



ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM

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ST. LOUIS, CLINTON TWP., MI

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Introduction (Bishop Tom Gumbleton)

Good afternoon. In all the meetings we've had, we seldom have repeat speakers; but today we do, because those of you who were here January of 2016, I'm sure you remember how impressed we were, and stimulated we were, by Bob Mickens, by his talk. So, he's back with us today; and we are very pleased that he is.

You may recall Bob is originally from Toledo, Ohio, and grew up there, and went to school there until 1986, when he went to Rome and studied at the Gregorian University, the Jesuit University in Rome. And after he finished his studies there, he continued to live in Rome; and I can see why; I lived there for even a couple of years. I would love to live there, but he stayed on, and I came home. Bob began after he finished school working in Rome for Vatican radio as a Vatican reporter, and that went on for eleven years. After that he began to write a column on a regular basis for the *Tablet Magazine* which is the name of the lay-edited Catholic magazine that comes from London, England. And he wrote a column every week about the happenings in Rome and at the Vatican, and probably Church news; and he obviously had very good contacts— you could tell from his column— he had the inside story on many things. And he continued writing for the *Tablet* for about ten years. And now he writes for the international edition of a well-known French newspaper, *La Croix*, if I say that correctly. He's the English editor of that newspaper and continues to function from Rome. Bob is with us again today; and he continues to be very much in touch with what is going on inside the Vatican, inside the Church with Pope Francis; and so he is going to share with us today what we've called "Roman Happenings". He will discuss the happenings, especially the struggles of Pope Francis, as he confronts the resistance that he is faced with, trying to transform the cultures and the bureaucracies of the Vatican. So I am very pleased to have Bob with us; and I know you are too. So I ask you to welcome Bob Mickens. (Applause)

Robert Mickens: Roman Happenings—Francis' Efforts at Reform of the Curia and Vatican Culture

Thank you very much, Bishop Tom. We've known each other several years now We met in Rome one time for a meal. Actually I didn't spend all my time studying in Toledo, you know if you are from Toledo you want to get out as quick as you can. (*laughter*)

I actually came up here, just right across 696; and I was at Detroit Country Day School for two years. No, my father does not own a bank. *(Laughter)* That was Cardinal Szoka's question to me in 1986, because I had gone to Rome as a seminarian affiliated with the Diocese of Toledo; and two of the seminarians from Detroit were my classmates: David Lesniak and Michael Bugarin and Steve Villeo, who now, I believe, has joined the Redemptorists. Oh! We'll have some things to say about the Redemptorists in a minute. But they were kind enough, since I was an orphan Toledoan, that anytime Cardinal Szoka came to town, which was often, and he had a big wallet, *(Laughter)* they invited me to join them for dinner. And when they told the Cardinal that I had some connection to the metro area, and I had gone to Country Day School, that was his question, "Does your father own a bank?" *(Laughter)* That's what he said. He doesn't.

So, anyway, I do have some connection. And, the other thing, my big connection with this area is hockey. And I don't have to say ice hockey, because that's what morons call hockey. *(Laughter)* When I worked for the Tablet in London, they put together a kind of fun directory of all the staff; and they said, "What are your hobbies? What do you do?" And I said, "I played hockey." If it had not been for the Church and my tall stature, I would have played for the Red Wings, of course. But when I told them I played hockey, they totally misunderstood; and they put something with this funny looking little stick with a curvature on it about this tall. And I said, "What is that?" They said, "It's a hockey stick." I said, "No! It's not." They were talking about field hockey, which I had never even seen before. So, I have a bit of a connection to Detroit and the proximity. I also played hockey in the area, in the downriver area, for a couple of years before I went to the Detroit Country Day School; and that's how I ended up there, not because of anything up here, it was all because of my fleet of foot on the ice.

So thank you once again. I was here, as Bishop Tom said, I was here almost two years ago. It was January 18 of 2016; and we were only a couple years into the Pontificate of Pope Francis; and wow! what a whirlwind that was. I'm just going to do a brief overview of that in a minute, but I want to again thank Tom for inviting me. You know he's the fourth most senior bishop in the United States right now? *(Much Applause)* And, you know, when you are a bishop—and, you know, it is kind of funny—you know, we have this ancient tradition that the bishops are connected to a people; so they're the leaders, the pastor of a people. Well, Tom's one of these funny kind of bishops, because he's what they call a titular bishop. His titular diocese is somewhere in North Africa near Tunisia, it's called Oulului, or Oululee, or some strange name. Well, I have inside scoop from Rome that he is about to be promoted, I just found out. Well it's not a done deal yet; but I'm working on it, because there is another titular diocese, I think it neighbors your titular diocese, Tom, it's called—and it's perfect—it's called *Elephantaria Proconciliari*. *(Laughter)* Isn't that great? The patron of this group! So you would hopefully be—if I get my way—you'll be the new titular bishop of *Elephantarensis in pro Consulari*. *(Laughter)*

One person we should remember also, and when Bishop Tom asked me some dates to come, we decided this week; because this is the week, the 21st anniversary—actually, yesterday—was the 21st anniversary of the death of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin in Chicago. He died in 1996. And there is one more reason—very, very, very important reason. I am a resident of Michigan, actually, for purposes of voting—didn't go so well last time; and for a driver's license, which you need; because this is the greatest place in the world to upgrade an automobile. I mean, you can just buzz around everywhere. I'm actually visiting from another diocese, from, I think, Lansing, Earl Boyer's diocese. I'm a resident of Ann Arbor. So, the other reason why I am speaking here today is because all the bishops, and the ordinary of this archdiocese, they're in Baltimore; so he didn't have to get permission for me to come and speak. (*Laughter*) Okay! Enough of the joking aside.

