

Call for the Resignation of Pope Francis

Since 2013, the words and actions of Pope Francis have caused an unprecedented crisis in the Catholic Church, and have done great harm to the Church and the whole world. The members of the hierarchy of the Church have a duty to act in order to prevent Francis from causing further harm.

We therefore call for Pope Francis to resign the papal office, and to repent and do penance for his actions. If he does not do this, we request that the cardinals and bishops of the Catholic Church ask Pope Francis to resign the office of pope.

If he refuses to resign or recant the heresies that he has upheld, we ask that they declare that he has lost the papal office.

This crisis is due to two things:

1. Pope Francis has committed criminal acts gravely damaging to the Church and to individual believers.
2. He has shown that he rejects the Catholic faith, and has worked to destroy the faith of other Catholics.

1. Crimes of Pope Francis

1.1 Crimes other than heresy

1. He has committed criminal acts that have gravely harmed individual believers and the Church.

The actions listed below are crimes because they violate either canon law, the law of temporal states, the natural law, divine positive law, or some combination of laws from these different legal systems. The relations of these different legal systems are complex; for example, the protection of sexual abusers by not reporting their crimes, or by placing them in positions where they can be expected to continue to abuse, is a crime in some states, but not in others. The crimes of Pope Francis listed below all violate one or more of the following canons of the Latin Code; canons 383 §1, 392 §1 and §2, 1311 § 2, 1326 § 1, 1378 § 1 and § 2, and 1399. These canons are all based on natural law or divine positive law, so they are not ones from which the Pope can be dispensed. It should be remembered that the Church has by divine right the power to legislate for her members and to inflict juridical punishments on them of a temporal as well as a spiritual kind, and this legislation is no less real and has no less force than the legislation of civil states.

1.1.A. Protection of criminal sex offenders, and protection of religious superiors who themselves protect criminal sex offenders.

Bishops and religious superiors who protect criminal sexual abusers are themselves criminals, so Pope Francis's protection and promotion of such individuals is itself a protection of criminals. It has a particularly damaging effect, because it tells criminals of this stamp that protecting sexual abusers not only is 'safe' with him, but it will also probably lead to promotion. Pope Francis's promotion of these criminals has been so extensive and over so long a time-frame, both before and after his election to the papacy, that it can only be seen as an abiding disposition and an habitual policy. He has appointed large numbers of these persons to the college of cardinals, thus giving them significant influence over the election of the next pope, and has installed them in the commanding heights of ecclesiastical power in the Roman Curia and the American Catholic church.

The manner of Pope Francis's protection of these criminals aggravates his offence. He has repeatedly and brazenly lied about his actions and slandered victims of these crimes.

In addition to the specific cases recorded below, it should be added that Pope Francis abolished the moderately effective procedures for dealing with cases of sexual abuse of minors that had been instituted by Pope Benedict XVI, and replaced them with ineffective regulations, personnel, and organisations that brought to a halt the process of effectively dealing with sexual abuse in the Church. Francis accompanied this sabotage of justice with frequent public pronouncements about the supreme importance of bringing sexual abuse to an end.

Pope Francis had a record of protecting sexual abusers before he became pope, when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires (1998-2013) and president of the Argentine bishops' conference (2005-2011). The worst example of this protection is noted here, as it exemplifies his character and *modus operandi*.

FR JULIO GRASSI

Fr Julio Grassi founded and ran Happy Children homes for street children in Argentina. He sexually abused boys at these institutions. In 2009 he was convicted by an Argentinian court of abusing one of them. At great expense, Archbishop Bergoglio commissioned a 2,600 page report designed to exonerate Fr. Grassi by slandering his victims. The report was intended to persuade the Argentinian Supreme Court judges of Grassi's innocence, and was condemned by the court as an attempt to interfere with justice. When challenged about the report, Archbishop Bergoglio lied in declaring that he had no involvement with it. Grassi managed to avoid prison until 2013, thanks in part to Bergoglio's intervention. Grassi testified that he has the personal support of Bergoglio.¹

After his election to the papacy in 2013, Pope Francis protected and/or promoted many sexual abusers and bishops who covered up sexual abuse. Some outstanding examples are the following:

CARDINAL GODFRIED DANNEELS

Cardinal Danneels defended the catechism textbook 'Roeach', which was used in Belgium under his authority and which promoted pedophilia, and refused to have it altered or removed. He acted to protect the pedophile Bishop Roger Vangheluwe after it became known that Vangheluwe sexually abused his own nephew, beginning when the nephew was five years old. When the nephew, then an adult, asked Danneels to take some action against Vangheluwe, Danneels refused, told the nephew to keep quiet about the abuse, and told the nephew that he should acknowledge his own guilt. These actions were public knowledge in 2010. Cardinal Danneels stood at the side of Pope Francis on the balcony of St. Peter's when the Pope made his first public appearance after his election. Pope Francis named him as one of his personal appointments to both the first and second Synod on the Family. At his death in 2019, Pope Francis praised him as a 'zealous pastor' who 'served the Church with dedication'.²

CARDINAL JOZEF DE KESEL

In 2014 Cardinal de Kesel, then bishop of Bruges, appointed Father Tom Flamez as a pastor after he had been convicted of sexual abuse. He did not remove Fr. Antoon Stragier from ministry until 2015, although Stragier's crimes were known to the diocese in 2004. Pope Francis chose Bishop de Kesel as Archbishop of Mechelen-Brussels in November 2015 and named him a Cardinal in November 2016.³

CARDINAL REINHARD MARX

Cardinal Marx admitted to having covered up many sexual abuse cases when he was bishop of Trier, and offered his resignation to Pope Francis in 2021, giving this coverup as the reason. Pope Francis refused his resignation, and Marx continues as the metropolitan archbishop of Munich and Freising.⁴

CARDINAL CORMAC MURPHY-O'CONNOR

In 2008 a woman told English Church authorities that O'Connor had sexually abused her when she was between 13 and 14 years old. The woman had previously reported being sexually abused by another English priest, Father Michael Hill, who was subsequently convicted of this crime in a British court. Hill had earlier been removed from ministry after allegations of sexual abuse of minors, but Murphy-O'Connor, then Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, had reinstated Hill to ministry by naming him as chaplain at Gatwick Airport. Hill continued to abuse minors in this post. In 2013 Pope Francis instructed Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller to drop the investigation of Murphy-O'Connor for sexual abuse.⁵

CARDINAL OSCAR RODRIGUEZ MARADIAGA

Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga failed to act on numerous accusations of sexual misbehaviour with seminarians on the part of Jose Juan Pineda Fasquelle, auxiliary bishop of Tegucigalpa, who resigned after the accusations were made public. Maradiaga refused to investigate complaints made by 48 out of 180 seminarians about homosexual misbehaviour at the Honduras seminary, and attacked the complainants instead. Pope Francis named Maradiaga as a member and coordinator of the council of nine cardinals that he set up in 2013 to advise him in the government of the universal church. On 15 October 2020, Pope Francis renewed Rodriguez Maradiaga's appointment as Coordinator of the Council of Cardinal Advisers.⁶

