



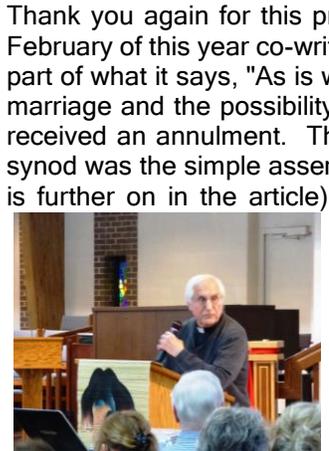
# ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM

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**STERLING HEIGHTS, MI**  
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## Introduction



Thank you again for this privilege of introducing our speaker. There was an article in *Commonweal Magazine* back in February of this year co-written by our speaker, Dr. Stephen Pope and a colleague of his from Boston College; and here is part of what it says, "As is well known the synod offered a lively debate regarding church teaching on the indissolubility of marriage and the possibility of extending Eucharistic communion to some divorced and remarried couples who have not received an annulment. The issue is certainly complex. However a troubling refrain heard both inside and outside the synod was the simple assertion: doctrine can never change. The extent to which the Church's teaching had changed (this is further on in the article) in the past few centuries often point to the reversal of teachings and the extent of this is breathtaking." It is very timely that Dr. Pope is with us today to speak about: "Can doctrine change?" And I say it is very timely, because two days ago Pope Francis opened up another area, and this one is going to be very difficult. He suggested, in response to a question: "Yes, we need to study whether women can be ordained." Now that is a breakthrough, because up until then, as a bishop, I was not permitted to talk about women's ordination. That was forbidden! One bishop in fact, William Morris from Australia was forced to resign because in a pastoral letter he had suggested to his people, in his far flung diocese which had very, very few priests, that among the other possibilities for supplying priests to the parishes, maybe we needed to look at the ordination of women. He was forced to resign for even suggesting that. Now I guess it's on the agenda. But don't get your hopes up too high (Laughter and applause), because I don't know what Dr. Pope thinks about this, but I am sure this is going to be one of the most difficult areas of Catholic doctrine that we have had to confront regarding change or not in all of our history. It's really going to be difficult. But at least we have a speaker today who is very well qualified to speak to us on this issue of the possibility of change in Catholic teaching.

**Bishop Tom Gumbleton**

Dr. Pope comes to us from Boston College where he is a professor of theology. He has a degree in philosophy and theology, a bachelor's degree from Gonzaga University in 1977, an M. A. degree in Divinity from the University of Chicago in 1983, and he received his PhD in theological ethics also from the University of Chicago in 1988. At Boston College he teaches courses on social ethics and theological ethics. He has written innumerable articles - 4 or 5 page list of articles that he has written - but also books. He has one called *The Evolution of Altruism and the Ordering of Love* that was published by Georgetown in 1994. Another one *Human Evolution and Christian Ethics*, Cambridge 2007. He's edited a book *Essays on the Ethics of St. Thomas Aquinas*, Georgetown 2001, and a number of other books too lengthy to read them all. He continues to do research and he is especially interested in research in Christian ethics and evolutionary theory, love and justice and contemporary Christian ethics, charity and natural law and Thomas Aquinas and also Roman Catholic social teachings. So his interests are very wide spread and challenging. Because of all of this, his wide experience and his deep scholarship, he is very well prepared to speak to us today on the possibility of change in Catholic doctrine. And so I ask you to please welcome Dr. Stephen Pope. (Applause)

## Can Catholic Moral Teaching Develop?

Never trust anyone under thirty! (Laughter) You know, when we were younger, I remember when I was a teenager growing up in California, people had a little sign, *Never Trust Anyone Over 30*. That shifted. So anyway it's nice to be here. There is a lot in the topic that I am going to speak about; and I am hoping to have not just me talking to put you to sleep, but for me to make some comments and have you respond. If at any point you want to ask a question you can do that. Don't start screaming at me but you can raise your hand and I'll recognize you. We will have a discussion section after I go through some of these slides.

So the first slide is a citation from Pope Francis about the need for two values that I think are essential to this discussion that often get dichotomized. One value is fidelity. The other value is creativity. There is no reason why these are enemies. And what I like about this citation from Pope Francis he says "To be faithful, to be creative, we need to be able to change." That's contradictory to some people, that to change sounds like you are being unfaithful.

## Stephen Pope



But when times change and people's experiences evolves, if you don't change with them, you're no longer faithful, you're just rigid. Fidelity is important because we want to say we are faithful to Christ, we are not making it up as we go along. We're not just winging it, and we don't just want to reflect our culture, which is in bad enough shape. But how can we maintain that connection to Christ but also be open and changing as Christ did in his own time.

Christ was not woodenly set in his ways: he was challenging what he inherited. He also grew out of what he inherited. He deepened what he inherited. So we have this question: "Can Catholic doctrine be changed?" I love this cover from Newsweek: "Is the Pope Catholic?" (Laughter) When I first saw it I thought it was talking about me? But no! - get the Pope joke out of the way early is my goal. So, is the pope Catholic? Is he trying to change? He sure is trying to change the Church. Is he trying to change doctrine? So some of the time when we think that everything is black and white, we sometimes close off the way of grace and the way of growth. If you want to grow you have to be willing to change. And what is the Spirit asking us in our lives from the moment we're born to the moment we go to the pearly gates of heaven? Grace is constantly inviting us to open our hearts, to open our minds, to embrace the truth wherever we find it. And often we hear that life is divided into two types of people: us and them. And sometimes people get followers by inciting fear. Fear that tightens the "us" group, but it alienates us from the "other," which means we're not listening to the grace that God is making available in "the other." So how do we not close off grace in our lives?

