

“The Church of the living God - the pillar and the bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3:15)

**Declaration of the truths relating to some of the most common errors
in the life of the Church of our time**

The Fundamentals of Faith

1. The right meaning of the expressions ‘living tradition,’ ‘living Magisterium,’ ‘hermeneutic of continuity,’ and ‘development of doctrine’ includes the truth that whatever new insights may be expressed regarding the deposit of faith, nevertheless they cannot be contrary to what the Church has always proposed in the same dogma, in the same sense, and in the same meaning (see First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius*, sess. 3, c. 4: “*in eodem dogmate, eodem sensu, eademque sententia*”).
2. “The *meaning* of dogmatic formulas remains ever true and constant in the Church, even when it is expressed with greater clarity or more developed. The faithful therefore must shun the opinion, first, that dogmatic formulas (or some category of them) cannot signify truth in a determinate way, but can only offer changeable approximations to it, which to a certain extent distort or alter it; secondly, that these formulas signify the truth only in an indeterminate way, this truth being like a goal that is constantly being sought by means of such approximations. Those who hold such an opinion do not avoid dogmatic relativism and they corrupt the concept of the Church's infallibility relative to the truth to be taught or held in a determinate way.” (Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration “Mysterium Ecclesiae” in defense of the Catholic doctrine on the Church against certain errors of the present day*, 5).

The Creed

3. “The Kingdom of God begun here below in the Church of Christ is not of this world whose form is passing, and its proper growth cannot be confounded with the progress of civilization, of science or of human technology, but it consists in an ever more profound knowledge of the unfathomable riches of Christ, an ever stronger hope in eternal blessings, an ever more ardent response to the love of God, and an ever more generous bestowal of grace and holiness among men. The deep solicitude of the Church, the Spouse of Christ, for the needs of men, for their joys and hopes, their griefs and efforts, is therefore nothing other than her great desire to be present to them, in order to illuminate them with the light of Christ and to gather them all in Him, their only Savior. This solicitude can never mean that the Church conforms herself to the things of this world, or that she lessens the ardor of her longing of her Lord and of the eternal Kingdom” (Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Solemni hac liturgia (Credo of the People of God)*, 27). The opinion is, therefore, erroneous that says that God is glorified principally by the very fact of the progress in the temporal and earthly condition of the human race.

4. After the institution of the New and Everlasting Covenant in Jesus Christ, no one may be saved by obedience to the law of Moses alone without faith in Christ as true God and the only Savior of humankind (see Rom 3:28; Gal 2:16).
5. Muslims and others who lack faith in Jesus Christ, God and man, even monotheists, cannot give to God the same adoration as Christians do, that is to say, supernatural worship in Spirit and in Truth (see Jn 4:24; Eph 2:8) of those who have received the Spirit of filial adoption (see Rom 8:15).
6. Spiritualities and religions that promote any kind of idolatry or pantheism cannot be considered either as “seeds” or as “fruits” of the Divine Word, since they are deceptions that preclude the evangelization and eternal salvation of their adherents, as it is taught by Holy Scripture: “the god of this world has made blind the minds of those who have not faith, so that the light of the good news of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, might not be shining on them” (2 Cor 4:4).
7. True ecumenism intends that non-Catholics should enter that unity which the Catholic Church already indestructibly possesses in virtue of the prayer of Christ, always heard by His Father, “that they may be one” (John 17:11), and which she professes in the Symbol of Faith, “I believe in one Church.” Ecumenism, therefore, may not legitimately have for its goal the establishment of a Church that does not yet exist.
8. Hell exists and those who are condemned to hell for any unrepented mortal sin are eternally punished there by Divine justice (see Mt 25:46). Not only fallen angels but also human souls are damned eternally (see 2 Thess 1:9; 2 Pet 3:7). Eternally damned human beings will not be annihilated, since their souls are immortal according to the infallible teaching of the Church (see Fifth Lateran Council, sess. 8).
9. The religion born of faith in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God and the only Savior of humankind, is the only religion positively willed by God. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that just as God positively wills the diversity of the male and female sexes and the diversity of nations, so in the same way he also wills the diversity of religions.
10. “Our [Christian] religion effectively establishes with God an authentic and living relationship which the other religions do not succeed in doing, even though they have, as it were, their arms stretched out towards heaven” (Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 53).
11. The gift of free will with which God the Creator endowed the human person grants man the natural right to choose only the good and the true. No human person has, therefore, a natural right to

offend God in choosing the moral evil of sin, the religious error of idolatry, blasphemy, or a false religion.

