

# Fraternité St Pie X – Society of St Pius X

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### Post-conciliar Language

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Pope Francis has issued an encyclical, *Laudato si*, on the “care of our common good”. By this he means the physical environment of planet Earth.

There is something wrong with calling *Laudato si* an encyclical. According to the 1912 Catholic Encyclopedia: “In modern times usage has confined the term *encyclical* almost exclusively to certain papal documents (...) which in their superscription are explicitly addressed to the patriarchs, primates, archbishops, and bishops of the Universal Church in communion with the Apostolic See. (...) From the nature of the case, encyclicals are generally concerned with matters which affect the welfare of the Church at large. They condemn some prevalent form of error, point out dangers which threaten faith or morals, exhort the faithful to constancy, or prescribe remedies for evils foreseen or already existent.”

For example, Leo XIII, of happy memory, had rightly addressed his first encyclical “To the Patriarchs, Primates, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Catholic World in Grace and Communion with the Apostolic See,” with a very clear purpose: “that you may help Us to carry on the battle now being waged on behalf of the Church of God and the salvation of souls.” (April 21, 1878).

Pope Francis’ new encyclical is not aimed at Patriarchs, Archbishops, etc., but is rather an appeal to “everyone” (nn. 14, 64, 79, etc. – 17 times in the document in English) and “addressed to all people of good will” (n. 62). Moreover it does not intend to teach (the normal act of a teacher, a *Magister* in Latin, thus of a *Magisterium*) but to dialogue, to converse, to debate: “I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all.” (n.14)

As a result, the Holy Father admits he cannot speak with authority: “On many concrete questions, the Church has no reason to offer a definitive opinion” (n.61). “There are certain environmental issues where it is not easy to achieve a broad consensus. Here I would state once more that the Church does not presume to settle scientific questions or to replace politics. But I am concerned to encourage an honest and open debate so that particular interests or ideologies will not prejudice the common good.” (n. 188)

Thus the Pope admits that he is not teaching; nevertheless he wants his encyclical to become part of the Church’s teaching: “It is my hope that this Encyclical Letter, which is now added to the body of the Church’s social teaching...” (n.15)

All these observations lead to the following conclusion: normal Catholic words no longer mean the same thing as they used to. It is so important to understand this in order to understand the crisis in the Church: modernists use Catholic words, but give them new meanings. Here we have an encyclical at variance with what encyclicals used to be, as defined above, and we are told that this text will be part of “the Church’s social teach-

ing”, a text which has little in common with the encyclicals *Quas Primas*, on Christ the King, of Pius XI, and *Immortale Dei*, on the Christian constitutions of States, of Leo XIII, both clearly explaining the Church’s social teaching.

Romano Amerio wrote in his masterwork *Iota Unum* (n.49): “The depth of the change which has taken place in the Church in the post-conciliar period can be similarly deduced from the great changes which have occurred in its language.” He then goes on to prove this by

- The *disappearance* of such words as hell, heaven and predestination;
- *Semantic transposition*, for example, to call the parish priest a pastoral worker, the Mass a Supper, authority and every kind of office a service;
- *Neologisms*, generally philological monstrosities, designed to signify new ideas, showing a desire for novelty, such as presbyter rather than priest, or Eucharist instead of Mass. Through these, there is generally a hidden change in the concept involved or at least a change of nuance.
- *Some words that had never been used* in papal documents and which occurred only in specific fields have acquired an enormous popularity, such as the word dialogue, which was previously unused in the Church. Vatican II used it twenty-eight times.

Writing today, Amerio would have added a new abuse of post-conciliar language: using the same words but with a different or even contrary meaning. That makes serious discussion really impossible. For instance: the word ‘Tradition’ which implies receiving something from the past and passing it on, now simply means the present, often with no relation to the past, as in ‘living Tradition’ which means the Church today. Or ‘ecumenism’, previously used to show the missionary spirit of the Church seeking to bring in the sheep that are outside the fold, now means ‘unity in diversity’, the duty to unite all the religions as they are (cf. *Iota Unum*, n. 245). “We have given up this ecumenism of return”, Cardinal Kasper has repeatedly said. The very word ‘Council’ has also been redefined. Using the word ‘Council’ to describe a pastoral meeting where scholastic theology was explicitly rejected has led to the great debate on the authority of this Council. What is the meaning of a “Dogmatic Constitution’ in a pastoral Council that explicitly refused to define dogma or condemn error? They keep the words, but change the meaning.

“Through the abandonment by the Council fathers of the ‘scholastic language’ the floodgates were practically, quasi officially opened (...) for a *New Theology*. (...) The leading theologians naturally saw that the language would affect the nature, indeed the very substance of theology and the faith” (Fr. J. Dörmann, *Pope John Paul II’s Theological Journey*, Angelus Press, Part I, p. 37).

Let me close with the opening words of St Pius X’s encyclical *Pascendi* (1907) where he showed that he was very much aware that the modernists would use language to change the faith: “One of the primary obligations assigned by Christ to the office divinely committed to Us of feeding the Lord’s flock is that of guarding with the greatest vigilance the deposit of the faith delivered to the saints, *rejecting ‘the profane novelties of words’* (1 Tim 6:20) and the gainsaying of knowledge falsely so called. There has never been a time when this watchfulness of the supreme pastor was not necessary to the Catholic body, for owing to the efforts of the enemy of the human race, there have never been lacking *‘men speaking perverse things,’* (Act 20:30) *‘vain talkers and seducers,’* (Tit 1:10) *‘erring and driving into error’* (2 Tim 3:13).”

St Pius X, pray for us, pray for the Church!

Yours truly in the service of Jesus and Mary Immaculate,

*Fr. Daniel Couture*

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District Superior