So the Catholic tradition has a strong emphasis on continuity. So for example, Vincent of Lerins said "Progress in religion must be progress of faith, not change, The faith doesn't change," he said, "but we change by growing closer to the faith." So, he says "When each several thing is improved in itself, that is progress. When we improve, we're making progress. But when a thing is turned out of one thing into another, that is change." From the 5th century until 2016 a lot of people are allergic to the word change. They are terrified of change, because they think maybe it means we were wrong. Maybe not we were wrong, but maybe the all star team that we've been rooting for, the fathers of the church, the great theologians, the councils, maybe they were wrong in something. Can you image? How can they not be wrong? They are human beings. Human beings inspired by the Spirit is different than human beings being God: and only God is right all the time. So remember the sign when Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council? He said, "The deposit or truths of faith contained in our sacred teaching are one thing, while the mode in which they are enunciated, keeping the same meaning and keeping the same judgment, is another." So this suggests that formulations change, but that truth does not change; that style changes, because we are trying to relate to people, but the message is identical. So John XXIII, who was truly an innovative person, of course, calling the council, was still focused on the truth is immutable, and it is our changing perception of it that's deepening.

Now here's what we have in Pope Francis citing Vincent of Lerins, that 5th century authority. He says, "St. Vincent makes a comparison between the biological development of man and the transition of one era to another of the deposit of faith, which grows and is strengthened by time." Human self-understanding changes with time.; the truth doesn't change. So we grow in understanding the truth and this is necessary for the transmission of the Gospel in its timeless meaning. You see, even though he himself is open to creativity and creative fidelity, the pope himself has a strong note of continuity here. So does John XXIII; and so does Vincent of Lerins. That's a very Catholic approach. John Paul II, it will not surprise anyone here, also was big on continuity. So he says, "Catholic social teaching is identical in its fundamental inspiration, but it's ever new because it's subject to the necessary and opportune adaptations suggested by time and place." So he would say the right of the worker in the 19th century was maintained strongly in the 20th century; it's maintained in the 21st century. But what is a worker in Detroit. In 1920 the workers needs in Detroit is going to be different than the workers needs in 2016. The automobile industry is completely shattered as it used to be known here. What is the right of the worker now? It's different than a just wage, health benefits and retirement. How about retraining? How about education? How about learning to be able to live in an information technology world?

So we have this question: Can doctrinal change happen? This shows you how confused the Church is, in all due respect.

So we have Cardinal Burke, you may have heard of him. He lives near here? So Cardinal Burke says during the synod (Cardinal Burke you might say is the man who says, "There will be change over my dead body. The pope is not free to change the Church's teachings with regard to the immorality of homosexual acts, or the indissolubility of marriage, or any other doctrine of the faith". OK! That leaves no room for ambiguity.

Cardinal Dolan says, "First of all, a synod can't change doctrine. Nobody can. Nobody can changer doctrine." That's odd, theologically. "And a synod is more conversational. I mean, if the Holy Father wanted to give serious attention to some point of established Church doctrine or discipline, it would take an Ecumenical Council to do that." That's not true. I mean, that's a way is calling a council, but lots of Church teachings have been promulgated by popes acting on their own authority - of course, in communion with the bishops and speaking for the universal church. So he says, "To change doctrine is not part of our agenda."

Cardinal Reinhard Marx, considered on the more progressive side says, "Doctrine develops" OK, so now we have Marx saying doctrine develops; that's good from my point of view. Saying doctrine will never change is a restrictive view of things. It's just historically inaccurate.

It's not just a matter of what's your norm, it's just a fact that doctrine has changed over time; and Cardinal Marx knows this. So he says, "The Church's doctrine doesn't depend on the spirit of time, but can develop over time". Notice he's not saying our formulation changes over time, we're growing in our appreciation of doctrine. He's saying that doctrine itself can change.

Now Cardinal Gerhard Muller, who is the number one man at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith - this is the sometimes called the doctrinal watchdog; it's not very complimentary, but that's the phrase that you can hear from sometimes in his position - he says, "Dogma develops and is evolving". That's also dubious theologically; but he says, "Dogma is evolving," not has evolved, and we're now sticking with it, "but does not change in a way that contradicts basic principles of the teaching ... that would conclude or affirm the contrary." So what Cardinal Muller is saying, doctrine can change; but it can't reverse itself; it can't contradict. Later formulations can't contradict what was said earlier in the history of the Church.

So, we are going to find out about that.

So in response to this question, "Can doctrine change?" there are basically three responses:

First of all, it can't change. Christ gave the deposit of the faith to the apostles. They wrote some down; they kept some in oral traditions and practices of the Church; and that deposit is immutable.

The second point - you saw this with Mueller a bit - that the Church is constantly evolving and it can be relevant to contemporary culture. This goes beyond Mueller because this view is really the view of modernism. It says the Church ought to always be keeping pace with popular opinion, so we get more and more believers. And I sometimes hear undergraduates that I teach say, "Professor Pope, if the Church just keeps sticking with this stuff, no one is going to listen, and they are gonna all leave, and no one's going to belong to this organization. And if they don't have any followers, they're gonna have no money." (Laughter) I said, "You've got to stop thinking about the Church as a business. It's not a business with a profit margin. It's here to witness to the truth of Jesus, and to help us live good lives, and to be one with God." They can't get that because they have a consumer model. But this is kind of a consumer model, the Church has to always be responding and reshaping itself to be popular.

