



Settimo Cielo



di Sandro Magister

14 ott

The Wrong People Francis Can't Get Rid Of

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Ex-cardinal **Theodore McCarrick** is not the only wrong person on whom Francis bet. Because at least three others can be pointed out, in the upper levels of the hierarchy, each one tied with double thread to the changes that this pope wants to introduce into the Church.

Francis too had known for some time about McCarrick's bad conduct, his grooming of young people and seminarians, taking them on outings and then to bed. And yet he kept him right with him until the end, as his chief adviser in the appointments aimed at tipping the balance of power among the bishops of the United States in favor of the progressive wing. Blaise Cupich in Chicago, Joseph Tobin in Newark, Kevin Farrell as president of the Vatican dicastery for laity, family and life, whom Francis also immediately promoted as cardinals, are all three of the McCarrick brood, their careers advancing miraculously with him, even if today they too are in danger of being damaged by the collapse of their tutelary deity, whom a few months ago not even Francis could not defend after it came to light that years ago he had also abused a minor.

Then there is Belgian cardinal **Godfried Danneels**, one who prides himself on having been the kingmaker in the election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio as pope, together with that "mafia of St. Gallen," his definition, which saw the periodic meeting in that Swiss town of the Who's Who of cardinals hostile to John Paul II and Benedict XVI. In the two synods on the family of 2014 and 2015, both times Pope Francis put at the head of his guest list none other than Danneels, because he is a supporter of that "openness" to communion for the divorced and remarried, in practice meaning the admission of divorce and remarriage, which Francis wanted to broach at all costs, as he afterward did with the postsynodal exhortation "Amoris Laetitia." But not even Danneels is that paragon of virtue which Francis's conspicuous tokens of appreciation would have one think. In 2010 an audio recording came out in Belgium of him telling a young man to shut up and not report that he was the nephew and sexual victim of the archbishop of Bruges at the time, Roger Vangheluwe, his friend and protege.

Then again there is the Honduran cardinal **Óscar Andrés Rodríguez Maradiaga**, for some time the target of serious accusations of embezzlement that were investigated by an apostolic visitation in his diocese, and whose auxiliary bishop and pupil, Juan José Pineda Fasquelle, was removed last July 20 because of continuous homosexual activity with his seminarians. And yet Pope Francis continues to entrust to him the coordination of the "C9," the council of nine cardinals who assist him in the governance of the universal Church.

Not only that. Last August 15, Pope Francis appointed to the key role of substitute at the secretariat of state the Venezuelan archbishop **Edgar Peña Parra**, former adviser at the nunciature in Honduras from 2002 to 2005, and closely connected to Maradiaga and Pineda, whose appointment as auxiliary bishop of Tegucigalpa he backed in 2005.

Last but not least there is Monsignor **Battista Ricca**. Who is not a cardinal but is nevertheless the emblem of the personal secretariat that Bergoglio has built around himself, parallel and often alternative to the offices of the curia. In the organizational structure of the secretariat of state Ricca figures as a diplomatic adviser of the first class, but when he was working in diplomacy in the field he stood out for the scandals he sowed. In Uruguay in particular, where he lived with his lover at the nunciature, whom he had brought down there from Switzerland, the previous stage of his career. Francis knows this, and yet he has promoted Ricca as prelate of the IOR, the Vatican "bank," and is also keeping him in place as director of the Casa di Santa Marta, his residence. And to those who asked him why he answered, "Who am I to judge?"

In short, Francis wants to reform the Church, but is betting precisely on persons from whom he should first of all free himself if he truly wants a renovated and purified Church.

(English translation by **Matthew Sherry**, Ballwin, Missouri, U.S.A.)

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