FORMER CARDINAL THEODORE MCCARRICK

Former Cardinal McCarrick had a decades-long career of grooming and pressuring seminarians to engage in homosexual relations with him. Pope Francis was personally informed of this behaviour in 2013, and was told that Pope Benedict had placed restrictions upon him. McCarrick had made frequent trips to Argentina to visit seminarians when Pope Francis was Archbishop of Buenos Aires. Pope Francis freed McCarrick of the restrictions on his activities that had been imposed by Pope Benedict XVI as a result of reports of his crimes, and used him for many important tasks, including trips as a representative of the Holy See to Israel, Armenia, China, Iran and Cuba. He accompanied Pope Francis on his trips to Israel and Cuba. He was only removed from ministry in 2018, after his predation on seminarians was widely reported in the media.⁷

Pope Francis has appointed a circle of men linked to former cardinal McCarrick to important posts. These include Cardinals Robert McElroy, Joseph Tobin, Wilton Gregory, and Kevin Farrell, described below.

CARDINAL BLAISE CUPICH

Pope Francis named Cupich Archbishop of Chicago in 2014, appointing him a cardinal and a member of the Congregation for Bishops in 2016. McCarrick had lobbied for his appointment in Chicago.⁸

CARDINAL JOSEPH TOBIN

Pope Francis appointed Tobin, Archbishop of Indianapolis, as a cardinal and as Archbishop of Newark in 2016. McCarrick had been his predecessor as Archbishop of Newark from 1986 to 2000, committing many crimes while in that post. The Archdiocese of Newark had made a payment in 2005 to a seminarian abused by McCarrick. Tobin refused to respond to a complaint about abuse by McCarrick sent to him in 2018 by Michael Reading, a former seminarian.⁹

CARDINAL WILTON GREGORY

Cardinal Gregory worked with McCarrick on drafting the 2002 Dallas Charter, which provided procedures for American Catholic bishops for responding to accusations of sexual abuse by clerics. The charter's procedures were ineffective, conspicuously omitting any provision for dealing with accusations against bishops. When bishop of Belleville, Illinois, Gregory was held in contempt of court for refusing to release the records of a priest accused of sexual crimes. While Archbishop of Atlanta, Georgia, he successfully opposed legislation that would extend the statute of limitations for lawsuits claiming damages for sexual abuse. Pope Francis made him Archbishop of Washington in 2019 and named him cardinal in 2020.¹⁰

CARDINAL ROBERT MCELROY

McElroy was appointed Bishop of San Diego in 2015. He was a close associate of former Cardinal McCarrick. In 2014, Rachel Mastrogiacomio reported that Fr. Jacob Bertrand, a priest of the San Diego diocese, had subjected her to satanic ritual abuse. Other women made similar reports. Bertrand admitted his guilt to the diocesan authorities. In response to these reports, Bertrand was simply moved to another parish. Only when Mastrogiacomio went to the police did McElroy remove him from ministry. The diocese of San Diego falsely claimed to have no files on Bertrand's activities, and added that even if they had any files they would not provide them. In 2018, Bertrand was convicted by an American court of criminal sexual misconduct. He had earlier confessed to the apostolic administrator of the diocese of San Diego that he had raped Mastrogiacomio while celebrating Mass and engaging in perverse rituals. In 2016 the clerical sexual abuse expert Richard Sipe informed McElroy that McCarrick was a serial abuser. He remained silent and took no action. Pope Francis made McElroy, a suffragan bishop of Los Angeles, a cardinal in 2022.¹¹

CARDINAL DONALD WUERL

Cardinal Wuerl allowed Fr. George Zirwas to continue in ministry after learning that he had committed numerous crimes of sexual abuse. Wuerl resigned as Archbishop of Washington after his actions in this and in other cases of sexual abuse were criticised by a Pennsylvania grand jury report. When Wuerl resigned Pope Francis praised him for his nobility, kept him in charge of the Archdiocese of Washington as apostolic administrator, and retained him as a member of the Congregation for Bishops.¹²

BISHOP JUAN BARROS MADRID

Barros covered up the grave sexual crimes of Fr. Fernando Karadima, who was convicted of sexual abuse by a Church tribunal in 2011. Pope Francis appointed Barros bishop of Osorno in 2015 despite Barros himself objecting to the appointment, despite the opposition of the Chilean bishops, and despite strong protests from the faithful. Pope Francis denounced the critics of Barros as slanderers. Bishop Barros resigned in 2018 amid a worsening crisis of sexual abuse cases in Chile.¹³

CARDINAL FRANCISCO JAVIER ERRAZURIZ OSSA

Cardinal Errazuriz also protected Fr. Fernando Karadima and attempted to silence his victims. In 2013 and 2014, together with Ricardo Ezzati Andrello, his successor as Archbishop of Santiago, he attempted to prevent Juan Carlos Cruz, one of Karadima's victims, from being appointed to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. Pope Francis appointed Errazuriz to his Council of Cardinals after the crimes of Karadima came to light. He remains a cardinal.¹⁴

CARDINAL RICARDO EZZATI ANDRELLO

Ezzati protected both Karadima and Fr. Óscar Muñoz, who was convicted of repeated sexual abuse and rape of children. He tried to stop the appointment of Juan Carlos Cruz, one of Karadima's victims, to the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors. He submitted his resignation as archbishop of Santiago, in 2016 and again in 2018, but Pope Francis refused to accept it; Francis only accepted Ezzati's resignation in 2019, the day after the Supreme Court of Chile rejected Ezzati's petition to dismiss the civil case against him for protecting Muñoz. He remains a cardinal.¹⁵

BISHOP GUSTAVO ÓSCAR ZANCHETTA

Zanchetta was named by Pope Francis as bishop of Oran in Argentina in 2013. Zanchetta engaged in misconduct of a homosexual character while a bishop, including the sexual harassment of seminarians. Photographic evidence of this was submitted to the Holy See in 2015. Zanchetta resigned from his diocese in 2017, after which Pope Francis named him as assessor of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, the Vatican bank. This post had not existed prior to Zanchetta's appointment. Zanchetta was sentenced to four and a half years in jail in Argentina for sexual assault of seminarians in 2022. There has been no canonical trial or sentence for these crimes, which have only been punished by the secular courts.¹⁶