Let's look back very quickly at two years ago, January 18, 2016. How many of you were actually here when I gave the talk? So, a fair number of you, okay. I want to very quickly, just to refresh our memories and also for the purpose of refreshing our memories, because we seem today with the internet, with social media, with constant bombardment of news, to forget things very, very quickly. So a lot has happened in the last two years since I was last here with you among friends. What I talked about last time was the whole idea of Pope Francis as Bishop of Rome, and how that is very essential, not just for the papacy, but for him particularly. I looked at the pope as really bringing back to life the momentum, and the spirit, and the deeper teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

And even recently, Cardinal Donald Wuerl in Washington pretty much said the same thing. I don't know if he reads what I write, or if he was eaves dropping from that last talk I gave, but he said almost exactly what I'd said two years ago. That Pope Francis has really brought to life and reignited the whole spirit and energy of the Second Vatican Council. His focus on encounter and dialog, of accompaniment, of meeting people, these were things we were already seeing two years ago. We knew, by then, two years into this pontificate, that he had a great solicitude and love for the poor, for the peripheries, or people on the margins. We knew about his simplicity of life, where he lives—he decided not to live in the Papal Palace. Of course, mercy has been such a key theme in his pontificate, it was already then, it was from the very first day that he addressed the crowds from St. Peter's Square at the first Angelus the Sunday after his election. Mercy is a major, major driving catalyst, impulse for this Pope, God's mercy. God's judgment is mercy. It's a whole different logic; something that so many of us Catholics and other Christian's, so many people in ministry, who are to be the sacramental agents of mercy, continue to grapple with, find it difficult to understand. Already we were seeing the emergence of, and really putting meat on, the bones of synodality, using the synod of bishops as a form of moving the Church together on a path of a Church in mission, and on pilgrimage, as the vision of the council we have of the Church: the pilgrim people of God. And we saw that already in the first two years.

We saw the pope's devotion to our Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary. And, again, he put it in a different kind of context, as he does in so many ways: taking the rich heritage and patrimony of our Church and giving it fresh impetus, fresh life, looking at it in creative ways. One of the primary symbols or images of Mary that the pope is devoted to is Our Lady, the Untier of Knots., the Blessed Virgin as someone who helps find a creative way to solve the riddles of life, of pastoral ministry, of the Church's challenges.

I also talked about, at the time there was a question whether the pope had become a rock star; because John Paul II, I think, was criticized by a lot of people that it was all about him. JP II had become kind of an icon of the entire Church; and isn't that what is happening with Pope Francis? I argued then, and I continue to maintain that, it was kind of a dichotomy, or kind of an irony, that a pope, who was trying to demythologize the papacy, was actually, despite himself and his best efforts, being made even more prominent, given more status as a star. And the kids used to yell, "JP II, we love you," and then they were yelling, "Benedicto, oh, Benedicto," and then it was, "Francesco, Francesco." And he put a stop to that right away; and he said, "No! No! No! No Francesco, Jesu Christo." And they don't yell Francesco much anymore, because he doesn't let them. The kids got the message; they got the memo.

The program of the Pontificate, we talked about *Evangelii Gaudium*; and it's still continues to be the most important document, the blueprint of this pontificate. *Evangelii Gaudium*, you all know what that is" *The Joy of the Gospel*. Are any of you in groups that are studying that document in your parishes, or some of your discussion groups? Because that's really essential; it gives us the pope's vision for renewal, for a missionary renewal of the Church, and a reform of the Church in its essence; at the heart. He talks about it.

I like to call it the attitude adjustment program; because the pope was asked, right before this document came out, in that interview with the Jesuits, "What is your idea of reform of the Church?" because people are really anxious about this. He'd been pope for just a few months, and he said, "Well, the first reform and the most essential is mentality, the attitude. We have to change attitudes, because if we change the structures without changing the mentality or the attitude that underlies what the Church is about, what these structures are for, no change will make any difference. So we have to change the attitude."

And I would submit that even more today, four years and eight months, that's how long he has been pope now. That's one month more than John XXIII, thank God. I just did the math this morning. So he's outlived John's pontificate, has outlasted that brief dynamic and very important pontificate of now St. John XXIII. He's still got a ways to go to beat JP II; (Laughter) but we don't lose hope. So, the attitude adjustment program that I summarize him as seeing as the most important part of reform or Church renewal continues to this day.

I think we have seen the ethos of the Church changing gradually. Our priorities are shifting, the mentality of people in the pews are shifting. I think that most Catholics, the non-ordained Catholics, baptized faithful, are excited by the pope. I keep hearing that people are confused by the pope. I don't know who is confused by the pope, there may be a couple of bishops that are confused by the pope (*Laughter*); some writers are confused.

Cardinal Cupich was at a conference last week, you may have seen this, and he was with the journalist E. J. Dionne from the Washington Post. It was at the University of Chicago, and E. J. Dionne was kind of interviewing Cardinal Cupich and he said that, "Catholics aren't confused, they are upset, basically just not getting Pope Francis; and the cardinal replied, "I don't think they are. They are being told that they are supposed to be." And that's a big difference. And we'll talk about that in a minute, about the opposition to the pope, and how that's grown, and how that's gotten a lot louder; and yet, it's still only a tiny sliver, a tiny sliver, of all the Catholic population. So we talked about *Evangelii Gaudium*, and how it continues to be the most important document the pope himself has said. This has been his most important document; and he told it to a Vatican office on the very day that he released his first encyclical. Well, it was his second, actually, *Laudato si*, On Care of Our Common Home, and yet, he still said that *Evangelii Gaudium* is the most important document, that is, the blueprint for a pastoral, missionary conversion, and a synodal Church that is all walking together.