And the third view is of Cardinal Newman (John Henry Newman), the most famous 19th century Catholic, great authority, everybody loves him. Well, not everybody, but the in the theological world I'm in. It's interesting the people, left, right and center all cite Newman. So he says, "Doctrine develops over time. Historical Christianity shows that certain doctrines are not defined, i.e., formally stated by the Church, until the time is ripe." So what we read in the Profession of Faith at Mass every Sunday: "We believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth." All that's Profession of Faith that came out of creeds from the 4th, 5th and 8th century - early creeds of the Church. So he says, "The Creed, the Canon, The Papacy, Ecumenical Councils, all began to form, as soon as the Empire relaxed its tyrannous oppression of the Church". Fourth century.

So I'm not going to go through all this because I will kill you, but I want to stress the simple concept that Newman had, that he developed into a very sophisticated theory is that growth of doctrine is like growth of a plant. That you begin with a seed; that's the New Testament. The seed is watered; it's nurtured into a young plant; that's the early Church. It begins to develop fully in the patristic and medieval period; and then it comes to fruition in the modern period, contemporary period. It's a plant. The later development of the plant is simply an unfolding of what is genetically primed, already located in the seed. It's an unfolding; it's not a changing of what it was - the oak tree does not become a zebra - so this development he had as an idea. Where that leads you is later development of doctrine can never contradict what was said earlier; and that's the key question. Can the church contradict itself; discovering something new about the world, about human beings, about God even that leads it to say the opposite of what it had said centuries earlier?

If we ask ourselves: Can the Church Change? Can doctrine specifically change? We have to ask: what kind of doctrine? Our discussion gets obscure and confused, because we are not identifying what kind of doctrine we're talking about. So you can see there are four essential levels of Church teaching.

1. The first is dogmas, which are divinely revealed truths. This is what dogma means in its true Catholic sense: a central core belief. So if you think about Christian belief as a series of concentric circles, okay? At the very heart of this, about God's salvific role for us, about the nature of the Church as the body of Christ, about sacraments as a way in which we live into God's grace, about Christ as the Son of God and fully human. Those core Catholic beliefs are dogma's, okay?

2. Beneath that we have the level of definitive doctrine. This is statements that are proposed on matters of faith that are very closely connected with matters of revealed faith, revealed truth, okay? So they're not considered to be directly revealed, but they're considered to be essential to direct revelation; and this requires, the Church says, "a firm and interior assent of mind."
3. The third level - and this is the one that's controversial - the third level is called non-definitive, ordinary doctrine. By the statement definitive one means closely, explicitly connected to the heart of Christianity and therefore considered to be infallible, that is, cannot be mistaken without the entire body of Christian truth of Christianity being mistaken. The non-definitive, ordinary doctrine regards specific teachings on faith and morals: capital punishment, the teaching about slavery, the teaching of the just war theory, the teaching of anything you could think about on a concrete material norm is a matter of ordinary doctrine. This level of teaching of this level of doctrine is not considered to be the same level as the first two, okay? That's important.
4. And then the prudential admonitions in use of discipline. For example, what many Catholics don't know is that mandatory clerical celibacy is not on the first three levels of Church teaching. It's a disciplinary issue. And it is something that the Church could change without in any way contradicting the heart of Christian faith.

A couple of important distinctions here on doctrine on that third level: The first is that all the Church's teaching tried to either tell us what's part of the our deposit of faith, the core of Christianity, or helps us live that out and understand it better. For Catholic theology, from the time of Cardinal Newman, it's been pretty well accepted that doctrines do develop, and essential important doctrines evolve and develop. For example, the Church did not always hold that respect for life must begin at the moment of conception, which is what the Church teaches now. When Thomas Aquinas taught in the 13th century, he used Aristotle's biology and said, "The moment in which the taking of the unborn life is homicide, is murder, happens after a number of weeks." The Aristotelian biology is that the human soul didn't go into the human body until well down the gestational line, after the first trimester. The Church now says, "Well, now because we know more about the process of fetal development; and we don't know where to draw the line; we have to presume the earliest possible time which is the moment of conception; and that becomes the moment of respect. That's on the third level of Church teaching. It's not in Scripture. It wasn't held for the majority of the history of the Church; it was a 20th century position. It's still taught by the Church to be very serious; but it is not on the same level as those other kinds of truths.

So the third point is especially important, which is that the teachings that are non definitive from the ordinary magisterium are not irreformable; that is, that they cannot never be changed or ever be thought about. Although sometimes you hear popes and some bishops say, "You can't talk about it; and can't think about it; this is beyond discussion." I think they are confusing levels of authority. So Catholics in good faith may disagree with any Church teachings on this level, if they do so conscientiously, not out of a disregard for authority, but out of a conscientious process of prayer and deliberation and communication with people. We are supposed to exercise our consciences and not be just passive recipients.

So the bishops in 1968 laid out certain specific norms for when one can disagree with these teachings, the teachings of the Church. This was in response to the birth control in encyclical, *Humana Vitae*. So they said that someone can disagree with Church teaching, if they have if they have serious and well founded reasons, if there is no effort to undermine the teaching of the Church in general, there is not any attempt to just dismiss Church teaching, but is taken real seriously, and the dissent does not cause others to fall into error themselves - it does not scandalize people.