The Law of God

12. A justified person has the sufficient strength with God's grace to carry out the objective demands of the Divine law, since all of the commandments of God are possible for the justified. God's grace, when it justifies the sinner, does of its nature produce conversion from all serious sin (see Council of Trent, sess. 6, *Decree on Justification*, c. 11; c. 13).
13. "The faithful are obliged to acknowledge and respect the specific moral precepts declared and taught by the Church in the name of God, the Creator and Lord. Love of God and of one's neighbor cannot be separated from the observance of the commandments of the Covenant renewed in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Spirit" (John Paul II, Encyclical *Veritatis splendor*, 76). According to the teaching of the same Encyclical the opinion of those is wrong, who "believe they can justify, as morally good, deliberate choices of kinds of behavior contrary to the commandments of the Divine and natural law." Thus, "these theories cannot claim to be grounded in the Catholic moral tradition" (*ibid.*).
14. All of the commandments of God are equally just and merciful. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that a person is able, by obeying a Divine prohibition - for example, the sixth commandment not to commit adultery - to sin against God by this act of obedience, or to morally harm himself, or to sin against another.
15. "No circumstance, no purpose, no law whatsoever can ever make licit an act which is intrinsically illicit, since it is contrary to the Law of God, which is written in every human heart, knowable by reason itself, and proclaimed by the Church" (John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium, vitae*, 62). There are moral principles and moral truths contained in Divine revelation and in the natural law which include negative prohibitions that absolutely forbid certain kinds of action, inasmuch as these kinds of action are always gravely unlawful on account of their object. Hence, the opinion is wrong that says that a good intention or a good consequence is or can ever be sufficient to justify the commission of such kinds of action (see Council of Trent, sess. 6 *de iustificatione*, c. 15; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 17; Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, 80).
16. A woman who has conceived a child within her womb is forbidden by natural and Divine law to kill this human life within her, by herself or by others, whether directly or indirectly (see John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, 62).

17. Procedures which cause conception to happen outside of the womb “are morally unacceptable, since they separate procreation from the fully human context of the conjugal act” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, 14).
18. No human being may ever be morally justified to kill himself or to cause himself to be put to death by others, even if the intention is to escape suffering. “Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of a human person. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written word of God, is transmitted by the Church's Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, 65).
19. Marriage is by Divine ordinance and natural law an indissoluble union of one man and of one woman (see Gen 2:24; Mk 10:7-9; Eph 5:31-32). “By their very nature, the institution of matrimony itself and conjugal love are ordained for the procreation and education of children, and find in them their ultimate crown” (Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 48).
20. By natural and Divine law no human being may voluntarily and without sin exercise his sexual powers outside of a valid marriage. It is, therefore, contrary to Holy Scripture and Tradition to affirm that conscience can truly and rightly judge that sexual acts between persons who have contracted a civil marriage with each other, can sometimes be morally right or requested or even commanded by God, although one or both persons is sacramentally married to another person (see 1 Cor 7: 11; John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 84).
21. Natural and Divine law prohibits “any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation—whether as an end or as a means” (Paul VI, Encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, 14).
22. Anyone, husband or wife, who has obtained a civil divorce from the spouse to whom he or she is validly married, and has contracted a civil marriage with some other person during the lifetime of his legitimate spouse, and who lives in a marital way with the civil partner, and who chooses to remain in this state with full knowledge of the nature of the act and with full consent of the will to that act, is in a state of mortal sin and therefore can not receive sanctifying grace and grow in charity. Therefore, these Christians, unless they are living as “brother and sister,” cannot receive Holy Communion (see John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 84).
23. Two persons of the same sex sin gravely when they seek venereal pleasure from each other (see Lev 18:22; Lev 20:13; Rom 1:24-28; 1 Cor 6:9-10; 1 Tim 1:10; Jude 7). Homosexual acts “under no circumstances can be approved” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2357). Hence, the opinion is contrary to natural law and Divine Revelation that says that, as God the Creator has given to some humans a natural disposition to feel sexual desire for persons of the opposite sex, so also He