He talked a bit about career reform, and I will get to that in a minute, because that continues apace, again, not at the speed that some people would like, because we tend to be very impatient. We want these things to get done quickly. But, as the pope said, "Unless there is conversion in the mentality and attitude, these changes will not be good; and they will not last." And so we have seen, slowly, pieces being put in different order, some parts being eliminated, new parts being added, and the final reform of the Vatican bureaucracy, the Roman Curia will probably be announced sometime in the spring, or at the latest, next autumn. So we are probably several months to a year away before the pope will feel that it's time to unveil the full project.

There were important appointments we know, the Cardinal Secretary of State, putting cardinals in strange places in the peripheries, in the margins of the Church, in the provinces. I mean, Panama, for crying out loud, got a cardinal, and not even in Panama City, but a place called David. Has anyone been to David, Panama? Maybe someone was in the Navy or Merchant Marines, I don't know, but, places that people had never heard of. Why? Why did he do that? Because he believes that the people of God have a representation everywhere. The Church is in everyplace, the voice of the people. And the smallest, furthest place away should not be excluded in the big decisions. There should be a cardinal for Panama, for crying out loud, and we got one.

The pope, who was not going to be traveling a lot, he's traveling. Just like poor Benedict XVI said he wouldn't travel much; and he did, because that has become the expectation of a global papacy. And the pope took his first trip, remember? And this was prophetic, he went to—it was the 8th of July 2013—now he had just been pope for 4 months and usually popes go on summer vacation. Pope Benedict would go out to Castel Gandolfo, the papal villa overlooking the lake. John Paul II liked to go to the mountains, because he liked to ski and hike. And Francis went to a place called Lampedusa; it's a small island south of Italy; it's an Italian island close to Northern Africa. And why did he go there? Because it was the first stop for the boat people, the refugees coming to Europe from Northern Africa. And he was one of the first people on the world stage to put his finger on a very, very important issue; and you know it in this archdiocese, because we have a large population of immigrants and refugees from the past. Many of us come from immigrant families in this part of the United States. Pope Francis said this is the biggest issue right now. This is going to be a major issue. And, of course, in Europe the mass migration of peoples, also in Africa and the middle east where they are coming from, this is a burning issue for our times on the world stage and the pope went to Lampedusa in his first four months as bishop of Rome to highlight this and to raise the consciousness of the world community. They're still not listening, all of them, but Pope Francis was prophetic in going there.

He made other trips too. He went to Rio de Janeiro for World Youth Day that first year. And, of course, to Turkey, because it is so very important, the relationship between the various parts of the Body of Christ, the divided parts. The Church of Constantinople, the ecumenical patriarch, you know, the first time in history that an ecumenical patriarch went to the installation of the Bishop of Rome since the split from the 11th century. Because the patriarch said, "I feel something about this man. Don't know what it is, but I feel something." And Pope Francis has proven to be a very ecumenical minded pope.

One year ago on the 31st of October 2016, he went to Lund in Sweden. Why? It was the beginning of the yearlong celebration in festivities and commemorations to mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. And he celebrated the Liturgy of the Word with a Lutheran Bishop, who was a woman. That just didn't sit right with some people. *(Laughter)* And he continued to put forth a vision for a Church whose unity is reconstituted by the means of an image of, what does he call it? a polyhedron. Are there any engineers here? Do you know what that means? Could you explain a polyhedron? (A person answers in the audience, "Lots and lots of sides. Think of it like a ball in a disco place.") Excellent! Thank you! That's the best description: like a ball in a disco place. Our kids will get that. Okay! And that's his vision of Church unity and diversity; one does not dominate the other. If you have ever been to a disco, you know that. All these sides, but it can't exist, the polyhedron can't exist if one of those elements is missing.

And so we are united; but there are different hues and reflections in this unity; and that's okay: unity in diversity; a diversity in unity. Going to Lund in Sweden last year was another example of the pope being comfortable in another tradition of a group of believers that is different than our own Roman tradition.

The Synod of Bishops has been absolutely essential for this pope right from the very beginning. He has revived the synod in a way that it's not ever been used before. Of course, it is rather new in its present form. It's an ancient structure, but in its present form, Paul VI revived the International Synod of Bishops right at the very end of the Second Vatican Council in 1965; and John Paul II, as we know, used the synod often. It was more or less a rubber stamp to confirm the policies of his pontificate and the people in his Roman Curia. Benedict XVI tried to open it up a little bit, giving some freedom of a half hour a day at the end of the session, to see if there was any kind of open discussion. But Francis has really opened it up, and made it a forum for discernment. Discernment. That is a big word that has been lost in the recent post Vatican II period. Discernment. And this is one of the major principles that Pope Francis, one of the major tools that Pope Francis is trying to get all believers to embrace. Discernment. And discernment doesn't mean to sit down and think, "OK! I think I should do this." No! It's an arduous process of prayer, of reflection, of dialog, and then finally decision. But prayer, and reflection, and dialog together, are very, very important for Pope Francis. So discernment, the Bishops' Synod, and Pope Francis. Using this, I believe, he is developing it, continuing to develop it into a tool to help him govern the Church.

And I continue to predict, not always a wise thing to do, make predictions; but, I think, once the final blueprint for the reform of the Roman Curia is published, when that is all and done with, I think that you are going to see that the Synod of Bishops is going to be in a much more prominent position; and the curia will be subjugated to the synod, because it is the pope's synod. He is the president of the synod. Like in the eastern churches, the patriarch is the president of his synod. The president has the final say. They work together, but someone has to decide at the end. The pope likes, not just consensus, but discernment. How do we arrive at a decision? And then it's up to him to make the final decision. So, those who accuse him of being a dictator forget that the pope also has the responsibility to make a final decision on such issues. The Synod of Bishops, we could go on and on about that.

