

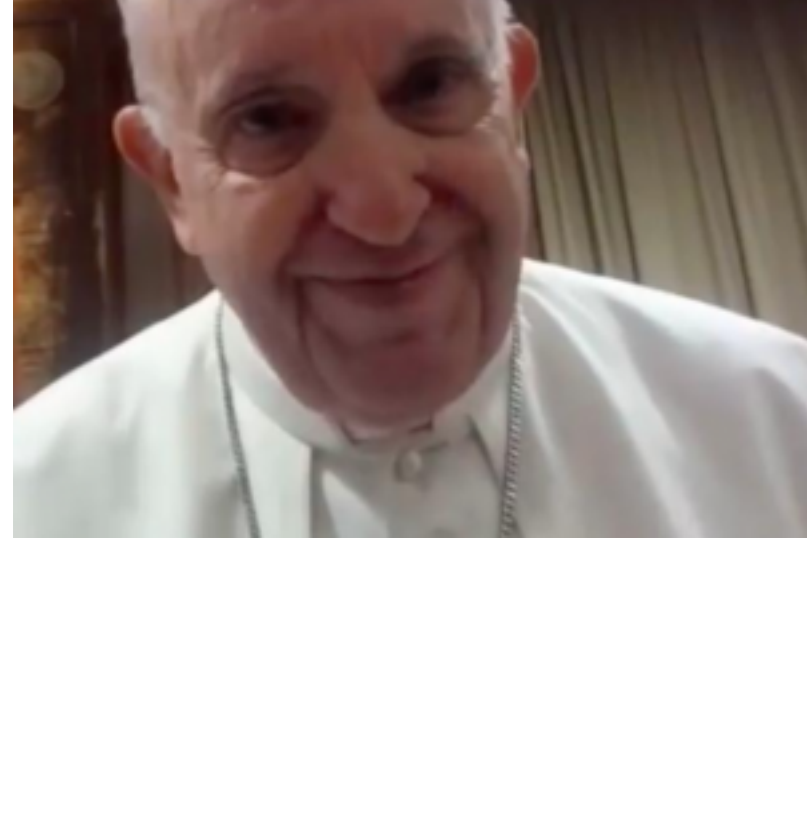
Settimo Cielo



di Sandro Magister

20 apr

Francis, the Self-Contradictory Pope. Theory and Practice of a Non-Infallible Pontificate



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Anyone who can understand this deserves a medal. Take a look:

"There are four elements: in learning reality there are the concept and the intuition, and in explicating reality there are the two terms of an antinomy. These four elements come into tension with each other. We cannot say that the sign of its effectiveness is the balance between reality and grasping it. We must look for a sign that, in itself, contains the tension of the four elements. In my opinion, this sign is consonance.

"The consonance that the subject who knows experiences in the self is, in this case, a reflection of the consonance that exists between the reality in itself and the known reality. Let me explain: the one who knows has direct experience of the consonance that exists between what he learns and what he expresses. On the basis of this consonance he can know when there is consonance between the reality in itself and the learned reality.

"St. Ignatius uses this experience to discern whether a spirit is good or bad: the consonance depicted in the falling of water on the sponge rather than on the stone. It is an ambivalent consonance as far as the identity of the spirits is concerned, because its positive or negative indication is to be taken from the habitual state of the subject, progressing from good to better, or falling from bad to worse."

The passage just cited is the heart of a never-before-published text by Jorge Mario Bergoglio, with which "La Civiltà Cattolica" solemnly opened its latest issue, extolling its "style of argument."

> Interpreting Reality

The text can be dated to 1987-88 and coincides with the apogee of the intellectual arc of the Argentine Jesuit now pope, when, in his early fifties, he was working on a doctoral thesis on the thought of the Italo-German theologian and philosopher Romano Guardini.

That thesis was never completed, in spite of Bergoglio's trip to Germany aimed at doing so. But one of its chapters, according to its author, has been inserted root and branch into "Evangelii gaudium," the agenda-setting document of Francis's pontificate. And it is the chapter with the so-called "four postulates" so dear to the current pope, according to which time is greater than space, unity prevails over conflict, realities are more important than ideas, the whole is greater than the part.

