

**Explanatory note to the
“Declaration of the truths relating to some of the most common errors
in the life of the Church of our time”**

In our time the Church is experiencing one of the greatest spiritual epidemics, that is, an almost universal doctrinal confusion and disorientation, which is a seriously contagious danger for spiritual health and eternal salvation for many souls. At the same time one has to recognize a widespread lethargy in the exercise of the Magisterium on different levels of the Church's hierarchy in our days. This is largely caused by the non-compliance with the Apostolic duty - as stated also by the Second Vatican Council - to “vigilantly ward off any errors that threaten the flock” (*Lumen gentium*, 25).

Our time is characterized by an acute spiritual hunger of the Catholic faithful all over the world for a reaffirmation of those truths that are obfuscated, undermined, and denied by some of the most dangerous errors of our time. The faithful who are suffering this spiritual hunger feel themselves abandoned and thus find themselves in a kind of existential periphery. Such a situation urgently demands a concrete remedy. A public declaration of the truths regarding these errors cannot admit a further deferral. Hence we are mindful of the following timeless words of Pope Saint Gregory the Great: “Our tongue may not be slack to exhort, and having undertaken the office of bishops, our silence may not prove our condemnation at the tribunal of the just Judge. (...) The people committed to our care abandon God, and we are silent. They live in sin, and we do not stretch out a hand to correct.” (*In Ev. hom.* 17: 3. 14)

We are aware of our grave responsibility as Catholic bishops according to the admonition of Saint Paul, who teaches that God gave to His Church “shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4: 12-16).

In the spirit of fraternal charity, we publish this Declaration of truths as a concrete spiritual help, so that bishops, priests, parishes, religious convents, lay faithful associations, and private persons as well might have the opportunity to confess either privately or publicly those truths that in our days are mostly denied or disfigured. The following exhortation of the Apostle Paul should be understood as addressed also to each bishop and lay faithful of our time, “Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6: 12 - 14).

Before the eyes of the Divine Judge and in his own conscience, each bishop, priest, and lay faithful has the moral duty to give witness unambiguously to those truths that in our days are obfuscated, undermined, and denied. Private and public acts of a declaration of these truths could initiate a movement of a confession of the truth, of its defense, and of reparation for the widespread sins against the Faith, for the sins of hidden and open apostasy from Catholic Faith of a not small number both of the clergy and of the lay people. One has to bear in mind, however, that such a

movement will not judge itself according to numbers, but according to the truth, as Saint Gregory of Nazianzus said, amidst the general doctrinal confusion of the Arian crisis, that “God does not delight in numbers” (*Or.* 42:7).

In giving witness to the immutable Catholic Faith, clergy and faithful will remember the truth that “the entire body of the faithful cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples' supernatural discernment in matters of faith, when from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals” (Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, 12).

Saints and great Bishops who lived in times of doctrinal crises may intercede for us and guide us with their teaching, as do the following words of Saint Augustine, with which he addressed Pope Saint Boniface I, “Since the pastoral watch-tower is common to all of us who discharge the office of the episcopate (although you are prominent therein on a loftier height), I do what I can in respect of my small portion of the charge, as the Lord condescends by the aid of your prayers to grant me power” (*Contra ep. Pel.* I, 2).

A common voice of the Shepherds and the faithful through a precise declaration of the truths will be without any doubt an efficient means of a fraternal and filial aid for the Supreme Pontiff in the current extraordinary situation of a general doctrinal confusion and disorientation in the life of the Church.

We make this public Declaration in the spirit of Christian charity, which manifests itself in the care for the spiritual health both of the Shepherds and of the faithful, i.e., of all the members of Christ's Body, which is the Church, while being mindful of the following words of Saint Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians: “That there might be no division in the body, but the members might be mutually careful one for another. If one member suffers any thing, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it” (1 Cor. 12: 25 - 27), and in the Letter to the Romans: “As in one body we have many members, but all the members have not the same office: So we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. And having different gifts, according to the grace that is given us, either prophecy, to be used according to the rule of faith; or ministry, in ministering; or he that teaches, in doctrine; he that exhorts, in exhorting; hating that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good. Loving one another with the charity of brotherhood, with honor preventing one another. In carefulness not slothful. In spirit fervent. Serving the Lord” (Rom. 12: 4 - 11).

The Cardinals and Bishops who sign this “Declaration of the truths” entrust it to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother of God under the invocation “*Salus populi Romani*” (“Salvation of the Roman People”), considering the privileged spiritual meaning which this icon has for the Roman Church. May the entire Catholic Church, under the protection of the Immaculate Virgin and Mother of God, “fight intrepidly the fight of the Faith, persist firmly in the doctrine of the Apostles and proceed safely amidst the storms of the world until she reaches the heavenly city” (Preface of the Mass in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary “*Salvation of the Roman people*”).

May 31, 2019

Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke, Patron of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta

Cardinal Janis Pujats, Archbishop emeritus of Riga

Tomash Peta, Archbishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana

Jan Pawel Lenga, Archbishop-Bishop emeritus of Karaganda

Athanasius Schneider, Auxiliary Bishop of the archdiocese of Saint Mary in Astana