What was really interesting, of course, was the way the pope involved more people. Now, remember, it is called the Synod of Bishops. So, when you say it is a synod on the family, why is there no family here? Because it is a Synod of Bishops. It's a bishops' assembly. But that does not mean that the family, or people who are part of the family, should not be involved in some way. So what did the pope do? He had the novel approach of doing a survey, questionnaire. He asked the bishops to take the pulse of their people. Some did, and some didn't.

And then he gave people the possibility of writing directly to the synod secretarial office in Rome. All that material got put into the working document.

That did not satisfy, it did not please all the bishops. Some of them were quite upset about that, because the people gave some responses that were very different from theirs. And the pope, also on this very first topic of the synod that he chose, which was family and marriage, and all the problems and challenges, the joys and hopes, the anguishes, and all that was part of that. All that was done over a two or three year period. So there is a preparation phase for the first synod gathering.

Think of the synod as this: it is a permanent institution. We don't think of it this way, because we say there was a synod in October, that's not correct. The synod is a permanent institution. Think of it like the Congress of the United States. We didn't have a Congress yesterday, we had a session of Congress. Congress is a permanent institution, so is the Synod. It meets infrequently, only when the Bishop of Rome, its president, calls it into session. Usually they are ordinary sessions; and they come every three years. Pope Francis decided he had an extraordinary session on the family, and then the ordinary session. So he announced it in 2013. There was a preparation phase which included the questionnaire.

The bishops gathered in Rome in 2014 with the working document, which included the responses to the questionnaires. Then they had discussions; they looked at what those responses were; they discussed some of the issues; and the pope said, "Right! Now let's go back to work for another year. When we come back to the ordinary session, we'll draw up some pastoral guidelines." You know what happened during this period? A lot of people, well maybe not a lot of people, but some people with very big pulpits and loud voices got very upset that the pope was going to change Church teaching on marriage, especially on divorce and remarriage, and whether or not remarried divorcees could be readmitted to the sacraments. What happened, of course, there were threats against the pope? Thirteen Cardinals actually signed a letter, and sent it to him during the second session of the Synod, warning him not to change Church doctrine. Two of these cardinals actually worked in the Vatican, were working for him. There were books that were written. Then, finally, when the Synod's second session was over in 2015, the pope took all that had been written, and he wrote a document.

And that is one of the new things since I last saw you: *Amoris Laetitia*, The Joy of the Family; and it has caused great consternation amongst some people. Again, I would submit, that they are not representative of a large number of Catholics. That's my sense. Cardinal Cupich said it the other day; he said "I see people every single Sunday. I go to a parish every single Sunday. I've seen a lot more people, I think, than any of these people have seen; and everyone is enthusiastic about the pope. They're not confused; they're not upset. Maybe there are some, but they would not be the majority."

And this has caused a big backlash among some people. Four Cardinals actually wrote something called the *Dubia*, doubts, and they basically put the pope to the test and said, “Just answer yes or no on these. Is this against Church teaching or is it not? A simple yes or no will do.” Life is not that simple. It's not yes or no; it's not black and white; and that was the whole point of the document, that the whole idea of accompaniment, of discernment, of walking with people, of conversion, and of mercy is a living and complicated process; and there are lots of mitigating circumstances. The principles remain, but reality is quite different.

So the pope never answered the *Dubia*. In fact, he just waited; and two of the four Cardinals who wrote that have since died; (laughter) and I'll be waiting for the other two as well, but. Cardinal Raymond Burke of the United States, of course, is one of the main figures in this opposition to the pope's teaching or the program of updating, or helping to see how to apply in a pastoral way the Church's teaching. Cardinal Burke, of course, is kind of wondering around Rome with a long red train, and not much to do. (Laughter) No, he doesn't wear the red train most of the time; but this is part of the opposition to the pope. Not only have four Cardinals come forward but there has also been a petition by some so-called Catholic scholars, priests and scholars, the names of whom, most I don't recognize, but they are 160 or a 180. They keep gathering more signatures on their petition; and they issued what is called a Filial Correction. Somebody said if you put that in German, and then retranslate it from the German back into the English, you come out with childish gripping or something like that. (Laughter) I don't know if that is true, but what they do is, these people accuse Pope Francis of promoting at least seven heresies, at least seven heresies. And they say, “We don't know if you are even aware of this. And we think it is important that you address this, and correct this, because you are confusing Catholics, you are confusing people.”

And then, most recently, my friends at the Crux News anonymously wrote a news article, or they did it anonymously as a staff. They issued an article that gave a forum to the former secretary of the U. S. Bishops Conference Committee on Doctrine, one Father Thomas Weinandy, who was a Capuchin priest and theologian. I hate to say, he was born in the diocese of Toledo, like I was, but he wrote a private letter to Pope Francis, and three months after he sent it to the pope, he decided to make it public through Crux. And he basically accuses the pope of causing all kinds of confusion, of changing Church doctrine, of promoting bad bishops, who are causing confusion themselves; and he even says, “You risk sinning against the Holy Spirit.” Now, you've all read the Scriptures; and there is only one sin, according to Jesus, that is unforgiveable, is a sin against the Holy Spirit. This is very strong criticism—this is very strong criticism—by somebody who held an important position in the U.S. Bishops Conference. The president of the conference, Cardinal Daniel DiNardo, eventually, a day later, asked him to resign.

He remained as a consultant to the commission on doctrine, and he asked him to resign and gave a very, it was not a real strong rebuke, but—instead what the cardinal asked—is that we take this as an opportunity to be more civil in our discourse, in our differences with one another—a man who accuses the pope almost of sinning against the Holy Spirit—and that's the president of the conference's response.