Pope Francis has repeatedly acknowledged that he is indebted to Guardini and in particular to his 1925 essay "Der Gegensatz," "Polar opposition."

It is a debt that is also recognized by the best-equipped scholar of Bergoglio's theological and philosophical thought, Professor Massimo Borghesi, instructor of moral philosophy at the University of Perugia and close to him for years, in two of his books dedicated to the subject: **the first**, from 2017, focused on the intellectual guides of the current pope, from Gaston Fessard to Henri de Lubac, from Erich Przywara to Alberto Methol Ferré, as well as Guardini of course, all great teachers but certainly assimilated in a very confused fashion by their disciple; and **the second**, from this year, in which he compares the vision of Francis - again associated mainly with Guardini's thought - with the movement inspired by the American "theocons" Michael Novak, George Weigel, and Richard John Neuhaus.

Borghesi does not hesitate to argue that Guardini's thought "is the theory that underpins the theoretical framework of 'Evangelii gaudium,' of 'Laudato si,' and of 'Fratelli tutti'." the three major documents of the current pontificate. "Catholic" thinking based on the distinction between 'opposition' and 'contradiction'."

But once again, the distance between teacher and disciple here too is chasmic.

The polarity theorized by Guardini is that which holds opposites together without erasing them, which conceives of the Church as a "complexio oppositorum," made up of both institution and charisma, mystery and word, interiority and public worship, history and eternal life.

In Bergoglio, however, this fruitful balance of opposites ends in gross contradictions, in which one of the two poles clobbers the other (like time, or the "process," over space, the norm) or one is just as good as its opposite.

This is an imbalance in Bergoglio not only as a thinker but also as a man, one that has profoundly marked his personal saga, already in the eighties of the last century in which among other things he wrote the rambling notes now published in "La Civiltà Cattolica."

No longer father provincial of the Argentine Jesuits but still with a party of ardent supporters, Bergoglio was in those years an incurable element of division in the Society of Jesus, and **was judged** as such not only by his Argentine adversaries but by then superior general Peter Hans Kolvenbach, to the point that neither did he want to meet him when he went to Buenos Aires, nor did Bergoglio set foot in the general curia when he went to Rome.

For him the 1980's, as Bergoglio himself **has described** them as pope, were "a time of great desolation," a "dark time" that followed the radiant years of his "omnipotence" as father provincial, during which he nonetheless felt an inner restlessness that in 1978 led him to put himself under the care of a Jewish psychoanalyst. The Society of Jesus ultimately sidelined him, exiling him to Córdoba with no role whatsoever. But from there he was miraculously recalled as auxiliary of then archbishop of Buenos Aires Antonio Quarracino, to later become his successor and a cardinal. In the conclave of 2005, the one that saw the election of Joseph Ratzinger as pope, he reached a peak of 40 votes, but even then Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, top Jesuit and top elector, harbored reservations about him and "was not in favor of the election of the Jesuit Bergoglio," as he afterward confided to Andrea Riccardi, Church historian and founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio, who wrote about this in **a book** published a few days ago.

He became pope in 2013, still with his psychological concerns, as he himself **has repeatedly stated**. It was "for psychiatric reasons" that he explained his wish to live at Santa Marta instead of at the Apostolic Palace. It is "for mental health" that he says he does not want to read the writings of his opponents.

The disorder of his speech is equal to that of his thought. When he speaks or writes Bergoglio is never linear, concise, direct, unequivocal. It is quite the opposite. He says and does not say, unsays, contradicts himself.

The perhaps unsurpassed example of his self-contradictory speech - yes, no, I don't know, do it yourselves - remains the answer he gave at the Lutheran church in Rome on November 15 2015, to a Protestant woman who asked him if she could receive communion at Mass with her Catholic husband:

> "It is not easy for me to answer..."