So here is a couple of principles in our discussion. First Newman, in the Catholic tradition, recognized that dogma and doctrine have developed, the first and second level of authority even. Those statements have developed over time. The Church also acknowledges that many times the practices of Catholics have violated the teachings of the Church, but it would have called the sins of the sons and daughters of the Church. This is John Paul II talking about Christian slave traders, Christians who owned slaves, including Jesuits and Dominicans and Franciscans who owned slaves. But the question we have to ask is: has the Church at times, in fact, implicitly or explicitly, rejected formerly held teachings, not just organic development, right? but the oak tree becomes a zebra? Is that what is going on? Has the magisterium or anyone in the magisterium admitted that it has been wrong about some doctrinal matters? I have a feeling I know what you are thinking right now. The authority that I recommend to you to read on this is a lawyer, who is a federal judge, whose name is John Noonan, a very devout Catholic, who wrote a book called, *A Church that Can and Cannot Change*. So Noonan writes, "Wide shifts in the teaching of moral duties, once presented as part of Christian doctrine by the magisterium, have occurred. In the course of this displacement of one set of principles, what was forbidden became lawful (cases of usury which is charging interest on money lent, and marriage, marriage was never forbidden but certain types of marriages were forbidden); what was permissible became unlawful (the case of slavery which was approved for about 1900 years by Christians); and what was required became forbidden (the persecution of heretics). So those seem like pretty good changes, not just organic development.

So let's take a look at a couple of cases of where this might happen. Let's think about doctrine, not only as just official statements by the Church, but also a richer sense of the teaching we find in the Bible, as a kind of doctrine, a teaching of the Bible, and the variance between the Bible and its own evolution and Christian doctrine today.

And actually, I think, a lot of times we find that the Church's teaching was against the Bible. Of course, this is what Protestant fundamentalists were saying: "I knew that, I told you that. That's why you are Catholics, because you don't believe in the Bible."

The Catholic approach is that we have to think about the Bible as developmental, right? There is a process of development of our interpretation of what we take out of the Bible is useful for our salvation; and what we see in biblical text are actually harmful for our salvation, for our living a Christian life; and if we take them literally, we become horrible human beings. This is one example. So Deuteronomy says: "If a city makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; and when the Lord your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword, but the women and the little ones, the cattle, and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourselves; and you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the Lord your God has given you." Now who does this remind you of? ISIS! Exactly! Deuteronomy is saying this, and this is considered a humanitarian modification of the ban, which is that you kill everything alive. You kill the men, the women, the children, the animals, and you cut the trees down, and you sow salt on the ground. That's what the Romans did to Carthage. This is what the Israelites were often told to do when they occupied territory that were held by the people like the Malachite's, the Jebusites.

Now compare those to humanistic, humanitarian ethics to the right; we have the Catechism of the Catholic Church: "Noncombatants, wounded soldiers, and prisoners must be respected and treated humanely". The Bible is all about war crimes. That's not a reversal. And we have also in the Catechism, drawing from *Gaudium et Spes*, drawing from the Second Vatican Council: "Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation." Pretty strong, isn't it? You can see those Catholics don't like the Bible, but it's really not that. It's there's a perception of what it is. What does it mean to say God loves human beings, and that these people in the land to be occupied by the Israelites are all created in God's image. But what we are really saying is that our notion of who God loves has expanded radically, that to say that God loves all human beings, and not just the Israelites.

Then we read Scripture very differently if we have that conception. Where did we get that conception? We get it from the New Testament. So we have in Leviticus, "You shall give chase to your enemies, and they shall fall before you from the sword. Five of you shall give chase to 100, and a 100 of you shall give chase to 10,000. Your enemies shall fall before you by the sword." And in the Psalms, "Oh daughter of Babylon, you who devastate. Happy shall they be who pay you back for what you have done to us. Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock." So if you hear this in the Scriptures, it's hard to say at Mass, "This is the word of the Lord." It's like, "Whoa!" It's the word of a psychopath. But we're thinking now in thousands of years of development; and the thousands of years have given us human beings who are very, very slow learners. So it takes a long time for us to get the concept of love. We have in the Gospel of Luke: "You shall love your enemies." And in Paul: "Bless those who persecute you; bless, and do not curse them... Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of God. Do not repay evil with evil." What a change, even within Scripture, right?

Another change, another example is the death penalty. So we have the Council of Trent saying that this is the legitimate authority of the state is exercised by taking the guilty lives of those who take innocent lives. Going back to Genesis, right? "The man who sheds another man's blood, his blood shall be shed." You have Pope Pius XII in the 20th century: "Public authority limits itself to depriving the offender of the good of life in expiation for his guilt." Now you had that endorsement, of course, it was inherited from Roman law and from the Bible; the death penalty was part of divine justice, executed by the state on behalf of God. Then you have John Paul II, where he says: "The new evangelization calls for followers of Christ to be unconditionally pro-life. A sign of hope is the increased recognition of the dignity of human life must never be taken away, even in the case of someone who has done grave evil." That's quite a strong change from Pius XII, right? Maybe he is spinning in his grave. But notice what the pope says, "Increasing recognition." So this implies that we are learning, we're developing, we're growing, we're starting to get it.

Then, if we say we respect life, we're not making that point when we kill somebody to prove a point, though actually in contradiction to ourselves. So this is more human progress we see in the Church. We see the same thing with religious freedom. Pope Innocent III - I love this citation: "We decree as a perpetual law, that whatsoever heretic ... shall be found therein, shall immediately be taken and delivered to the secular court to be punished according to the law, all of his goods shall be sold, the house the heretic has been received, shall be altogether destroyed, nor shall anyone presume to rebuilt it" - don't even rebuild his house - "but let that which was a den of iniquity become a receptacle of filth." It's like "Whoa," right? A little strong there. Same thing you see in Gregory XVI and Pius IX, who said, "The notion of religious freedom is insanity." And you have in Vatican II on *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Vatican Council declares: "The human person has a right to religious freedom." This means that all men and women are to be immune from coercion. Don't burn their houses down. Don't kill them. "in such wise that in matters religious, no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others". Another radical change! Aren't you relieved you live now and not a few centuries ago?