has given to others a natural disposition to feel sexual desire for persons of the same sex, and that God intends that the latter disposition be acted on in some circumstances.

24. Human law, or any human power whatsoever, cannot give to two persons of the same sex the right to marry one another or declare two such persons to be married, since this is contrary to natural and Divine law. “In the Creator's plan, sexual complementarity and fruitfulness belong to the very nature of marriage” (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons*, June 3, 2003, 3).
25. Unions that have the name of marriage without the reality of it, being contrary to natural and Divine law, are not capable of receiving the blessing of the Church.
26. The civil power may not establish civil or legal unions between two persons of the same sex that plainly imitate the union of marriage, even if such unions do not receive the name of marriage, since such unions would encourage grave sin for the individuals who are in them and would be a cause of grave scandal for others (see Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Considerations regarding proposals to give legal recognition to unions between homosexual persons*, June 3, 2003, 11).
27. The male and female sexes, man and woman, are biological realities created by the wise will of God (see Gen. 1: 27; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 369). It is, therefore, a rebellion against natural and Divine law and a grave sin that a man may attempt to become a woman by mutilating himself, or even by simply declaring himself to be such, or that a woman may in like manner attempt to become a man, or to hold that the civil authority has the duty or the right to act as if such things were or may be possible and legitimate (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2297).
28. In accordance with Holy Scripture and the constant tradition of the ordinary and universal Magisterium, the Church did not err in teaching that the civil power may lawfully exercise capital punishment on malefactors where this is truly necessary to preserve the existence or just order of societies (see Gen 9:6; John 19:11; Rom 13:1-7; Innocent III, *Professio fidei Waldensibus praescripta*; *Roman Catechism of the Council of Trent*, p. III, 5, n. 4; Pius XII, *Address to Catholic jurists* on December 5, 1954).
29. All authority on earth as well as in heaven belongs to Jesus Christ; therefore, civil societies and all other associations of men are subject to his kingship so that “the duty of offering God genuine worship concerns man both individually and socially” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2105; see Pius XI, Encyclical *Quas primas*, 18-19; 32).

30. In the most holy sacrament of the Eucharist, a wonderful change takes place, namely of the whole substance of bread into the body of Christ and the whole substance of wine into His blood, a change which the Catholic Church very fittingly calls transubstantiation (see Fourth Lateran Council, c. 1; Council of Trent, sess. 13, c. 4). “Every theological explanation which seeks some understanding of this mystery must, in order to be in accord with Catholic faith, maintain that in the reality itself, independently of our mind, the bread and wine have ceased to exist after the Consecration, so that it is the adorable Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus that from then on are really before us under the sacramental species of bread and wine” (Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Solemni hac liturgia (Credo of the People of God)*, 25).
31. The formulations by which the Council of Trent expressed the Church’s faith in the Holy Eucharist are suitable for men of all times and places, since they are a “perennially valid teaching of the Church” (John Paul II, Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 15).
32. In the Holy Mass, a true and proper sacrifice is offered to the Blessed Trinity and this sacrifice is propitiatory both for men living on earth and for the souls in Purgatory. The opinion is, therefore, wrong that says that the sacrifice of the Mass consists simply in the fact that the people make a spiritual sacrifice of prayers and praises, as well as the opinion that the Mass may or should be defined only as Christ giving Himself to the faithful as their spiritual food (see Council of Trent, sess. 22, c. 2).
33. “The Mass, celebrated by the priest representing the person of Christ by virtue of the power received through the Sacrament of Orders and offered by him in the name of Christ and the members of His Mystical Body, is the sacrifice of Calvary rendered sacramentally present on our altars. We believe that as the bread and wine consecrated by the Lord at the Last Supper were changed into His body and His blood which were to be offered for us on the cross, likewise the bread and wine consecrated by the priest are changed into the body and blood of Christ enthroned gloriously in heaven, and we believe that the mysterious presence of the Lord, under what continues to appear to our senses as before, is a true, real and substantial presence” (Paul VI, Apostolic letter *Solemni hac liturgia (Credo of the People of God)*, 24).
34. “The unbloody immolation at the words of consecration, when Christ is made present upon the altar in the state of a victim, is performed by the priest and by him alone, as the representative of Christ and not as the representative of the faithful. (...) The faithful offer the sacrifice by the hands of the priest from the fact that the minister at the altar, in offering a sacrifice in the name of all His members, represents Christ, the Head of the Mystical Body. The conclusion, however, that the people offer the sacrifice with the priest himself is not based on the fact that, being members of the Church no less than the priest himself, they perform a visible liturgical rite; for this is the privilege only of the minister who has been Divinely appointed to this office: rather it is based on the fact that the people unite their hearts in praise, impetration, expiation and thanksgiving with prayers or intention of the priest, even of the High Priest himself, so that in the one and same