And some more good news from the conference: they are meeting this week in Baltimore in a nice hotel; and they voted for the chair of certain departments. One of the candidates for the Pro Life Committee was the man that Pope Francis appointed to Chicago as archbishop and made cardinal, Cardinal Cupich. He was running against Joseph Naumann from Kansas City, who some have described as a cultural warrior. And who won the election? I got the results just before I arrived here. It wasn't Cupich, (from the audience, "Oh my gosh") which tells me that the bishops, not that they'd lost the plot; they just never got it. It's a clear sign Pope Francis has made certain people, appointed certain people, to key posts for a reason. Now there are probably some issues of personality that people don't like Blasé Cupich, despite his connection to Pope Francis, but one would think that it's a hint to the bishops that this is the person that he believes has the pastoral vision right for the United States; and the bishops have rejected that, it seems to me. The vote I think was 92 to 85. So it was close, but no cigar.

So, these are just a few of the things that the opposition is real; but, again, I would say that it is a small minority of people; and its driven by some journalists, because the social media has become the forum. After the Second Vatican Council, of course, there were people that did not like the changes that the council brought forth, especially the liturgical changes. And we know that there were groups that petitioned the Holy See to allow the continuation of the pre-Vatican II, the unreformed liturgy, the Tridentine Rite; and they engaged in letter writing campaigns. They were forceful enough, because they had enough sympathetic ears, and the Roman Curia that found a way. One who eventually became pope, Cardinal Ratzinger, shortly after the council—he was not yet a bishop—but, shortly after the council, he pulled back, because he thought things had become a bit too unleashed. That's in a nutshell a very simple way of saying something that's much more complicated.

But these people, and I would submit again, that the opposition to Pope Francis and the Church are people that were on the outs, but were bought back into the main stream of the Church during the pontificate of Benedict XVI. And most of them are connected to the old Mass, so-called ironically, and what it shows also, is not just about the liturgy, because *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the law of worship, is the law of belief; and our Roman Liturgy, the way we celebrate the sacraments and Eucharist had to change. It had to develop, just as our theology and our ecclesiology had developed, and come to a point of maturation at the Second Vatican Council. Because that form of liturgy, the Tridentine Liturgy, no longer properly expressed our belief and our ethos as a Roman Church community.

It was a different paradigm altogether; it represented a different paradigm. So the opposition to Pope Francis, if you boil it down, is really an opposition to what happened at the Second Vatican Council; and they are a minority. So don't forget that; and don't lose heart. Unfortunately, the internet and social media has given them a prominence that allows them to have greater weight beyond their true numbers.

When I spoke to you last, I said, "What are the elephants in the room today in the Church?" Women, as full, equal members in the Church. I also said the sex abuse problem was an elephant; and I saw it as something that Pope Francis has—it has not been his best game, let's put it that way. And I also talked a little bit about, what I said, the old man in the garden, that is the retired pope, who lives just a few hundred meters away from Pope Francis. Those were elephants in the room people weren't talking about. And the future tasks ministries in the Church: married clergy, redefining the primacy of the Bishop of Rome, Pan-Christian initiatives in meetings, that is, ecumenism, and Church unity. And I also talked a little bit about the Bergoglio model — Bergoglio is the pope's name—that model for the whole Church, unity and diversity, that model for all of human existence. I came here, it was not too long after the pope was in the United States, and in that meeting with the U. S hierarchy in September of that year he told them, "Don't preach complicated doctrines, but joyfully proclaim Christ. Promote a culture of encounter. Dialogue is our method." These are just buzz words from his talk to the bishops. "Our mission is to heal, and to be stewards, not masters." And he said, "No shrill voices."

So what's happened since the last time I was here? Well, a real shift has continued. I think we continue to see a shift in the whole ethos of the Church mentality. This is a big thing to turn around in just a few short years; but the pope, I think, has really continued to excite people; but it's only hardened his critics. The whole thing of the opposition that we see, the loud but minority opinion of *Amoris Laetitia*. It's unfortunately found mostly in our clergy. That's a problem folks! That's a real problem! And it suggests to me that another one of the elephants in the room now is, what to do about the future of ministry in the church and our clergy, because we don't have a pool of candidates that I see that are going to step up and carry forward this vision of Pope Francis.

We're seeing what the bishops are doing in Baltimore right now. They are not even talking about *Laudato Si*, on the environment. That's his only encyclical. The first one was written by Benedict XVI and he put, like the cake was done, and he put the cherry on top, and that was it; signed a few things. But this is his encyclical; and it's a vision of creation. He's not a green pope; he's not an environmentalist. That's not the point. His point is the very strong Judeo-Christian vision of this whole ball of wax as a creation from a loving God, a loving and merciful God; and the crown of that creation is that human person, a human being, who is called to responsibly care for this creation, from the unborn child in the womb to the rocks, and the trees, and the fish in the sea. And it's all part of God's creation; and our responsibility to care for that, to nurture that, to leave that for successive generations; this, I think, in the pope's mind.

And I believe he chose this theme for his first real encyclical, because it is something that binds all of humanity. No one is going to argue in this one over kneeling or standing. But they are going to argue, it seems, and we see, over clean coal (he laughs) or alternative forms of energy. But he sees this as a burning issue. The bishops are not even talking about it. Fortunately, they are talking about immigration. That's good! They can agree on that.

You know, the pope issued a new document, *Motu Proprio*, an apostolic letter on his own initiative that changes canon law; and this is really, really important, changes canon law on the principles of liturgical translations—the translation of the liturgical text—basically restoring to the bishops conferences what the Second Vatican Council on the liturgy intended: that it's the local bishops who have the prime responsibility for translating into their own languages the Latin text. That was taken away from them over a number of years; and that's how we ended up with the latest brilliant edition of something they call the Missal, which is really, technically, a Sacramentary, because a Missal has all the readings and everything in it. But the brilliant people in Rome forgot that, that if we had a Missal today it would be about that big or several books. It's the Sacramentary or the Missal that we have now is, because it was taken away from the local bishops; and Rome piloted the project, and a couple of the people that they liked. But the edition from 1997 and 1998, which was approved unanimously by all the English speaking bishops in the world, was rejected by Rome; and then we went to work on a project that was forced down the throats of compliant bishops.