We see the same thing with slavery. Time and again, even in Scripture, we have a defense of slavery. You notice in the 10 Commandments: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." Notice the wife with the house, thanks a lot - property. "Or male or female slave or ox." So the slaves are right between the wives and oxen. Another sign of development we hope, right? that anything belongs to your neighbor. We have this in Leviticus. Pope Nicholas V authorized the Spanish and the Portuguese to go to the new world and enslave its inhabitants. There are other papal documents contradicting this. There was a debate within the Church, but there was strong authorization; and then at Second Vatican Council, "Whatever violates the integrity of the human person ... whatever insults human dignity, including slavery ... the selling of women and children ... where men are treated as mere tools for profit ... all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed ... they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator." Now the Church didn't officially, once and for all, condemn slavery 'til 1890 - talk about slow learning - Leo XIII. And they only condemned it after the last part of the country had abolished slavery - that was Brazil. You don't want to get out ahead too much.

So I think this is the most important actual development. It's the question about who God is. I think it is a development that we are always going to be intimately distant with, distant from, because God is an absolute mystery. But notice the difference in how God is understood between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. And I don't want to do this in a way what is called supersessionist, that is to say: the covenant is no longer valid and that the Jews are benign people, and that the Old Testament is from a bad God. That is manicky and dualism. I do think the seeds of divine love clearly are very strongly scattered throughout the Hebrew Bible - the notion of *Hesed*, God's covenant love in particular, God's forgiveness of the people of Israel. But there is a strong difference here when Amos says, "Is a trumpet blown in a city and the people are not afraid? Does disaster befall a city unless the Lord has done it?" God does the disaster, God hurts people, God damages people. I once had a student come to my office after I taught her for a year; she started crying and she said, "I'm pregnant and I came to talk to you. I know you're not a counselor. My question for you: 'Is God going to get me?'" Is God going to get me? I said, "God is not in the business of getting people. We get busy getting ourselves. God is trying to stop us from people getting us; and stop us from being our own enemies."

So this idea, you think, "This sounds very Old Testament." A lot of people still think this way, right? When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, Pat Robertson said, "This is God's punishment of gays." Outrageous! Isaiah - this is especially important and I love Isaiah. How do you not love Isaiah? He's fantastic - but he says, "I form light and create darkness, I make weal and I create woe." I create woe - I'm going to kick your ass. Whoa! Father, is it okay if I say that here? (Laughter) I'll get it later (he laughs). If my plane goes down you'll know what happened. But now we have John: "Beloved, let us love one another, because God is from love; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God, and whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love." What a difference. What a difference. We still don't get this. We read the words, they are up here; but do they get in here. And I think what Francis is trying to do is have us get it down here.

So, John Noonan, the man that I quoted from the book *A Church That Can and Cannot Change*, that says when you look at doctrinal innovation, of the kind we just looked at: war, the death penalty, slavery, also he talks about usury and other ways the Church has changed, he says, "What normally happens is that insight comes from experience. And that experience is especially influenced by empathy. When we begin to understand other people, we can begin to think about doctrine more realistically, and more pastorally, and more lovingly." We're not talking *about* people; we're talking *with* people. That's a world of difference, isn't it? To really be informing. Our question is: "How does Christ want us to live? How does Christ want us to act? In relation to another person?" How can you think about that question without asking: "What is the other person's perspective? What is the other person going through? What are their struggles? What is their suffering? What is their joy?" right.? So this is akin to what Paul talks about in Philippians, when he says, "This is my prayer: that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best." Notice the connection between love and truth. St. Augustine once said, "We only really know people when we love them." We only know the truth when we are coming out of love, and not out of fear and anger and judgment. So what Paul is saying here is: "I pray that you love more and more, so you can know more and more, and make good judgments based upon that knowledge and that love."

So a key concept here is *empathy*. Psychologists tell us empathy has got two functions. One, empathy is cognitive. It's being able to take the role of someone else and understand what they are thinking - called cognitive empathy, sometimes. Second is affective or emotional. It is being able to feel what the other person feels. Real empathy has both sides: fundamentally feeling what they feel, so that you can know what they know. Christians talk about "living in the Spirit." The Spirit is a way of talking about how God evokes in us empathy for others. We talk about compassion because, if anything, is the central Christian virtue, it is compassion. Compassion is another word for *mercy*. What is compassion? Compassion is empathy plus good will. I want what is good for you, because you can actually do cognitive and emotional empathy, but not care about the person. Psychopaths are actually very good at being empathic; but they use it to manipulate people. But Christian compassion is empathy, plus good will, plus concrete action. So think of the Good Samaritan. He was moved in his guts, the story says.

He went to help the man in the ditch, found out what happened, and then did something concrete, a number of things concretely to help him. So this goes back to the Gospel of Luke, "Be compassionate as your heavenly father is compassionate." We can't be compassionate without empathy. What's key about empathy is that it opens us up to the experience of other people. And I think Vatican II, in a lot of ways, was the Church proclaiming its desire for empathy with the whole world. It had gone from being an in-group empathy, feeling caring about Catholics in a world they're embattled against, a fortress Church; to take down the walls, and let's be recognizing our connection to all of humanity, especially the poor. So the difficulty is that Church teachings, at times, seems more focused on protecting the authority and credibility of the Church: we can't change because it might look like we made a mistake - as if anybody thinks they don't make mistakes - more focused on the credibility of the Church than on responding to the real world experience of Christians.