CARDINAL LUIS LADARIA FERRER SJ

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith received complaints against Father Gianni Trotta in 2009, and three years later found him guilty of sexually abusing minors. Archbishop Ladaria wrote from the CDF to the bishop of Foggia in 2012, instructing him not to divulge the reasons why Trotta was laicized. Trotta continued to present himself as a priest and coached an under-11 boys' football team in the province of Foggia, and molested several of its members. Trotta was sentenced to eight years of prison in 2015. Ladaria Ferrer also wrote to Cardinal Philippe Barbarin on behalf of the CDF instructing him to avoid any public scandal in disciplining Fr. Bernard Preynat, who was charged with sexual abuse in France in 2016 and later convicted. In 2018 the French authorities attempted to charge Ladaria Ferrer for attempting to conceal Preynat's crimes, but the Holy See refused to extradite him. Pope Francis made Ladaria Ferrer head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2017, and appointed him cardinal in 2018.¹⁷

FR. MAURO INZOLI

In 2012, Fr. Inzoli was sentenced to reduction to the lay state by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith for sexual abuse of minors, but Pope Francis intervened and lessened the sentence to prayer, penance and removal from public ministry. In 2016 Inzoli was sentenced to five years in prison for eight offences of sexual abuse of children aged 12 to 16 years old between 2004 and 2008. Only then did Pope Francis reduce him to the lay state.¹⁸

CARDINAL OSCAR CANTONI

Cantoni was bishop of Crema when multiple complaints of sexual abuse were made against Fr. Mauro Inzoli, a priest of his diocese, from 2010 onwards. In 2011 the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith began

proceedings against Inzoli. Cantoni told the faithful of Cremona to not give in to judgments of condemnation of Inzoli. In 2013 Cantoni asked Cardinal Coccopalmerio to intervene with Pope Francis for clemency on behalf of his former priest Fr. Inzoli. The intervention was successful. Cantoni was responsible for covering up the sexual abuse perpetrated on underage boys at the Vatican's St. Pius X Minor Seminary. Pope Francis made Cantoni a cardinal in 2022.¹⁹

CARDINAL FRANCESCO COCCOPALMERIO

Pope Francis appointed Coccopalmerio to the board of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith that reviews appeals from clergy found guilty of sexual abuse of minors. In 2012 Coccopalmerio voted against the reduction of Fr. Mauro Inzoli to the lay state for sexual abuse. Pope Francis appointed Coccopalmerio to represent the Vatican at the 6th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in 2018, and promoted him from cardinal deacon to cardinal priest in 2022.²⁰

ARCHBISHOP MARIO ENRICO DELPINI

As vicar general of the archdiocese of Milan, Delpini moved Fr. Mauro Galli to a new parish after being informed that Galli had sexually abused a young man. Delpini admitted this in a court deposition in 2014. The Holy See was made aware of this. Pope Francis named him as Archbishop of Milan in 2017.²¹

CARDINAL VÍCTOR MANUEL FERNÁNDEZ

As Archbishop of La Plata, Fernández publicly defended Fr. Eduardo Lorenzo, after a complaint of sexual abuse of a minor originally made in 2008 emerged in the media. Fernández falsely asserted that the civil and canonical investigation of this complaint had determined that no offence had occurred. He published Lorenzo's letter accusing the complainants of 'slanders, insults and defamations' on the archdiocesan website, and traveled to Lorenzo's parish to concelebrate a Mass with him in which Lorenzo renewed his commitment to the priesthood. Lorenzo committed suicide the day after being charged with five counts of sexual abuse of minors. Pope Francis appointed Fernández cardinal and head of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith in 2023.²²

CARDINAL JEAN-PIERRE RICARD

In 2022, Ricard admitted molesting a 14-year-old girl. He was permitted to keep his status as a cardinal and cardinal-elect, and there was no canonical trial or punishment.²³

CARDINAL KEVIN FARRELL

In 1978 Farrell was ordained a priest in the Legionaries of Christ, the priestly society that was founded by the criminal sexual predator Marcial Maciel and used to further his crimes. Farrell was a chaplain at the Catholic University of Monterrey in Mexico, the city that was the centre of Maciel's activities, and was later a general administrator of the Legionaries with responsibilities for seminaries and schools in Italy, Spain and Ireland. He was then incardinated in the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C., and worked as vicar general for the then Cardinal McCarrick, with whom he shared a residence. Farrell claims to have been entirely ignorant of the crimes of both Maciel and McCarrick. These claims are not credible. After becoming pope, Francis appointed Bishop Kevin Farrell as cardinal in 2016, and put him in charge of the Administration of the Patrimony of the Apostolic See, which controls the Vatican's finances. In 2019 Farrell was named cardinal camerlengo, and in October 2020, Farrell was appointed head of the Commission for Reserved Matters, a Vatican commission that determines which of its economic activities remain confidential. In 2023 Francis appointed Farrell President of the Court of Cassation, which is the supreme court of the Vatican City State.²⁴

FR. NICOLA CORRADI

Fr. Corradi belongs to the Company of Mary, an Italian religious community that runs schools for deaf children. On December 2013, a group of students from the Italian Provolo Institute in Verona wrote to Pope Francis informing him that they had been sexually abused by Fr. Corradi at that Institute, and that Corradi was still working with deaf and mute children in Argentina. They also sent a video message to this effect to Pope Francis on May 9, 2014. In February 2016 they were informed by the Vatican that Pope Francis had referred the matter to the Italian Bishops' Conference and that no other action would be taken. Fr. Corradi was thus free to continue abusing children at the Provolo Institute for Deaf and Hearing Impaired Children in Argentina. In 2016,

Fr. Corradi was arrested together with other perpetrators and the institute was shut down. In 2019, he was sentenced by an Argentinian court to 42 years in prison for sexually abusing children at the Argentinian institute between 2004 and 2016. The details of the abuse are horrific.²⁵

FR. MARKO RUPNIK

Multiple accusations of sexual and physical assault of nuns dating back three decades have been made against Fr. Marko Rupnik S.J., a well-known artist. Rupnik's criminal acts manifested exceptionally abhorrent sacrilege and cruelty. The Jesuits conducted an internal investigation into the accusations against Rupnik, and in May 2019 they determined that the accusations against him were credible. The conclusions of the investigation were forwarded to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at that time. As a result, Rupnik was excommunicated in 2020 for absolving a woman with whom he had had illicit sexual relations. The penalty for this crime can only be lifted by the Apostolic See. Rupnik's excommunication was lifted after a month, and he was almost immediately invited to preach a Lenten retreat at the Vatican. After the excommunication he appeared in videos released by the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family, and Life. Pope Francis initially refused to lift the statute of limitations for the canonical charges against Rupnik, although it is usual to do so with serious and well-substantiated accusations. A number of Rupnik's victims wrote directly to Pope Francis detailing the abuse they had received at his hands, but they received no reply. Pope Francis received Rupnik in a private audience in January 2022. In August 2023 Rupnik, who had been expelled by the Jesuits, was accepted as a diocesan priest in Slovenia. In September 2023 Francis had a private meeting with Maria Campatelli, a former member of Rupnik's Loyola Community where he carried out much of his abuse, the current director of Rupnik's Aletti Centre in Rome, and a defender of Rupnik who accused his victims of defaming him. A few days after this meeting, the Vicariate of the Diocese of Rome issued a report into the Aletti Centre that whitewashed Rupnik in the face of all the evidence, and cast doubt upon the legitimacy of his excommunication. Pope Francis lifted the statute of limitations on the accusations against Rupnik in October 2023, when Rupnik's crimes had been given massive publicity, but no further proceedings have been instituted against him. Rupnik's career from 2020 on can only be explained by the personal support of Pope Francis.²⁶

1.1.B. Involvement in an act of idolatrous worship, desecration of St. Peter's Church, and sacrilegious profanation of the Mass.