The pope undid that in September. He wrote a document, *moto proprio*, called *Magnum Principium*; the greatest principle is: the participation of the people in the liturgy; and they need to understand, the local people. Think of it this way, it may be one thing there are people in Rome that speak English, but the poor Japanese bishops, they send their text there and Rome won't approve it, because they got some seminarian at the propaganda *Fidei College*, who's from Japan, who is loyal—you did this for us; we do this for you, kind of—very, very pious. He doesn't like it because it's not sacral enough language; and so, a seminarian, through a Roman congregation, trumps the local bishops. The Japanese were in Rome for their *ad limina* over the summer; and they went in to see one of the cardinals; and he read the riot act at them, because they are not proclaiming the Gospel enough. The next day the bishops had a meeting with the pope. And what the pope does when he meets bishops *ad limina*, he brings them all around, “Bring your chairs all around here, and then just sit,” and they talk. He has a translator, because he only speaks Spanish and Italian; but they told him what happened. The bishops told him that they got balled out by this prefect; and the pope said, “You're the bishops. You decide.” So, the next day they went into the Congregation for Divine Worship and Cardinal Robert Sarah—he is one of the people who is opposed to the pope on, not only liturgical things, but also *Amoris Laetitia*.

He started reading the riot act again, and the president of the bishops conference from Japan, who is a little man and very quiet, surprised all his contraries, got up, stood up, and banged his hands on the table, and said, "We are the bishops;" and the cardinal didn't know what to say. "The pope told us." Ok! Aye! Aye! captain.

So, there is a change happening. The importance of this document, *Magnum Principium*, is not just about liturgical translations; it's about who makes decisions in the local context; and this is a principle of collegiality. Unfortunately, and I hate to say this, I tell this to people all the time, we want a collegial Church, we want a Church that is not so centralized; but that is going to require growing pains, because our local bishops, if they are going to make all the local decisions, we don't have the bishops we want right now, perhaps. But we have to help those bishops, because, in synodality, it's the whole people of God. Bishops have the responsibility to listen to their people. The pope puts forth a very interesting image of the bishop. You know, he talks about priests—bishops are priests—having the smell of the sheep, which means that they are among the people. He says a pastor, like any shepherd, usually leads the flock. He has to lead the flock; but, most often, he's in the midst of the flock, has to be to know the sheep, and so that the sheep can know him. But he, also, at times has to follow the flock, because the sheep have a better sense for where the good pastures are and where the fresh water is, which the shepherd can't see. So this is a model of shepherding, of priestly service, the pope is trying to find in his bishops. And he is calling them and encouraging them to do.

The other thing, another development just recently is the 25th anniversary of the issuing of the Catechism of the Catholic Church. And you remember the pope—I don't know if you followed this—the pope said this has all been very good and the boiler plate points the popes make, congratulations over this ... blah, blah, blah ... and then he said, "But there is one thing that we need to correct here: capital punishment, the death penalty. And this caused a big, big problem for some people, because the pope can change the Church's teaching, but the church is always—but he said, "No, it's never; it's no longer; there is no case where it's permissible." And the Catechism, when it was written twenty five years ago says it hardly exists, the case, but because the Church has never said that it's a sin or that it is outlawed. So, how do we play this gymnastics, these theological semantic gymnastics, to not say that we did not changed the teaching. The pope said, "No," he didn't change the teaching, then he went into a small little discourse on the development of doctrine that, "The Church is a living organism; and, over time, we grow in our teaching. We deepen our understanding of the revelation of God." This is all very standard by the way. Pope Francis is not making this up. We just kind of forgot it since 1978, down the road, because this is an ancient part of our Church's theology, of our belief that we are part of a developing tradition. A tradition that doesn't develop would just be frozen in time. And even traditionalist movements, you might like to wear the same types of clothes that your grandmother wore, but it's not the exact same stuff; it can't be; you cannot repeat the past.

And a living organism can't be stuck; it has to grow. And that's what happens with our teaching and its application. So this is another major step forward.

Since we last saw each other, another big change has happened. Donald Trump has become president (comments from the audience) and that has changed some of the dynamic with our Church as well. The pope has appointed a new nuncio to the United States. That came in January 2016. Christophe Pierre is a really good diplomat. He is French. He was in Mexico before coming here. We have still not seen what kinds of appointments he'll be making. We did see however that there were two consistories in 2016, which is very, very important for this local Church in one way. Joe Tobin was made cardinal; I proposed Tom Gumbleton in one of my letters. When is Detroit going to get a cardinal? somebody wrote in The Detroit News that Al Vigneron is up for getting the red hat; and it was more of a wish, I think, than anything based on actual fact. But I said if Detroit wants a cardinal I got the candidate for him (laughter) and that's a guy who is an auxiliary bishop, resign; he's free; he can be one.

And guess what, in 2017, not too long ago, last year in January, the pope did make an auxiliary bishop a cardinal; and that's another major shift, it doesn't seem like it. He made auxiliary bishop Gregorio Rosa Chavez a cardinal in Sal Salvador, made him the cardinal, not the archbishop. Why? Because Rosa Chavez was a very close collaborator of Oscar Romero. Oscar Romero has been beatified. Pope Francis blocked the, I guess probably with the help of Our Lady of Untying Knots, he blocked the stalemate that was in the congregation. Romero is now blessed; and he'll probably be canonized by Pope Frances next year in Rome, or if the people in Salvador have their way, in San Salvador. Usually canonizations take place in Rome, because the pope wants to propose these people as universal saints. The beatifications, and this was an innovation of Benedict XVI, beatifications, like you will have here in Detroit, I think, on Saturday for Solanus Casey, you'll have Cardinal Amato come from Rome and do the honors at Ford Field. So that's a big thing.

