



the
BridgeDialogues
laity & clergy reimagining the church

A collaborative effort of Voice of the Faithful, FutureChurch, & Association of U.S. Catholic Priests

Professor Massimo Faggioli

Presentation at 2018 VOTF Conference



It's a great pleasure to be here. And, yes, when I received the invitation more than one year [ago], I could not imagine how timely this would have been today, this last year. Actually, starting at the end of 2017 with the publication of the report of the Royal Commission in Australia, this last year has been really, I believe, a new kind of crisis. And here, I want to acknowledge the role of the Voice of the Faithful, because I think it has been essential, and it will be essential, because this is a new kind of crisis.

This crisis is not an American crisis; it is a global crisis. There's no question that around the world, there's nothing like Voice of the Faithful, and this is something I want to say because it's important to say that.

What I'm going to do in the next 40 minutes or so is to—I wouldn't say provide you with a cold shower, but to explain what are the opportunities and challenges for the Catholic laity in the Church of today. Because what this crisis, this second phase or chapter of the abuse crisis tells us is that there is a vertical crisis of the hierarchical leadership that is simply not comparable with 2002. It's much bigger, much more serious, much more complicated by issues that we were not talking about 16 years ago, like the role of LGBT culture in the Catholic Church, for example. So, it's a totally new moment.

What is new about this moment of the crisis is that there is a huge vacuum in the Catholic Church, a vacuum of power—well, the power is still there where it used to be. There is a vacuum of authority, who has a voice to speak that can be listened to. And this vacuum has been filled in ways that are visible and invisible. Just this week, we have heard of initiatives of the Napa Institute, for example, of this new group called the Red Hat Ranking Group, this kind of thing. So, there's a huge vacuum that is being filled by some forms of the Catholic laity. This is not clerical power, as these are technically lay people.

This says something about how complicated it is today to think about the solutions of this crisis with a language and a Catholic theology of the laity, of lay people, that I think gives us opportunities. But we should be aware of the limits of this theology. My job today will be mostly to show what are the problems within the theology of the laity and the role of the Catholic laity in the Church; and after that, to say

something about what are the opportunities. I am not going to address directly the role of Pope Francis in all this, but I'm sure it will come up in the questions and answers afterwards.

The problem is that the Catholic Church today assumes that the Second Vatican Council opened enormous spaces for the Catholic laity. This is an assumption that, like most assumptions that are unquestioned, is problematic, if not untrue, because one of the problems is that theology of the lay people, of the role of the lay people, that was discussed and approved at the Second Vatican Council, the most important Church event in these last five centuries—1962, 1965—is a theology of the lay people, of the role of the lay people, that, as soon as it was approved at Vatican II before 1965, it was already very old. It aged incredibly rapidly.

Why? Because its mostly based on an idea of the lay people that is elaborated in some countries—in France, especially, but France, Belgium in the 1950s—and it is still based on a definition of the lay person that sees the lay condition as a concession to human frailty.

So, here, Vatican II really tries to overcome this.

So. I'm a strong believer that there is no Catholicism imaginable without Vatican II. We should build on Vatican II and build something stronger, higher. I don't think it is possible to imagine the future of the Catholic Church going back from the 1960s. But we should be aware that there are limits to that.

The theology of the laity of the Second Vatican Council is aware that in the 1950s, the idea of the lay person in the Catholic Church is still framed in terms of lack of something, which is the canonical definition of the lay people in canon law. There is no positive definition of the lay person, but it is negative in the sense that the lay person is a non-ordained person. So, it's still the canonical definition of the lay person, which is now the least important of all definitions or typologies of who is the lay person.

Vatican II tries hard. And if you want to have two different chapters in one same document, then Vatican II, [which] reflects this ambiguity, is the second chapter of the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*. Chapter 2, which says, it doesn't matter if you are ordained or not, we are the people of God. And that is the future that Vatican II was looking forward to. And just a couple of pages after, Chapter 4 of *Lumen Gentium*, you have a separate chapter on the lay person in the Catholic Church, which still reflects the old definition: Lay people are those who are not ordained and those who are supposed to help the Church with secular issues, secular realities.

So, this is the ambiguity. There is another thing that Vatican II tries to do very hard, is to say—and this is more visible in other documents, like *Gaudium et spes*, the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the last document approved by Vatican II, which, interestingly, is very afraid and cautious in using the word 'lay people.' It uses much more [often the word] secular.

Because *Gaudium et spes* basically says this: The Catholic Church should be aware that there is a secular dimension in all of us. Even if you are a priest, a bishop, a monk, we all have a secular dimension. And so this is complicated, especially into English, because English lacks a few words that are used in Latin, Italian, French, and German, this distinction between what is lay and secular. Because in English, secular means something a bit different.

So, here, Vatican II has an insight that it cannot work, that the theology of the laity cannot work with 1950s ideas. But Vatican II goes back and forth from a 1950s Canon Law definition of a lay person and a more forward-looking understanding of what is the secular and lay dimension of the Catholic laity.