As is well known, his irresolution with regard to intercommunion has made room in the Church for the most divergent practices, contrasted in vain by subsequent calls to fall back in line - amid the pope's silence - from the congregation for the doctrine of the faith and the pontifical council for Christian unity.

Not only the words, but also the deeds of Francis's pontificate are a feast of contradictions, right from the start.

At the end of his **first public audience** after his election as pope, on March 16 2013, in front of hundreds of journalists from all over the world he declined to bless those present "out of respect for the conscience," he said, of the non-Catholic or non-believer.

But a few days later, on the evening of **Holy Thursday**, he washed the feet of twelve inmates of various creeds at the Casal del Marmo juvenile prison, including a young Muslim, and even placidly celebrated the Mass "in coena Domini" before them, setting aside any past display of scruples.

And all this to the jubilation of the media, in both the first and the second case, a jubilation he was likely counting on.

Eight years later, in 2021, he unexpectedly concocted a surprise celebration of the Mass for Holy Thursday **at the home** of Cardinal Giovanni Angelo Becciu, the same close and trusted colleague who six months before he had brutally **dismissed**, also depriving him of his "rights" as cardinal, in both cases without providing any explanation of these two actions of opposite import.

The as yet unjustified Becciu defenestration is just one of the many contradictions Pope Francis runs up against when on the one hand he praises the "transparency" of his way of cleaning house and on the other exercises his powers in contempt of the rules and above all of the most elementary rights of persons.

Another recent example is the fate of the **"Responsum"** of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith - led by such a high-profile Jesuit theologian as Cardinal Luis F. Ladaria - against the blessing of homosexual couples.

Francis formally gave "his approval to the publication" of the "Responsum." Immediately after, however, he let slip **his opposition**. All it took in fact was for him at the Angelus on the following Sunday to deplore "legalisms," "clerical moralisms," and "theoretical condemnations" devoid of deeds of love, for the proponents of the blessing of homosexual couples to feel authorized by him to proceed as they please. Without the pope doing anything to stop them.

Indeed, a few days ago Francis did not even bat an eyelash when a member of the Vatican commission for the protection of victims of sexual abuse, the Chilean Juan Carlos Cruz, **reported** that the pope, speaking with him, had told him that he was "very distressed" over the "Responsum" and had the intention of "repairing in some form" the damage.

The chapter of homosexuality is perhaps the one on which Francis has spoken out in the most chameleonic ways, starting with that **"Who am I to judge?"** which has been taken by many as the "brand" of the current pontificate, making room for the most contradictory interpretations and practices. And here, again, Francis has never done anything to bring order to the understanding of his remarks, sometimes pushed to bizarre formulations such as that "he, who was she, but is he" applied by the pope - at the **press conference** on October 2 2016 on the flight back from Azerbaijan - to a woman who had herself made a man and married another woman, both received in benedictory audience at the Vatican.

Even in the field of economics, with Bergoglio, contradictions are at home. There is his stated desire to replace the "economy that kills," which would be that of the notorious multinational, with an ascetic **"Economy of Francesco"** dressed in the habit of the saint of Assisi. But then, at the beginning of his pontificate, he called McKinsey, Ernst & Young, KPMG, Promontory, Deloitte, Price Waterhouse Cooper to the Vatican to lend **their advice**. And last winter he selected as his partner in fighting capitalism the... **"Council for Inclusive Capitalism"**, in other words the magnates of the Ford Foundation, Bank of America, British Petroleum, Rockefeller Foundation, and the like.

And again, but not least, there is the enigma of **synodality**. Many times exalted by Francis as an ideal form of the Church and its government, but just as many times contradicted by how the pope actually exercises his powers, in a regime of monarchical absolutism that has no equal in the last century of Church history.

Because in reality, with pope Bergoglio, synodality is just like the Arabian phoenix as set to music by Mozart in "Così fan tutte": "That it exists everybody affirms, where it may be nobody knows."

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Condividi:



20 aprile 2021

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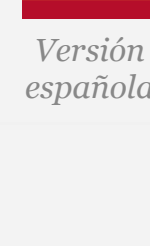
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