Joe Tobin's appointment to Newark is really important because, what it does, it flanks the guy on the other side of the Hudson, Tim Dolan. Did I tell you this story? When the pope went to New York Dolan, you know, he is bigger than life; he still thinks he's the rector of all those seminarians who have miters on their heads at the bishops conference. He said, "Holy Father, when he sees this Cathedral he is going to say, 'wow,'" because he put in like 30 million dollars in renovations, or something. So the pope gets there and says, "Monsignor, Eminence, before I go, can I use the toilet please". And he says, "Sure. Sure let me take you over to the residence, Holy Father." And the pope looked at him and said, "You mean, you did 30 million dollars in renovations, and there is no bathroom here?" (*Laughter*) It's a true story.

When Joe Tobin arrived in Newark, Cardinal Dolan phoned him and said "Welcome to metro New York area, your Eminence. Get on the train; it's only 20 minutes to Penn Station." And Tobin said, "Your Eminence, the train runs both ways." (*Laughter*) And that's true.

So Cardinal Perline is in the States right now, I think he is going back today, but he also met with Vice President, Mike Pence. The White House had cancelled that meeting. Now, you know who the new ambassador is: Trump's new ambassador to the Holy See, it's Callista Gingrich. And I have written an article about this, and I wrote a few weeks ago. It says, "Here comes Newt," because Newt is the de facto. He is. I mean, she has no qualifications to be an ambassador, any more than anybody else has, but even less than most people. Her only real connection to the president is through her husband. I'm not going to get into the whole politics, polemics, about their divorce and remarriage; that's their business. But they knew. Trump wanted somebody, like Newt Gingrich, in the Vatican Rome; and he knew that Newt would probably not make it out of the confirmation hearings, or he'd probably be pretty bloodied up. So he appointed Callista. She got through the hearings,; wasn't stellar; she doesn't seem to know much about what her job is suppose to be. When the vote went to the Senate finally, now her appointment was announced in May, right before Trump visited Rome, and had a meeting with the pope. The Holy See has the right to not give its acceptance, it's called diplomatic augremau, diplomatic agreements. They don't actually reject ambassadors, but they have a right not to accept them. They have to give the diplomatic augremau before they can take up their post. That was given before and I have a theory why. It was given right before Trump came to the Vatican.

The Holy See wants to engage this administration, and not further isolate it more than it can be isolated from reality, or anything else. This is very important, I mean, we are not talking to Paolo Silveri in little, tiny Italy. As horrible as he was, it's not a major player on the world scene like the United States. So they accepted Callista Gingrich. It took a long time for her to go through the hearings, and then, to go to the Senate for a vote. She got 20 or 28 people voted against her; that never happens. The only time that there were negative votes against an ambassador was the very first one, because it was a novelty and it was surrounded by the politics, whether or not the United States should even have full diplomatic relations with the Holy See. So this was something very out of the ordinary. People were upset. They knew the reason that she was going was to get Newt there. And one of the guys that works at the embassy that I know, he's been there a long time, met Newt last week. They arrived just last week and he said, "How long you been here?" And he said, "About 18 years," and he said, "We are going to have to sit down and have dinner." And my friend said, "I think I am going to have to ask the ambassador first if we can do that." But the first upside to the appointment came last week. The White House cancelled the Vice President's meeting with the Cardinal Secretary of State. The Holy See's diplomatic office, the Secretary of State, called Newt Gingrich and said, "We want him to meet the Vice President, because Trump's out of the country. We want him to meet."

Gingrich picked up the phone; the meeting happened. That's the shrewdness of the Holy See diplomatic apparatus. So that's one thing.

I should just say that these cardinals the pope has appointed: Cupich in Chicago and Tobin in Newark; these are major appointments. Also the appointment of Kevin Farrell, who is the Bishop of Dallas, bringing him to Rome to head up the dicastery for what they call the Dicastery for Family Laity and Life, which is a combination of about five offices. That's a major appointment and an important voice for the United States in Rome; and, hopefully, Kevin Ferrell can have some kind of good papal influence on the bishops in the United States. That office is one of the first of the reforms. The first was communications, when Pope Francis put all the different sectors of communications in one department. He did it with about five offices and Family Life and Laity. And he's also done it with a new office called the dicastery of Integral Human Development, Justice and Peace, Migrants and Itinerants, *Cor Unum*, which is coordinating agency, Health Care and, I think, there is maybe one other office. But put all those together.

He called to Rome another American; he's a naturalized American. You probably don't know this, you probably don't know his name, maybe you do, Archbishop Silvano Tomasi was the papal representative in Geneva at the U. N. organizations for 13 years. He's a Scalabrinia Father. Do you know the Scalabrinians? They are a missionary order out of North Italy, but came principally here to the United States in the early 1900s to help with the Italian immigrants. He and his brother came to the United States at about the age of 14. They were seminarians. They were in Brooklyn, and Silvano today speaks broken English and broken Italian in equal parts. Wonderful, wonderful man. He has Parkinson's, so he is a bit limited in his energies; but he has re-done this whole dicastery for Cardinal Turkson. He has been the architect of the reform of the pope. He used to be a major official at the migrants and itinerants office. The pope trusts him, because he is probably Rome's expert on the issue. Silvano must be about 71 or 72 now. Wonderful man, and he may be cardinal in the next round; I don't know, but I mention him to illustrate the point that Pope Francis is getting knowledgeable people, and people with expertise, incredible people to help with the reform. He has not chopped off heads and sent people away except what's his name, (he laughs) Cardinal Muller was let go at the end of his five years. Again he worked for the pope; and if he is not going to work for the pope, he's not going to stay. But the pope didn't chase him away. He kept correcting the pope in public. You couldn't keep your job in the U.S. presidential administration, that's for sure; (*Laughter*) but Francis is not like that man. He's merciful, generous, but you cannot be rowing against the direction of the boat if you are part of his staff. The pope has no problem with bishops in other dioceses questioning; but it is counterproductive if somebody in your own cabinet is working against you. So he did not fire Muller; he just did not renew him. His five year term was up, and let him go. And Cardinal Muller continues to go to the press and make his voice known. He doesn't seem know that he is no longer the *doctrinator in chief*. But that's a big move. So he's gone.