On October 4, 2019, Pope Francis attended an act of idolatrous worship of the pagan goddess Pachamama, and participated in this act of idolatrous worship by blessing a wooden image of Pachamama. On October 7, the idol of Pachamama was placed in front of the main altar at St. Peter's and then carried in procession to the Synod Hall. Pope Francis said prayers in a ceremony involving this image and then joined in this procession. When wooden images of this pagan deity were removed from the church of Santa Maria in Traspontina and thrown into the Tiber by Catholics outraged by this profanation of the church, Pope Francis, on October 25, apologized for their removal and another wooden image of Pachamama was returned to the church. On October 27, in the closing Mass for the synod, he accepted a bowl used in the idolatrous worship of Pachamama and placed it on the altar.

1.1.C. Removal of Catholic bishops without moral or legal basis.

Bishops receive the power of jurisdiction at their consecration, and this power is received directly from Christ (cf. Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11-12; *Lumen gentium* 21-27 and *Nota praevia*: Council of Trent, session XXIII, ch. 4. and canons 6 and 7). It is not a delegation of papal power, and bishops are not vicars of the pope. A bishop's jurisdiction over his diocese cannot therefore be removed simply at the will of the pope.²⁷ There must be a reason in natural or divine law that justifies the removal of jurisdiction that is received from God. Removing a bishop from his see without canonical process or legal basis is a crime against divine law. Pope Francis removed Joseph Strickland, the bishop of Tyler, Texas, and Bishop Daniel Fernández Torres, bishop of Arecibo in Puerto Rico, from their sees. This was done with no just cause, no legal process, and no explanation given.

1.1.D. Suppressing the traditional Latin liturgy.

In his *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, Pope Benedict XVI stated that the missal of 1962 containing the traditional Latin eucharistic liturgy had never been abrogated, and that it is to be duly honoured for its venerable and ancient usage. In his accompanying letter to the *motu proprio*, Benedict XVI asserted that 'what was sacred for prior generations, remains sacred and great for us as well, and cannot be suddenly prohibited

altogether or even judged harmful'. These statements express the teaching of sacred tradition. Pope Francis's *motu proprio Traditionis custodes* and his subsequent interventions in liturgical matters attempt to permanently destroy this sacred liturgy and the faithful communities attached to it. This is an apparently complete betrayal of the role of the Pope in preserving and protecting the traditions and spiritual patrimony of the Roman Catholic Church and appears to be an attempt to rupture the Church's most sacred traditions.

1.1.E. Directing that adulterers be absolved and given the Eucharist in circumstances where they knowingly and willingly persist in the practice of adultery.

In the apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, Pope Francis directed that in some circumstances adulterers are to be given absolution although they intend to persist in adultery, and are to be given the Eucharist while openly living in adulterous concubinage that they do not intend to give up (see below, 2.A.). On various occasions Pope Francis has publicly stated that the absolution must be given "always". Obedience to this directive on the part of confessors is sacrilegious, since the sacrament is invalid if absolution is given when the penitent expresses no intention of repentance and does not resolve to renounce sin.

1.1.F. Instituting "non-liturgical" priestly blessings for adulterous and homosexual relationships.

In the declaration *Fiducia supplicans*, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, over Pope Francis's signature without appeal, made provisions for Catholic priests to bless 'couples' when the basis of the relationship between the individual members of the 'couple' is adultery, fornication, or homosexual relations. This means that the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church appears to have committed the supreme moral treason of defying both the natural moral law and the divine law in his legislation and teaching.

1.1.G. Collaboration with the Chinese Communist government.

In 2019, Pope Francis sent Bishop Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo, then the chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, to represent the Vatican at an organ donation and transplantation conference held in Kunming, China. The Chinese government is known to execute political prisoners in order to harvest their organs for transplant. The presence of Bishop Sorondo at this conference was thus particularly scandalous and grotesque. At the conference, Bishop Sorondo said: 'Francis has love and confidence in China; and China trusts Pope Francis.... In this dynamic, the next step is to reach [an agreement on establishing] diplomatic relations.' This statement of Bishop Sorondo's, which he made as an official representative of the Holy See, was never corrected or repudiated by the Vatican and remains Vatican policy.²⁸

In 2018 Pope Francis concluded an agreement with China that permits the Chinese government to choose Catholic bishops in that country, and has ordered a number of faithful Catholic bishops to give up their dioceses to bishops appointed by the state. This agreement was renewed in 2020 and again in 2022.²⁹ China is a totalitarian and officially atheist state ruled by the Chinese Communist Party, the most murderous organisation in human history. The Chinese government treats the Chinese people with monstrous cruelty, and requires all religious belief and practice to be subordinate to government policy. The Catholic bishops appointed as a result of Pope Francis's agreement with China will be supporters and instruments of the policies of the Chinese Communist Party. After the conclusion of the agreement between the Vatican and China in 2018, the persecution of Catholics and other Christians increased greatly. Pope Francis has never mentioned the persecution of Chinese Christians since the conclusion of the agreement, and he has renewed the agreement twice despite the increase in persecution that followed it and that continues to this day.³⁰

The crimes committed by Pope Francis, such as his protection of sexual abusers, are in some cases crimes by the standards of the laws of sovereign states, as well as being moral and canonical crimes. By committing them, Pope Francis has made himself vulnerable to blackmail from powerful temporal forces that have the resources to investigate his crimes and get evidence of them. In this light, Francis's collaboration with the Chinese government, and his call for Ukraine to surrender to Russia, may be connected to blackmail of this sort. Even if this did not occur in these cases, the civil crimes that Francis has committed mean that such pressure can be effectively placed on him. This fact alone makes him unfit to be pope.