I think that is what is radical about Pope Francis; and that is why he is changing the Church, because he is trying to change this dynamic. So, he says, "This capacity for empathy enables a true human dialogue in which words, ideas and questions arise from an experience of fraternity and shared humanity." Again notice the logic here love, fraternity and shared humanity. Love enables us to be in dialogue. What is dialogue? It's people teaching each other. It's not one person lecturing the other one, like I am doing now. It's not one way, it's not unilateral; but it's a back and forth dialogue in which everybody is learning and teaching at the same time, in which we all benefit from. So, I think what Pope Francis is saying essentially is that all Christians, and especially pastors, must cultivate empathy, not only for the other, but also for one another, for everyone in the household of God; people sitting way back there matter just as much to God as the people in the front row - sorry bishop, but I know he believes that too - so notice when he says in the Apostolic Exhortation on the *Joy of the Gospel*, "We need a Church this is bruised, hurting and dirty, because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church that is caught up in a slavish preoccupation with liturgy and doctrine, procedure and prestige." It is not that liturgy and doctrine are bad, they are good; but you have to see that the love is what is driving, and what is inspiring, and is what is the whole purpose of liturgy and prayer. And doctrine is what is driving us to love our neighbor. So he also writes, "God save us from a worldly Church, with superficial spiritual and pastoral trappings!" Urging a greater role for the laity, the pope warns of excessive *clericalism*, and calls for a more inclusive female presence in the Church, especially where important decisions are made. And I am going to go, "Yah!" and, "Holy Father, keep going, don't retire, don't die, please." (Laughter) These are the hors d'oeuvres, we haven't been given the main meal yet, I hope.

So here is what I think. Pope Francis represents change because he recognizes that *mercy* is the path to truth, doctrinal as well as pastoral. And, I think, for such a long time we have focused so much on truth that we have lost mercy; or mercy has been an afterthought; or mercy as been an application of truth, and not the ground of truth. When I say *truth*, I mean how we see the world, how we understand the world. If it is informed by mercy, we see a different world than if it is informed by judgment and exclusion and holding people up to standards that we ourselves couldn't even live with. And you know, of course, who didn't like this at all, right? Jesus. That's what drove him bananas against the Pharisees. It's the hypocrisy and how they hurt people by their judgments. So, Francis says, "I think we too are the people who, on the one hand, want to listen to Jesus, but at other times, like to find a stick to beat others with, to condemn others...and I say it with humility - that this is the Lord's most powerful message: mercy." That's amazing! The pope understands all of revelation - Scripture and tradition, including doctrines - fundamentally, as expressions of divine mercy. Then we have to ask ourselves, if the doctrine doesn't contain mercy, are we understanding it right? Is this formulated right? Are we getting it; or should we just get over it. Should we take what we can that is true -we always want to do that - but if mercy becomes the sieve through which we interpret doctrine, it really changes how Catholics function.

I have many, many students. I've been teaching at Boston College for 28 years. When I started, it felt to me in the classroom like two thirds were Catholic, church going, more or less in a Catholic kind of way. I'd say now, active church goers, one in ten, in a Catholic school with 70% nominally Catholic. But they say the number one reason - the number reason - they don't go to church is all they perceive is judgment. All they perceive is not living up to expectations. All they hear is sin. And I had students that just finished the course yesterday and one of them said, "Thank you. I didn't know the Church cared about love. Now, they had never been to church. This person, this individual, had never been to church except he went to one person's baptism, and went to a bar mitzvah - bar mitzvah is not church, but at least he was aware of the situation. But his PR of the Church, not just Catholic, Protestant, is condemning, condemning, condemning; and I think Francis sees this. His most powerful message is: *mercy*."

So I think - this is the key line of the presentation for me - the change is in practices, if we start being merciful in our lives: the pope bringing showers into St. Peter's square for the homeless people and bathrooms. It's about time. And the Church has been beautiful in charity in Rome in many ways. The first hospital for syphilitics was set up for pilgrims coming for the Jubilee Year in 1500 right outside one of the main gates in Rome. So, if changes in practices lead to changes in attitude, we become more and more merciful if we act mercifully. And change in attitudes over time and space, if it spreads, can shape our understanding of the word of God and of our way of life; and that is in a way talking about faith and morals. But the doctrines are secondary to the way of life; and the way of life is secondary really to experiencing and being committed to mercy. So Pope Francis: "A pastor cannot feel that it is enough simply to apply moral laws ... as if they were stones to throw at people's lives." That's a good one!

I think one of the marks of mercy, as he understands it as a Jesuit, is to seek grace in the midst of all circumstances. Even in the most messy lives, there's grace present. So it is a very undualistic world view, that there are good people and bad people. There are people with grace, there are people without grace. There are people who are in the state of sin; there are people who are in the state of grace, which when I was a kid growing up in Catholic schools, lasted about 20 minutes. You were almost always in the state of sin; just don't get hit by a car before Saturday afternoon. But you're mostly in the state of sin and the Church is what dispenses grace to you. The way that theology changed is that is the way we think about grace. So that by thinking that everything is black and white - this is the Church I grew up in - but thinking that everything is black and white, we sometimes close off the way to grace, and of growth, and discourage paths of sanctification which give glory to God. Let us remember that a small step in the midst of great human limitations can be more pleasing to God than a life, which appears outwardly in order, but moves through the day without confronting great difficulties. So he's telling people, "If you're gay, look for God's grace in your life and respond to it. If you are cohabiting, look for God's grace in your life and respond to it. If you're living in a second, civil marriage, look for God's grace in your life and respond to it. And especially mercy for those who have been excluded or abandoned."

