

Settimo Cielo



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Homosexual Blessings. The Pope Takes Back the Ban, When Instead in the Year 2000...



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The halt announced on March 15 by the congregation for the doctrine of the faith to blessings of same-sex couples has sparked a widespread outbreak of rebellion in the Church, with its epicenter in **Germany** and **Belgium**, where even leading bishops have publicly rejected and derided the decision from Rome.

But as of Sunday March 21, the main unknown is now another. And it regards the pope.

Does or does not Francis share this **"Responsum"** of the congregation that watches over the correct doctrine of the Church?

The document bears the signatures of Cardinal Luis F. Ladaria, prefect of the dicastery, and of Archbishop Giacomo Morandi, secretary of the same.

But it is also written there that "the Sovereign Pontiff Francis, at the Audience granted to the Secretary of this Congregation, was informed and gave his assent to the publication of the above-mentioned 'Responsum ad dubium,' with the annexed 'Explanatory Note'."

Already in this formulation, however, there are clues that suggest a lesser involvement of Francis compared with the previous "Responsa" of the same congregation.

On **previous occasions** the pope had preliminarily given an audience not to the secretary but to the cardinal prefect of the dicastery, and not simply to be "kept informed" and "give his consent to the publication," as in this case, but for something more exacting: to "approve," meaning to make the decision his own, and to "order" that it be published.

The official bulletin of the audiences shows that congregation secretary Morandi was received by Francis on January 28, while cardinal prefect Ladaria was last received on March 18, three days after the publication of the "Responsum," when the rebellion against the ban had broken out.

In reality, the rebels were not so much taking aim at Francis himself. They were rather hurling their darts against the congregation for the doctrine of the faith, the Vatican, the ecclesiastical institution. Implicitly, as on other occasions, they tended to separate the pope from the curia and to exempt him from direct responsibility.

And he? It was like he was in on the game. At the **Angelus** on Sunday March 21 he added a couple of glosses to the text he was reading, to mark his distance from those clerical, elitist rigidities and aridities that are his habitual target, as a pope who is on the side. of the people against the institution.

Here is the passage with the words that Francis added off the cuff underlined:

"It means sowing seeds of love, not with fleeting words but through concrete, simple and courageous examples, not with theoretical condemnations, but with gestures of love. Then the Lord, with his grace, makes us bear fruit, even when the soil is dry due to misunderstandings, difficulty or persecution, or claims of legalism or clerical moralism. This is barren soil."

A few hours later, right on time, came the twofold confirmation that this was nothing other than an allusion by the pope, certainly not benevolent, to the "Responsum" against blessings of homosexual couples.

The twofold confirmation came - with the ritual reference to "authoritative Vatican sources who want to remain anonymous" - from two prominent Vatican scholars who have long been ranked among those closest to Jorge Mario Bergoglio: the Irishman Gerard O'Connell and his wife, the Argentine Elisabetta Piqué, respectively in the magazine of the New York Jesuits **"America"** and in the Buenos Aires newspaper **"La Nación"**.

The result of this allusive distancing of the pope is that from this point on the "Responsum" against blessings of homosexual couples will be considered by many as a mere "opinion," exactly as defined right from the start by the president of the German episcopal conference, Limburg bishop **Georg Bätzing**, in whose diocese - as in many others all over the world - those blessings have been practiced for some time.

And they will certainly not be interrupted, with Pope Francis letting everything and the opposite of everything be done without ever saying clearly what he really wants. As has already happened with Eucharistic communion shared between Catholics and Protestants, after his memorable **"yes, no, I don't know, do it yourselves"** that disarmed any subsequent corrective intervention by the congregation for the doctrine of the faith or by the pontifical council for Christian unity.

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This is what is happening today. But there is a precedent, very similar but with the opposite outcome, which it is instructive to recall.

It was the year 2000, with John Paul II as pope and with Joseph Ratzinger as cardinal prefect of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith.

The subject of the dispute was a declaration, **"Dominus Iesus"**, signed by Ratzinger and by then-secretary of the congregation Tarcisio Bertone, that reaffirmed an absolute cornerstone of the Christian faith: that the salvation of all comes from Jesus and from him alone.

It was also written there that John Paul II had "ratified and confirmed" the declaration "with a sure conscience and with his apostolic authority."

But this did not prevent a wave of rebellion from rising then as well, even on the part of bishops and cardinals of the first magnitude.

And then too the explicit target was not the pope, but rather the congregation for the doctrine of the faith and its cardinal prefect.

There were even those who - like Vatican Council II historian Alberto Melloni - attributed the composition of "Dominus Iesus" to the "incompetence" of unspecified "associates of the congregation" whom Ratzinger himself "in direct conversations showed he did not esteem and did not know," and all this in order to sabotage the papacy of Karol Wojtyła "for his ecumenical attitude and his theses on the God of the Quran."

But it did not happen at all that John Paul II then publicly distanced himself from that document, in a subsequent Angelus. Indeed, quite the opposite happened.

To begin with, given the extent of the protests, pope Wojtyła summoned Cardinal Ratzinger to discuss the matter and decide what to do. Just as a few days ago Pope Francis summoned Cardinal Ladaria to an audience.

But what happened in that meeting? And then at the **Angelus** on Sunday October 1 2000? Let's hear from Ratzinger himself and how he **wrote about it** - as pope emeritus - in a 2014 book:

"In the face of the firestorm that had developed around 'Dominus Iesus,' John Paul II told me that he intended to defend the document unequivocally at the Angelus. He invited me to write a text for the Angelus that would be, so to speak, airtight and not subject to any different interpretation whatsoever. It had to be completely unmistakable that he approved the document unconditionally.

"So I prepared a brief address: I did not intend, however, to be too brusque, and so I tried to express myself clearly but without harshness. After reading it, the pope asked me once again: 'Is it really clear enough?' I replied that it was.

"Those who know theologians will not be surprised that in spite of this there were afterward some who maintained that the pope had prudently distanced himself from that text."

One may note the entirely Ratzingerian irony of these last two lines. Certainly not applicable to Pope Francis, who in his Angelus of this March 21 distanced himself from the "Responsum" against blessings of homosexual couples, and in earnest.

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(In the photo above, from November 28 2020, Pope Francis visiting pope emeritus Benedict XVI).

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