2. Heresies of Pope Francis

Pope Francis has publicly and pertinaciously contradicted a number of central teachings of the Catholic faith. Only the clearest cases of heresy on his part will be given here, together with a brief reference to the places in which he has stated these heresies. These statements have been analysed at length by faithful Catholic scholars, whose work can be consulted for a more detailed discussion.³¹ Heresy is a serious crime in canon law, and has always been recognized as such; see e.g. Canons 1364 and 1365 of the Latin Code of Canon Law. Some of the actions of Pope Francis enumerated below also violate Canon 1368, ‘A person is to be punished with a just penalty who, at a public event or assembly, or in a published writing, or by otherwise using the means of social communication, utters blasphemy, or gravely harms public morals, or rails at or excites hatred of or contempt for religion or the Church’, and Canon 1369, ‘A person who profanes a sacred object, moveable or immovable, is to be punished with a just penalty.’

2.A. Acts that violate divine commandments in grave matters can nevertheless be morally good and acceptable to God.

In the apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, Pope Francis made the following statements:

301: It is [sic] can no longer simply be said that all those in any “irregular” situation are living in a state of mortal sin and are deprived of sanctifying grace. More is involved here than mere ignorance of the rule. A subject may know full well the rule, yet have great difficulty in understanding “its inherent values, or be in a concrete situation which does not allow him or her to act differently and decide otherwise without further sin.”

303: Conscience can do more than recognize that a given situation does not correspond objectively to the overall demands of the Gospel. It can also recognize with sincerity and honesty what for now is the most generous response which can be given to God, and come to see with a certain moral security that it is what God himself is asking amid the concrete complexity of one’s limits, while yet not fully the objective ideal.

2.B. God not only permits, but positively wills the pluralism and diversity of religions, both Christian and non-Christian.

On February 4th, 2019, Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Mosque, publicly signed and issued a statement entitled 'Document on Human Fraternity', in which they made the following assertions:

Freedom is a right of every person: each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives.

Pope Francis’s involvement in the idolatrous ceremony of veneration of the Pachamama idol and in the other acts described in 1.1.B above indicates that he holds this view.

2.C. Adulterous relations can be morally good.

In the apostolic exhortation *Amoris laetitia*, Pope Francis asserts that in some circumstances adulterers do not sin by committing adultery. See *Amoris laetitia* 301 and 303, cited above.

2.D. Adultery, fornication, and homosexual relations can be morally good.

The declaration *Fiducia supplicans*, issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith with Pope Francis’s approval, asserts that Catholic priests can bless couples when the basis of the relationship between the members of the couple is adultery, fornication, or homosexual relations.

2.E. The death penalty is always and everywhere morally wrong.

In his letter of March 20, 2015 to the President of the International Commission against the Death Penalty, Pope Francis asserted that the death penalty ‘is an offence to the inviolability of life and to the dignity of the human person which contradicts God’s plan for man and for society and his merciful justice, and it fails to conform to any just purpose of punishment.’ Pope Francis has revised the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2267 to read, ‘the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person’. In his encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, 263-267, Francis has asserted that the death penalty is “inadmissible”, which amounts to saying intrinsically wrong. He stated this clearly in his address on October 11, 2017, which is the sole source cited by the revised *Catechism* text:

It must be clearly stated that the death penalty is an inhumane measure that, regardless of how it is carried out, abases human dignity. It is *per se* contrary to the Gospel, because it entails the willful suppression of a human life that never ceases to be sacred in the eyes of its Creator and of which, ultimately, only God is the true judge and guarantor... [The former use of the death penalty in the papal states was an] extreme and inhumane remedy that ignored the primacy of mercy over justice... Concern for preserving power and material wealth led to an overestimation of the value of the law and prevented a deeper understanding of the Gospel.... It is necessary, therefore, to reaffirm that no matter how serious the crime that has been committed, the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and the dignity of the person.

The same view is repeated even more forthrightly in the last published papal document (*Dignitas infinita*), which says that “the death penalty... violates the inalienable dignity of every person, regardless of the circumstances” (no. 34). This view contradicts the doctrine established in previous solemn magisterium of the Catholic Church.

2.F. Some Catholic dogmas can be rejected as false.

In his response to the *dubia* submitted to him by Cardinals Brandmüller, Burke, Sandoval, Sarah, and Zen on July 10, 2023, Pope Francis asserted that

... both the texts of the Scripture and the testimonies of Tradition require interpretation in order to distinguish their perennial substance from cultural conditioning. This is evident, for example, in biblical texts (such as Exodus 21:20-21) and in some magisterial interventions that tolerated slavery (Cf. Pope Nicholas V, Bull *Dum diversas*, 1452). This is not a minor issue given its intimate connection with the perennial truth of the inalienable dignity of the human person. These texts need interpretation. The same applies to certain considerations in the New Testament regarding women (1 Corinthians 11:3-10; 1 Timothy 2:11-14) and other texts of Scripture and testimonies of Tradition that cannot be materially repeated today.

The ‘testimonies of Tradition’ include all Catholic dogmas, since the teaching of these dogmas by the Church is a central part of Tradition. Pope Francis gives no criteria for distinguishing the ‘perennial substance’ of Catholic dogmas from their ‘cultural conditioning’. Since every part of every Catholic dogma is culturally conditioned in some way, his position places no limits on which dogmas can be rejected. He has rejected a number of individual Catholic dogmas, as described in A to E above. This is good evidence for his holding the general position that Catholics need not accept the meaning expressed by Catholic dogmas.

2.G. Passages of the Scriptures can be rejected as false.

This is stated in Pope Francis’s response cited above to the *dubia* submitted to him by Cardinals Brandmüller, Burke, Sandoval, Sarah, and Zen. Pope Francis does not say that a certain interpretation of Scriptural passages can be rejected, or that Scriptural passages should not always be understood in a literal rather than a metaphorical or a mystical sense. In the case of 1 Corinthians 11:3-10 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14, he says that the actual message of some passages of the Scriptures can be rejected by Catholics. Since he gives no clear criteria for identifying which Scriptural passages can be rejected as false and which should still be accepted, he in effect places no limitation on which passages of the Scriptures can be rejected.

In the last document published by the Pontifical Academy for Life, *La gioia della vita* (The Joy of Life) is stated: "it should be impossible for us today to treat the Scriptures as timeless propositions and norms, claiming to extract immutable truths from them" (pp. 22-23)

The individual heresies described in A to E above clearly contradict the teaching of a number of texts of the Scriptures. This indicates that Pope Francis holds the general position that the undoubted teaching of Scriptural texts can simply be rejected as false by Catholics. Pope Francis also makes it clear that he holds this position in his response to the *dubia* cited in 2.F above, in which he identifies specific Scriptural texts and asserts that their meaning cannot be accepted.