So we have this story: Imagine a woman attending Mass faithfully week after week - this was a friend of mine who went through this - but you all know someone like this, living her second marriage vow and with all her heart, caring for her children and grandchildren, acknowledging her failures, praying for forgiveness; but she is excluded from the love of the Eucharistic, excluded from the table. We have Pope Francis saying, "The Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak." What happened to her?

But I have a good friend, she had six children. He was a doctor; and she was about 38 years old; and the husband took off with his nurse. It was like a soap opera, but it happened. He skipped the state. She applied for annulment. She was told to get a canon lawyer. She said, "I trust the Church. I'm just going to write it up, I'm sure they will understand." Yeah! "I was married 15 years, but my husband left me. This is 10 years after he left. I'm lonely." I went to visit her. On the inside of her bedroom door there was a sign in her handwriting saying, "*I can make it through another day with God's grace.*" She was incredibly lonely, and she was a good Catholic; so she never dated again, because the Church turned down her annulment. Where is God's mercy for her? And we would say to her, "Forget it! God understands, God loves you." She wouldn't do it; her DNA was Catholic. I mean, I have pretty good Catholic DNA, I have a Catholic name, but there is a limit. You have to live with your conscience; but she wouldn't give herself permission to do that. She was very old school. So I think Pope Francis is saying, "We have to think about this woman with mercy and not about the law." She actually did nothing wrong, but she was still asking for forgiveness for all the little ways she may have neglected her husband, and may have thrown her husband into the arms of his nurse. I say, "Forget that! Shoot them both!" Oh no, I don't believe in that. (Laughter) I don't believe in killing, but if I did, that would be a good case.

Another factor here is that the mercy rejects the stigmatization of the marginalized. So he says, "If someone is gay, and he searches for the Lord, and has good will, who am I to judge? We shouldn't marginalize people for this; they must be integrated into society." Now, if we think about this attitude, what if we all had this attitude, what practices would follow of including people. And if we had the practices, then how would it mean to live Christian morality. It's a morality of inclusion. That's a doctrinal move. But the doctrine doesn't come from the top down; it comes from the bottom up. It comes from the *Sensus Fidelium*, where people are going.

So a couple of differences: We see Pope Francis is saying how mercy affects his interpretation of doctrine. Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, "We must once again declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun ... even for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as licit means of regulating birth." Ok? That is a very technical language for no condoms, no artificial birth control, no pill. Now he wrote this after the pill had come out in 1968; took five years to think about it; went against the Papal commission that recommended that the Church modify its teaching, because of the experience of married couples. And he said, "No, we can't change it." And the significant argument was put to him by the head of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith, at the time, Cardinal Ottaviani, who said, "If you change the teaching of *Casti Connubii* (Pope Pius XI 1930) you will destroy the credibility of the Church to teach truth; because, if we are wrong on this, we could be wrong on anything. And if we do that, there's no Resurrection." It's a slippery slope. It starts with birth control, because in Catholic ethics it always starts with something sexual. (Laughter) Why that is, I have no idea; but there is a weird thing going on there. So he says, "This includes in conformity with these landmarks in the human and Christian vision of marriage; we must once again declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun, and, above all, directly willed and procured abortion, even if for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as licit means of regulating birth." So he is saying, of course, abortion is condemned as it has for many, many years but back to the *Didache*, the early, early Church was against the taking of unborn life. But he is saying here that birth control and abortion suffer from the same problem which became known as a contraceptive mentality, an attitude of against life.

John Paul II wrapped it up even more and said, "You're fostering a culture of death if you use birth control," which to many ordinary Catholics that are married and are actually using it, which is 80% of married couples in the Catholic Church in the U. S., which at one point used it.

When their first seven children started driving them insane, they realized, "I need to stop." (Laughter) He's saving, even for therapeutic reasons; use of artificial contraception is absolutely excluded. The word absolute means there are no exceptions, ever. Now what is Pope Francis saying? Two months ago he is on a plane coming back from Brazil, and a reporter asked him "Can abortion be the lesser of two evils in the case of a pregnant woman infected with the Zika virus?" You all know about the Zika virus, horrendous microcephaly, lot of problems. Pope Francis says, "This abortion is not the lesser of two evils; it is a crime. On the lesser evil, avoiding pregnancy, we are speaking in terms of the conflict between the fifth and sixth commandment." That's the commandment not to kill and the commandment not to commit adultery. Somehow he connects the use of artificial contraception with committing adultery, which I think is another mental leap. In any case he says, "Paul VI, a great man, in a difficult situation in Africa, permitted nuns to use contraceptives in cases of rape - this is still happening in the Congo by the way, nuns are raped in the Congo; women are raped in the Congo in massive numbers of women because it is a weapon of war - So Pope Francis Says, " Paul VI permitted nuns to use contraceptives in cases of rape; on the other hand, avoiding pregnancy is not an absolute evil." Well Paul VI said, "Contraception is an absolute evil." Pope Francis is saying, "It is not an absolute evil." I will maintain: that is not growth; that's change. It's change, coming out of a pastoral awareness.