offering of the victim and according to a visible sacerdotal rite, they may be presented to God the Father” (Pius XII, Encyclical *Mediator Dei*, 92).

35. The sacrament of Penance is the only ordinary means by which grave sins committed after Baptism may be remitted, and by Divine law all such sins must be confessed by number and by species (see Council of Trent, sess. 14, can. 7).
36. By Divine law the confessor may not violate the seal of the sacrament of Penance for any reason whatsoever; no ecclesiastical authority has the power to dispense him from the seal of the sacrament and the civil power is wholly incompetent to oblige him to do so (see *Code of Canon Law 1983*, can. 1388 § 1; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1467).
37. By virtue of the will of Christ and the unchangeable Tradition of the Church, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist may not be given to those who are in a public state of objectively grave sin, and sacramental absolution may not be given to those who express their unwillingness to conform to Divine law, even if their unwillingness pertains only to a single grave matter (see Council of Trent, sess. 14, c. 4; Pope John Paul II, Message to the *Major Penitentiary* Cardinal William W. Baum, on March 22, 1996).
38. According to the constant Tradition of the Church, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist may not be given to those who deny any truth of the Catholic faith by formally professing their adherence to a heretical or to an officially schismatic Christian community (see *Code of Canon Law 1983*, can. 915; 1364).
39. The law by which priests are bound to observe perfect continence in celibacy stems from the example of Jesus Christ and belongs to immemorial and apostolic tradition according to the constant witness of the Fathers of the Church and of the Roman Pontiffs. For this reason, this law should not be abolished in the Roman Church through the innovation of an optional priestly celibacy, either at the regional or the universal level. The perennial valid witness of the Church states that the law of priestly continence “does not command new precepts; these precepts should be observed, because they have been neglected on the part of some through ignorance and sloth. These precepts, nevertheless, go back to the apostles and were established by the Fathers, as it is written, ‘Stand firm, then, brothers and keep the traditions that we taught you, whether by word of mouth or by letter’ (2 Thess. 2:15). There are in fact many who, ignoring the statutes of our forefathers, have violated the chastity of the Church by their presumption and have followed the will of the people, not fearing the judgment of God” (Pope Siricius, Decretal *Cum in unum* in the year 386).
40. By the will of Christ and the Divine constitution of the Church, only baptized men (*viri*) may receive the sacrament of Orders, whether in the episcopacy, the priesthood, or the diaconate (see

John Paul II Apostolic Letter, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 4). Furthermore, the assertion is wrong that says that only an Ecumenical Council can define this matter, because the teaching authority of an Ecumenical Council is not more extensive than that of the Roman Pontiff (see Fifth Lateran Council, sess. 11; First Vatican Council, sess. 4, c. 3, n. 8).

May 31, 2019

Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

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