It should be added that canonists have held that popes who commit grave crimes apart from heresy thereby incur a suspicion of heresy, because in the case of a pope belief in the Catholic faith can with difficulty be reconciled with a life of serious and impenitent sin. Pope Francis is guilty of the serious crimes described above, and also of less serious misdeeds that are not strictly criminal, but that give good reason for doubting his commitment to the faith and the Church. These include vulgarity and obscenity in his public utterances, hate-filled denigration of those who oppose him, and a bizarre fondness for Judas Iscariot that he has expressed in sermons and in the act of keeping a picture of Judas in his personal study.

These greater and lesser crimes give reason to believe that his heretical assertions are, truly a stubborn and deliberate rejection of the Catholic faith.

3. Background and effects of the crimes of Pope Francis

In order to understand the crimes of Pope Francis and to discern how to respond to them, it is necessary to grasp that Pope Francis is a product of a wider crisis in the Church.

This crisis first took form in the modernist crisis of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modernist thinkers such as Alfred Loisy and George Tyrrell denied not only the principal doctrines of the Catholic faith, but also the very existence of divinely revealed truths. This denial attracted considerable support among priests. Pope St. Pius X denounced modernism as the synthesis of all heresies and took action against it. The visible element of the modernist movement was in consequence suppressed for a time, but a modified version of its ideas resurfaced in the 1930s. The essence of this neomodernism was the claim that neither the Scriptures nor Catholic dogma were themselves divinely revealed truths. Instead, they were human interpretations of divine revelation. As such, they were subject to the cultural and personal limitations of their human authors. In consequence, they were open to revision in the light of later knowledge that uncovered and surpassed these limitations. Although this revision involves rejecting the previous meanings of Catholic dogmas, according to the modernist position it is not a true rejection of Catholic teaching, but the achievement of a deeper understanding of divine revelation. Necessary revisions to the contents of the Scriptures and Catholic dogma can be worked out by theologians, and can then be made official and binding by magisterial teaching.

No principled criteria are given by neomodernists for distinguishing between true divine revelation and its historically conditioned accompaniment. It is not in fact possible to give such criteria, since the Scriptures and the Church's formulations of Catholic dogma are necessarily always entirely expressed in some historical and cultural form or other. As a result, the neomodernist thesis makes it possible to deny any Catholic teaching, and to present almost any ideology as Catholic. Such fundamental doctrines as the Trinity, the Incarnation, original sin, the redemptive sacrifice of Christ, the Resurrection, and the necessity of Christian faith for salvation, have accordingly been rejected by many neomodernists presenting themselves as Catholic theologians.

The neomodernists used Protestant biblical criticism to support their position. This Protestant school of biblical study began with the deist Hermann Reimarus (1694-1768). Reimarus rejected the possibility of any supernatural intervention in history, and sought to explain the historical origins and contents of the Scriptures in entirely natural terms. This approach to the Scriptures was continued by David Strauss (1808-1874), Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860), Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976). The rejection of the miraculous and supernatural by these thinkers, generally combined with anti-Semitism as a motive for rejecting traditional Christian belief,³² was a philosophical and religious position that they accepted personally prior to their historical investigations. These positions, rather than good historical evidence and reasoning, determined their skeptical and unbelieving historical conclusions. These skeptical conclusions, which denied the existence of

miracles, the existence of divinely revealed truth, the divinity of Christ, and the divine origin of the Church, were nonetheless put forward by them as the result of objective and factual historical scholarship. Catholic modernists and neomodernists presented the conclusions of this school as established historical fact, and argued that biblical scholarship required that Catholic theology be reinterpreted on modernist lines.

Neomodernist theses on the nature of Catholic theology were openly put forward from the 1930s onward. By the 1940s, neomodernism had achieved wide acceptance within the clergy, and was openly stated by theologians like Henri Bouillard S.J. Determined opposition to neomodernism was seen as a sign of ignorance, backwardness and intellectual mediocrity in the most influential clerical circles. Cogent criticisms of neomodernism were made by orthodox theologians such as Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange O.P. and Marie-Michel Labourdette O.P.,³³ but these criticisms were met by personal attacks on the critics rather than reasoned argument. It was claimed that the critics of neomodernism were slanderers who used false accusations of heresy to attempt to destroy Catholic theologians holding legitimate theological positions. Neomodernism was nonetheless condemned in 1950 by Pope Pius XII in the encyclical *Humani generis*:

15. ... they hold that the mysteries of faith are never expressed by truly adequate concepts but only by approximate and ever changeable notions, in which the truth is to some extent expressed, but is necessarily distorted. Wherefore they do not consider it absurd, but altogether necessary, that theology should substitute new concepts in place of the old ones in keeping with the various philosophies which in the course of time it uses as its instruments, so that it should give human expression to divine truths in various ways which are even somewhat opposed, but still equivalent, as they say. They add that the history of dogmas consists in the reporting of the various forms in which revealed truth has been clothed, forms that have succeeded one another in accordance with the different teachings and opinions that have arisen over the course of the centuries.

16. It is evident from what We have already said, that such tentatives not only lead to what they call dogmatic relativism, but that they actually contain it.

This condemnation was however followed up by modest disciplinary measures that were sufficient to embitter neomodernists, but not sufficient to interfere with the spread of their ideas.

Loss of faith among the clergy inevitably leads to a spread of moral corruption (cf. Romans 1:26-27). The spread of neomodernism, which was especially strong during and after the Second World War with its disrupting effects, hence fostered an increase in immoral and criminal sexual behaviour among clergy and religious. Clerics involved in this corruption used their clerical status to secure sexual access to vulnerable Catholics. This phenomenon was partially addressed by *Religiosorum Institutio*, 'Instruction on the Careful Selection and Training of Candidates for the States of Perfection and Sacred Orders', issued by the Sacred Congregation for Religious on February 2, 1961. The imperative measures for safeguarding and reform that were proposed by this instruction were however not implemented or soon abandoned.

During the complex event of the Second Vatican Council, neomodernists achieved considerable influence. They assured prelates that some Catholic teachings that were difficult or unpopular could be modified or rejected without changing the faith. Bishops who were personally Catholic believers often accepted these assurances without grasping that they were based upon heretical premises. The theologians Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, and Edward Schillebeeckx are examples of open and influential neomodernists at the Council. Not all of the theologians who belonged to the progressive camp at the Council were neomodernists, but the positions of the neomodernist theologians were presented as conveying the teaching of the Council. The dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum* was falsely presented as teaching neomodernism, and as rejecting and replacing the teaching of the First Vatican Council on the nature of Catholic faith and the immutability of Catholic doctrine. It would be wrong to explain these developments simply as the result of conspiracy. Pre-existing neomodernist ideological conviction came first among clergy and religious, and alliances and associations were then made on the basis of this prior ideological agreement.