On reception of communion of divorced and remarried: You know John Paul II said, "It is forbidden." He said explicitly, the *internal forum*, a conversation between a priest and a person who is seeking discernment and guidance in private, confidential conversation, John Paul II said, "That is not any basis for authorizing people to go to communion, if they have been civilly married." Now what do you see Francis saying in *Amoris Laetitia*, "Matters of civilly remarried Catholics should be seen within the context of ongoing spiritual discernment, in the private conversations of the internal forum." Notice how he is conceding the relationship between the priest and the lay person here, not as the judge and the lawgiver and the criminal, but as friends, as an advisor, as someone who's trusted, as someone who can give spiritual guidance. Notice it's not fundamentally moral either; it's fundamentally spiritual. The morality comes out of the spirituality, because how we act should come out of grace. "So in conscience conversation in the internal forum," he writes, "contributes to the formation of a correct judgment on what hinders the possibility of a fuller participation in the life of the Church, and on what steps," he says, "can foster it, and make it grow. In this context, remarried Christians in dialogue with their spiritual advisor, might legitimately decide to return to communion as a result of this discernment process." Quite strong! It's not like John Paul II was from the Middle Ages, right?

Does anybody recognize the picture on the left? (one of the slides from the PowerPoint presentation #30) This is a baptism that took place in Rome a few years ago. The couple were married civilly. She got pregnant; they went to the Justice of the Peace and got a marriage certificate. They wanted the baby to be baptized. This was the first pope on record, publicly to baptize a child of a couple whose marriage is not considered sacramental - is not sacramental! The pope didn't say, "If you get married in the Church, make her an honest woman, I will baptize your baby." He said, "Of course, we welcome you." Change in practice. Change in attitude can lead to change in doctrine. Who can be baptized? What about the scandal? That's the objection. If you let a married couple, one of them is Catholic, who is civilly married; if you let her go to communion, you are going to scandalize the faithful. They are going to think, "Look at these people; The Church isn't enforcing it any longer; so it doesn't matter anymore. You are going to ruin marriage if you allow people to go communion when they are civilly remarried." And Pope Francis has the freedom to say, "It's more of a scandal if you don't baptize the baby. It's more a scandal if you exclude people." It's more a scandal if you don't let my friend go to communion, who has wanted to go to communion for 30 years, and doesn't do it, who feels heartbroken every time she left and felt excluded every time she leaves church. The pope is more interested in this witness of Jesus, his scandalous practice of inclusive table fellowship. He didn't have a criteria for admission to the dinner table. In fact he sought out the people that everybody else said how can you eat with them, the prostitutes, the tax collectors. He included people that did scandalize other people; and what he said to them was, "You'd better be thinking about why you are scandalized by what I am doing, because I am just being loving to people. Why is your love so restricted? Why is your love so confined? Why do you want to say God is small minded? Why does God have a narrow heart for you?" Again, Eucharist is medicine for the sick; baptism is medicine for the sick.

So the last slide here is, I think, the biggest issue remaining. I mean a big issue that the pope could do a lot with in trying to change attitudes and practices, and prepare the ground for some kind of changing in doctrine is about women. He means well, but he's old school. It doesn't get a lot old schooler than a 79 year old Argentine, Italian heritage guy, who's a Jesuit priest. (Laughter) He's a man of his place; he's a man of his time; he's a beautiful person; he's changed a lot in his own life. A great book by Austen Ivereigh, called *The Great Reformer* - a great book. I highly recommend it, talks about all the dramatic changes in his life. He's got one more big change - it would be a home run - is to try to understand how women can be really included in the Church, but not just be given cosmetic compliments about the feminine genius, and about how nice women are, and about how loving they are, and how good the pasta is, and so forth; but to really do something to show empathy for women, not pity; pity is condescending; empathy is about equality.

So, empathy starts with paying attention. If you're surrounded by men all the time, how are you going to pay attention to women? I've been at many conferences. I was at a very studying conference, I was working for Catholic Relief Services in Central Africa. It was a very, very good project in the Great rench region.

It was about reconciliation, which was one of my central concerns as an ethicist: reconciliation after conflict. There were maybe 20-25 bishops there from all over, Rwanda, Uganda, Burundi, Congo, I mean, talk about conflict! There were some excellent sisters, who gave excellent talks, who were professors doing excellent research. Then, we all sat down to the meal and guess what the sisters are doing? They were standing at the table. They're serving the food. They were participants 20 minutes ago; and now they're standing at the table asking if we want a second glass of wine, or a fourth glass of wine. (Someone in the audience asks if these are African or American nuns) These are African nuns, but this happens in the Church. When I was a high school teacher, right out of college, I was at a high school in southern California run by Servite priests, which is a nice order. But they had five nuns from Puerto Rico; their whole job was to stay in the back room and take care of the physical needs of the priests. They would iron their underwear - seriously. Where is the empathy there? It was ridiculous!

So empathy starts with paying attention, taking people seriously, listening with open hearts and minds. See the difference between that and pity - pity says I'll be nice to you, but listening with open hearts and minds. Open means I'm going to be open to change if I need to. I'm going to see that I have some blind spots here. Seeing systematic injustice, where everything is structured in a way that harms women, expanding our understanding, revising our judgment, changing our conduct, and transforming our structures. Mercy has to give rise to justice; otherwise it just becomes individual. So Pope Francis' greatest challenge is here. But there is a sign of hope from what we just heard a few days ago, in his decision to establish a commission to study the feasibility of ordaining women to be deacons. That's a nice proposal. I think it took an incredible amount of courage, because he's working with a Curia that mostly doesn't like him. They like things the way they are. The pope recognizes things can't continue the way they are, not because we're not popular, but because we are defining Christ in the way we are living. It takes a lot of guts to be that way. And I think his guts come from really his immersion in grace, because it gives him a courage from what he could go on and do on his own. Thank you for listening. (Applause)

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