Cardinal Sarah has been rebuked. The pope has not removed him but; he has tried to contain him; and he has gone around the Curia in many cases.

But Sinine, that's the cardinal of the kitchen cabinet that he set up, a novel thing early on. They keep meeting periodically; and, as I said at the beginning, they should have a new constitution for how the Roman Curia, the bureaucracy, is put together by this spring or next autumn. So it will probably also see some new cardinals in the next few. There are not a lot of spaces open, but the pope named just five in this past year. Your own Michael Burns has gone to Guam since we last met. The Detroit Red Wings did not make the playoff for the first time; (*Laughter*) it's not good news.

And, I just should say, that the next big initiative is the Synod. Again the Synod is pivotal in what is going to happen in this Church. One of the questions that I asked last time: ministry in the Church, some of the unfulfilled things. Keep your eyes on what happens next October. The pope is calling the Synod into session to talk about youth, faith and vocational discernment. And, once again, they have asked the bishops to take the pulse, to do a questionnaire. I don't know if any of your kids have seen it; but, for the first time ever, the Vatican itself has put a survey, an online survey, and made it available to kids. And it ends at the end of November; so there is just a couple weeks to go. The pope is trying to canvas the views of all kids, all young people, not just Catholics, not just church going Catholics, but Muslims, non-believers. He's trying to figure out what youth is about. Also what makes these kids tick.

We live in such a different world than what I grew up in; and, I mean, I am 53. But even somebody 15 years ago has grown up in a totally different world. This digital revolution is bigger than anything we've ever experienced, much bigger than the industrial revolution. Everything is moving so quickly. Kids don't even know how to write anymore; they write better with their thumbs. Most of them use their thumbs to write. Hell! Mine are too fat and stubby, I keep making mistakes; but I could write you a beautiful letter. They can't. They can't even sign their names. A kid told me, "Sign your name? Toss that!" What? Not even to sign your name? Fourteen year old kid, doesn't know how to sign his name, puts it in block letters. It's amazing. So the pope's trying; and when he talks about vocational discernment, these kids and the young women are saying "We want to help, you won't let us". You know, that's the Synod Assembly, next October.

And further, in 2019 the pope is holding another session of the Synod; and it is a special synod session for the bishops of the Pan Amazon Region. Now these two are not unrelated, these two assemblies: the one on the kids, and the one on the Amazon. There are a lot of similar issues, because we're one Catholic family. But a big issue is vocations in the Amazon; and this is probably going to be the first place where we see a creative response to the vocation shortage. The bishops have been saying for a long time we have to ordain the very *probat*, that is, married men of proven virtue.

But it is not the only proposed solution. There is a bishop in South Africa a German missionary, Fritz Lobinger, who some years ago wrote about the elders; that the elders in the community must discern among the communities, who is the leader here? Among our elders, who is the leader? It doesn't matter if it's a man or a woman; if she's married, if he's married; that's not the point. Discern who is the true leader, the elder in this community? That's another possible solution, whether that's accepted or not.

But I have a very strong sense that if the bishops from the Pan Amazon Region, and this would be not just one bishops conference but nine, because there are nine different conferences. If they were to petition the Holy See to ordain people other than celibate males, that this will be the initial domino that will lead to re thinking of ministries in the Church. It is not going to be as simple, and I hope it is not going to be as simple, let's ordain some very *probati*. I believe, and I think, a lot of people in the Church believe that we have to discern ministries in the Church, because it is not enough to say, "Okay I will be celibate; and I am a male; and if you put hands on me now I have the grace and the charism to preach and to lead." That's not the way. God's grace works through nature. You have to have the prime material before. You can't ordain somebody who has no mouth to speak to you. You might find a different way to do it, but he's not going to do it in a verbal form. God can't work that kind of—well He can; She can—but it doesn't happen very often.

So these two synods: this is the next big thing on the agenda: the young people in October of 2018, and then the synod on the Amazon in 2019; and preparation is underway for both these assemblies. The pope has already called, and the secretary for the synod has already called, two meetings of young people. In May they are going to have a mini synod type of gathering of young people from all over the world. That is going to help further set the agenda for the bishops. And that's exciting. It might seem like baby steps; but we have never done this in the Church. And if you don't include the young people, I mean, look! Is there anybody here younger than me? I'm 53. Okay, good. Well I'm relieved; but I'm also very worried, because that means I am on the other side of the equation now. I mean, I was always the youngest one. So this is very, very hopeful, I think.

What you have to do, if you, like Pope Francis, you have to pray for Pope Benedict. No, not to die, to live, to live a very long life, because Pope Francis believes Benedict is a very important thing for the Church that he resign, that he has the courage to resign. And now it's possible. And that could become a norm in the future. But he has also told people, two people that I know that are very close to him, has confirmed this. He has told them, it would not be good for me to resign as long as Benedict is still alive. So, pray for Pope Benedict. (*Laughter*) Got it? You got it?

With that, I think I have talked far long enough.

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