After the Second Vatican Council, neomodernists succeeded in presenting their position as the teaching of the Council, and in largely enforcing it on the Church. The extensive and favourable publicity received by neomodernist theologians and prelates at the Council helped to make this possible. Orthodox professors were purged or sidelined at Catholic universities and seminaries, and a favourable presentation of neomodernism was

universally required in Catholic schools and institutions of higher education. Liturgical abuses, suppression of religious habits and clothing, suppression of traditional devotions, and destruction of traditional church architecture were all widely used to make the faithful believe that traditional Catholic beliefs were obsolete and should be rejected. A systematic attack on all Catholic teaching on faith and morals was mounted from within the Church by bishops, priests and religious. Due to a kind of diabolical disorientation, the attack met with great success. Heterodoxy became mandatory in many theological institutes. Naturally enough, after being told that the faith they had previously accepted was wrong, a large proportion of priests and religious repudiated their vows and left the religious life, and a large proportion of the laity ceased to practice the faith. Thus began a decline in religious practice that has continued to the present, with the result that the Church in many countries faces extinction.

A number of magisterial interventions were made to counter these attacks. Pope Paul VI addressed various errors in the encyclicals *Mysterium fidei*, *Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, and *Humanae vitae*, and in the *Credo of the People of God*. Pope John Paul II did the same in the encyclicals *Evangelium vitae*, *Redemptoris missio*, *Ecclesia de eucharistia*, *Veritatis splendor*, and *Fides et ratio*, in the declaration *Dominus Iesus*, and in the exhortation *Reconciliatio et paenitentia*. The existence, content, and number of these interventions testifies to the gravity of the crisis of faith in the Church. The neomodernist position at the origin of this crisis, and the theologians who developed and advanced it, were however not clearly identified and condemned. There were no serious consequences for clerics and theologians who held and proclaimed these errors.

Neomodernist success was achieved partly by making allies. The neomodernists who mounted this attack on the faith faced a difficulty. They were only dominant in certain religious orders and in Western Europe. The majority of the clergy at the time of the Second Vatican Council had been educated in orthodox Catholic theology and philosophy, and many of them were inclined to hold on to what they had been taught. The neomodernists thus needed allies to enforce their ideology on the Church. They found them in the networks of homosexuals and criminal pederasts that had already developed in the Church as a result of the crisis of faith in the clergy. Members of these networks naturally tended to look favourably on neomodernist questioning of divine revelation. They offered a powerful tool, ready to hand, to enforce the neomodernist ideology on the Church. By embracing neomodernism and working to propagate it, they secured influence and promotion in the hierarchy. Their sexual activities were concealed and protected by their clerical allies, regardless of any violation of civil or canon law. An example of this phenomenon is Bishop John J. Wright, appointed cardinal and Prefect for the Congregation of the Clergy by Pope Paul VI in 1969. Not all of these criminals embraced neomodernism; some of them upheld conservative liturgical and theological positions. Conservative clerics involved in illicit sexual activity would however protect neomodernist clerics involved in these activities.

Catholic seminaries were a key sector for those seeking to transform the Church. Control of the selection and training of seminarians gave control over what the faithful would be taught. Influence over the next generation of priests was particularly important as a result of the huge exodus from the priesthood after the Second Vatican Council, which left a hole that could be filled. Control of seminaries and their teaching staff of seminaries was thus a priority of neomodernists. Priests primarily motivated by neomodernist conviction were joined on the staff of seminaries by members of pederastic networks, whose numbers, motivation, and political skill and connections were needed for the success of the neomodernist project of transformation. In consequence, in a large proportion of seminaries men engaging in homosexual and criminal pederastic activity were selected as seminarians, and men who objected to this activity were expelled or not admitted. Networks of criminal sexual predators were given immunity from interference throughout the Church, and took actual control of large swathes of the Church. Financial corruption was and is a frequent accompaniment of their activities. A number of dioceses, religious orders, and religious institutions became in effect criminal organisations presenting themselves as religious associations. When these activities were exposed by civil authorities, the local churches often collapsed as a result. Ireland, not long ago a staunchly Catholic country, has overwhelmingly rejected the Catholic faith and the Catholic Church as a result of revulsion at the criminal sexual activities of the Irish clergy.

Some individual offenders have been removed from ministry by their ecclesiastical superiors after being convicted by the civil authorities, or when the mass of evidence against them became too great to deny, but no attempt has been made by Church authorities to eradicate these networks, and they retain great power in the Church. They still operate with impunity and intimidate other clerics into silence, unless the civil authorities intervene. The career of former cardinal Theodore McCarrick exemplifies this phenomenon. McCarrick was known in Rome and among the American episcopate as a sexual predator from at least the 1990s. He was

nonetheless made Archbishop of Washington D.C. and a cardinal in 2001, and in 2002 was the main drafter of the U.S. Catholic Bishops' Dallas Charter of procedures for dealing with sexual abuse by priests. He was only removed from ministry in 2018, when widespread media coverage of his crimes made it impossible to continue protecting him.

Pope Francis is a product of these developments in the Church. He holds and propagates a neomodernist conception of revelation, faith, and theology. Throughout his career, he has protected and promoted both sexual abusers and bishops who protect criminal sexual abusers.

Pope Francis uses the well-established technique of appointing underlings who are personally compromised, in order to be sure of their absolute obedience and loyalty. His protection of criminals has, however, a wider goal. It demonstrates to the members of criminal networks in the clergy that he will protect them if they are loyal to him. Francis followed this policy both before and after his election to the papacy, and there are indications that it assisted him in becoming pope. Former cardinal Theodore McCarrick boasted in 2013 that he had played a role in the election of Pope Francis, whom he had known prior to the conclave. Crucial supporters of Bergoglio at the conclave that elected him were Cardinals Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, Godfried Danneels, Oscar Maradiaga, and Karl Lehmann, all of whom were active in protecting criminal sexual abusers.³⁴ This policy explains why Francis has taken risks and gone to extremes in protecting Rupnik, although Rupnik is not one of his henchmen. By going to such lengths for Rupnik, Francis demonstrates to important criminal abusers in the clergy that he will back them absolutely if they are on his side.

Pope Francis also sees the ideological value in securing the control of these criminal elements over the Church. These elements are committed, by the lives they live, to the rejection of Catholic faith and morals. Francis knows that ideological trends change. Zeal for neomodernism presupposed a close acquaintance with traditional Catholic theology and worship. This close acquaintance with an abhorred reality was what fuelled the passionate hatred of the neomodernists for Catholicism. The very success of the neomodernists in devastating Catholicism has thus undermined the strength of their cause, which is now visibly being replaced by an interest in and longing for the treasures of Catholicism that were buried over the course of the last six decades. This interest is especially marked among the younger generation of Catholics, to whom the passions and loathings of neomodernism are virtually incomprehensible. The ascendancy of criminal elements in the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church provides the best guarantee available for preventing a resurgence of traditional Catholic faith and worship. Guaranteeing this ascendancy is one main goal of Francis's initiatives in *Amoris laetitia* and *Fiducia supplicans*. These documents not only establish immoral and anti-Catholic practices in the Church; they enable bishops and religious superiors to eliminate seminarians and postulants who are loyal to the Catholic faith, by insisting on participation in these practices as a condition of ordination or of admission to the religious life.

