Communion. The effect of these norms has been to give "implicit approval" of divorce and of sexual activity outside a valid marriage.

*"The sacrament of marriage, its indissolubility, and the sanctity and holiness of the Eucharist are now being touched,"* by those norms of various bishops *"who ultimately, in cunning and veiled language, admit to Holy Communion those*

*people who commit, intentionally and habitually, sexual acts and sexual unions outside a valid marriage."* Such language is to "give permission to sin, as Moses gave because of the hard-heartedness of the people—and Jesus Christ condemned this. How can the Apostles and the Successors of the Apostles today introduce a pastoral norm which is in substance what Moses did?"

Bishop Schneider added that bishops should be able to reverently voice their beliefs during important moments of the Church without being seen as speaking out against the Pope. He insisted that, in issuing the profession, the bishops did not criticize *Amoris Laetitia* but only "one concrete norm" which gives "divorced and remarried" Catholics implicit approval "through access to Holy Communion" of their divorce and sexual activity outside a valid marriage.

*"When this is evidently against the entire Tradition of the Church, it does not matter who published this. We have to say this, because the Pope is only a servant. He is not God. And he is not Christ, he is only the Vicar of Christ and he has to be faithful to his first task to transmit faithfully and without ambiguity the entire truth of the Church."*

*"Real help for the subjective part of doctrine is provided when bishops and priests give people the fullness of the truth of Christ with love and patience, and tell them the reality of their situation without condemning them."*

*A doctor cannot conceal the real situation of a disease. And when he says to the patient, 'This is your disease; I have made a diagnosis,' no one will be offended. But this does not mean that the doctor con-*

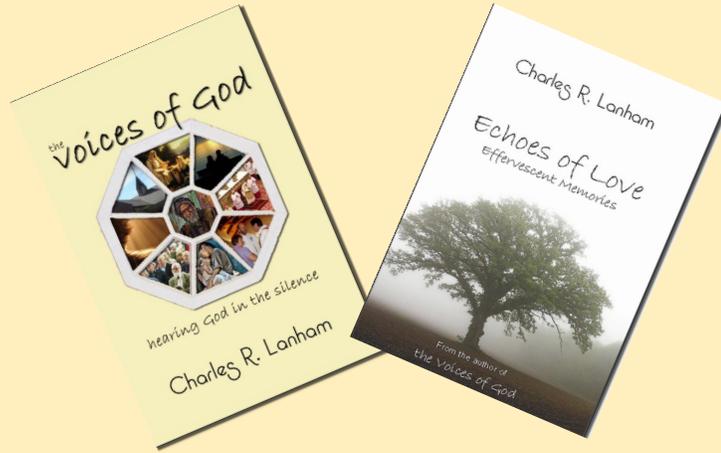
*demns you and that he is against you. He will help you, and oftentimes we cannot cure a disease suddenly. It has to take time.*

*This is pastoral accompaniment and discernment."*

Bishop Schneider said that to give Holy Communion to those who intentionally perform sexual activity outside a valid marriage "is a cruel medicine. This is the false medicine. It is confirming them in their disease to continue to live against the will of God, against Revelation. And this will never bring the subjective part of the truth to them. This is distorting the truth. This is not pastoral love."

Bishop Schneider also believes some of those advocating Communion for the "divorced and remarried" are "not so much advocates for the importance of Communion, but are using this as an implicit tool to introduce divorce into the Church and to grant permission to have sexual activity outside of a valid marriage, to introduce the spirit of the world today."

1. Edward Pentin, "How Bishop Athanasius Schneider Became a Leading Voice for Catholic Truth", National Catholic Register, February 4-17, 2018, p. 9.
2. Edward Pentin, "Three Bishops Issue Profession of Truth About Sacramental Marriage", National Catholic Register, January 21–February 3, 2018, pp. 9-10.
3. Diane Montagna, "Exclusive: Bishop Schneider invites world's prelates to sign Profession of Immutable Truths", Life Site News, Rome, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/exclusive-athanasius-schneider-invites-worlds-bishops-to-sign-profession-of/>, January 30, 2018.



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