Francis's fundamental goal for his pontificate is to secure the ascendancy that neomodernism achieved over the Church after the mid-20th century, and to turn this ascendancy into a permanent victory that will lead to the eradication of Catholic faith, morals, and worship once and for all. The means for attaining this goal have been cleverly thought out and carefully pursued. They are designed to work in more than one eventuality; for example, if the Catholic faithful in a given region refuse to accept the rule and the teaching of a sexually predatory ecclesiastical clique, their very refusal will lead to a victory over Catholicism as a result of the desertion of the Church by the faithful in that region. If however they accept the instruction of this clique, they will abandon their faith.

Francis has the advantage of understanding his opponents, who typically do not understand him and his strategy. His main reliance is on their fear. He knows that they are afraid of his power and cruelty, and the power and cruelty of his supporters. He knows that they exist in a Church where the pope is seen as an absolute monarch who is beyond criticism, where any open denunciation of a pope is seen as unacceptable, and where open critics of a pope are thought of as self-condemned. He grasps that they frequently resort to mental coping strategies that are typical of those in intolerable situations; strategies in which dangers are denied in the face of the evidence or simply not admitted to conscious awareness, unrealistic hopes are entertained, and implacable enemies are seen as fundamentally reasonable and benign. By playing on these fears and exploiting these coping strategies, he has advanced toward his goal with little serious opposition.

4. Action to be taken in response to the crimes of Pope Francis

Pope Francis is manifestly unfit for the papal office. His fundamental offence against the office is unbelief. Since he no longer accepts the Catholic faith that it is his task as pope to uphold, he has a moral obligation to resign the papacy.

This unbelief is not the only reason why Pope Francis should resign. The proper exercise of the papal office requires a high degree of natural and supernatural virtue. Pope Francis has shown that he lacks these virtues. Without belief in the Catholic faith, he lacks the knowledge and the graces needed to repent of his past sins, to correct the evils he has done, and to fulfil the duties of his office. Lacking faith, he also lacks all supernatural virtue. He has shown himself to be lacking in the natural virtues of prudence and justice. Even if he were to repent for his past sins, which is devoutly to be wished, he would remain unsuited for the papacy due to his flaws of character. The only good course of action open to him is to recant his heresies, express contrition for the harm he has done, resign the papacy, and devote the remainder of his life to prayer and penance.

Clearly it is most unlikely that he will do this. The Church must therefore determine how to act in the face of his crimes.

One duty that the Church must fulfil is to speak out about the crimes and heresies of Pope Francis, to denounce them, to warn the faithful of them, and to entreat Pope Francis to renounce them. This duty falls on all the members of the Church who have some right and authority to publicly teach and uphold the faith. It falls on Catholic theologians and pastors who have a cure of souls, but it falls most especially upon the bishops of the Church. 'Each of [the bishops of the Catholic Church], as a member of the episcopal college and legitimate successor of the apostles, is obliged by Christ's institution and command to be solicitous for the whole Church, and this solicitude, though it is not exercised by an act of jurisdiction, contributes greatly to the advantage of the universal Church. For it is the duty of all bishops to promote and to safeguard the unity of faith and the discipline common to the whole Church' (*Lumen gentium* 23). Those persons who have a responsibility to speak out in this way incur the guilt of Francis's crimes themselves, if they remain silent. 'Qui tacit consentire videtur, si loqui debuisset ac potuisset'; 'he who is silent is understood to consent, when he ought to have spoken and was able to do so'.

The obligations of the bishops are not limited to the public denunciation of the crimes of Pope Francis. Since these crimes have already been the subject of public supplications, protests, and denunciations by members of the faithful, and Pope Francis has only persisted in them, there are good reasons for doubting that he will be affected or led to repentance by further protests. His pertinacity in heresy has gone far enough to make it reasonable to consider that he is a public heretic. This gives rise to a grave situation for the Church. The Catholic Church has always held that popes can be heretics, and that a pope who commits the public crime of heresy loses the papal office thereby. This belief is based on the teachings of the Scriptures, which assert that the heretic separates himself from the Church by committing the sin of heresy. Clearly a pope who chooses to leave the Church by embracing heresy cannot remain pope.

Theologians and canonists have disagreed on the details of how a heretical pope falls from office. The principal schools of thought on this issue are the position of St. Robert Bellarmine, which is usually accepted by canonists, and the position of Cajetan and John of St. Thomas, which prevails among theologians. St. Robert Bellarmine holds that a manifestly heretical pope *ipso facto* loses the papal office; Cajetan and John of St. Thomas hold that some action from the Church is necessary before a heretical pope falls from the papacy because of his heresy. This difference of opinion is pertinent to the present situation, and makes it more difficult. The open heresy and criminality of Pope Francis means that his tenure of the papal office is now in doubt, but it cannot be affirmed with certainty that he is no longer the pope.

It is a mistake and a sin for faithful bishops and cardinals to do nothing, in the hope that Pope Francis will soon die and be replaced by someone better. Pope Francis is causing unrelenting harm day by day to souls and the Church. The faithful have a right to expect their believing shepherds to protect them from his attacks. These shepherds have a duty before God to protect them, and failure in this duty will bring eternal punishment upon them.

As a first step, the bishops and cardinals of the Church should make every effort to get Pope Francis to resign. He has a duty to resign under the present circumstances, and his resignation would be the best resolution to the catastrophe of his pontificate. This is true despite the fact that papal resignation is an extraordinary event that ought not to happen, since the papacy is a sacred office that should only be vacated by the death of the reigning

pontiff. The case of Benedict XVI illustrates the evils of papal resignation. But the reign of a corrupt pope who has rejected the faith and is incapable of responsibly exercising the papal office is also an extraordinary event that ought not to happen. Since it has occurred, the resignation of the pope in question is the least evil outcome available.

If Pope Francis refuses to resign, the duty of the bishops and cardinals is to proceed to declare that he has lost the papal office for heresy. If such a declaration cannot occur because there are too few bishops and cardinals willing to speak out about Francis's heresy, the faithful bishops and cardinals should form a united group to publicly warn the faithful of his crimes and heresies, state that his tenure of the papal office is in doubt due to his heresy, and admonish the faithful not to believe his statements or obey his orders unless it is clear on independent grounds that these statements and orders should be respected.

Of course, even a resignation, or a declaration of of Pope Francis' loss of office will not solve the problems in the Church. When he is gone, the clerical corruption that produced him and that he has fostered will remain. But addressing the crimes and heresies of Francis is the essential first step in dealing with this corruption.

Signed by

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