The fundamental limit of the Second Vatican Council, what it says on the laity is that it is one of those issues of the Second Vatican Council that cannot count on a prescriptive set of statements and of laws. They are all stated in terms of wishes that are issued to Church leaders. This should happen; this is advisable; this would be good. So it's clearly a council that had, again, an insight on the untenable limits of the theology of the

1950s. But all those bishops had gone to the seminary in the 1920s and 1930s.

The youngest among them—because some of them went to the seminary in the early 20th century during the anti-modernist crisis, which is the most serious intellectual catastrophe in the Catholic Church, which is something that some Catholics, lay Catholics, again, would like to repeat today. Because when you try to say that the sex abuse crisis is part of a new understanding of sexuality in the Catholic Church in a positive way, you are basically calling for a new anti-modernist crisis. So, this is not just history.

So, there are limits. Because this theology of the lay people works only if it is accepted by the clerical hierarchy, so there is no institution for the laity or of the laity that can automatically translate some ideas into the Church's practice. And as you know, the most important official act of interpretation of the Second Vatican Council after Vatican II is the Code of Canon Law of 1983, which has a definition of who is a person in the Church that, famously, is non-theological but is juridical. It comes from Roman law. The person in the Catholic Church, according to canon law, is not a person/member because he or she is baptized, which is a sacramental notion of personhood in the Catholic Church, but is a physical person, which is the Roman law understanding of a person. But here you see that post-Vatican II doesn't really help to implement that shift towards a really full theology of the laity in the Catholic Church.

I'll give you just a few examples. So, here, lay people are incorporated in the office of sanctifying in liturgical ministries, but laity by themselves do not have powers in the Church coming from God, only the hierarchy. And so lay people have other business to do. The office of governing: The lay people have a right to be governed—[laughter]—which is important because right now this is not happening, as you all know. And so there is a total panic mode in the Catholic Church, especially in the United States.

So, I think that my right to be governed is not being respected now, actually. But this is another, separate issue. But Vatican II says that there is no right to govern for lay people. They have a right to be governed, but there's no right to govern. And finally, for the office of teaching in the Catholic Church, the idea that lay people can work for the Church as theologians—lay people like myself—is totally unheard of until Vatican II. It is something that appears ... in the late 60s-70s, but it is not part of the reflection of the Second Vatican Council on the lay people. So here, you see how many limits there are to what Vatican II says about the lay people.

So, here, very briefly, I think it's important, before talking about laity today, to have a very quick picture of the different phases in Church history with different kinds of lay people in the Church.

The first part is the 1st century or so until the mid-second century. More or less, there's no real distinction in lay/clergy. There is a variety of ministries, a variety of charisms. We don't really know if we can apply our [inaudible] of the Church of today to the early Church. Actually, we cannot.

The second phase is the Church of the Martyrs. The third, especially the 3rd and early 4th centuries, is the beginning of a hierarchical organization in the Catholic Church. But it is a functional differentiation that is minimal compared to the fundamental unity of the Catholic Church, because it's a church that is being subject to persecution and martyrdom. And when you are martyred, your church is going to be more united. Look at China today. We think they are two different churches. No, they are two episcopal lines that are different, but it is one Catholic Church, which is some sense the flip side of the U.S. problem, where we have one episcopal line but a very divided Church.

The third phase is the so-called Imperial Church, when the Church becomes much more hierarchical, in some sense because it mirrors the empire. When you relate to the empire, you become more imperial, right? And so that's why we have, from the 5th century on, a much more visible and deep differentiation of roles, especially between lay and the ordained people. What is the important difference between lay people and ordained people is not as we usually assume, because lay people can marry and clergy cannot. This is something that happens much later. [Instead] it's about something that I think is very close to the

heart of this crisis of today. Who is in charge of managing the money and the resources? And if you go back to the most classical definition given in the Middle Ages, in the 12th century, by the first legislator of the Catholic Church that tried to organize systemically the law of the Church, the Bolognese monk Gratian, he said famously, there are *duo genera christianorum*—forgive my Latin—there are two orders of Christians: the lay people and the ordained.

Interestingly, he said this—and this has become the theology of the Catholic Church for the clergy and laity for the last 10 centuries—he says this not on the basis of sacraments. No, he is talking about the administrative law of the Church. You have two different kinds of Christians according to whether they are legally able to manage and to make decisions on the finances, resources, of the Catholic Church, or if they have no right to do that.

So, it is a whole theology that is built on administration, which is—pay attention—is something that is coming back right now. Because if you think that the Catholic Church should be like a corporation, your theology will be built on a theology of a corporation. Theology always builds on something else. Rarely does it just proceed from Scripture.

This is the Imperial Church, which is a large chunk of Church history until the Reformation. You have, as you know, Martin Luther, de-clericalizes the Church, or that church that follows him. And by reaction, Catholicism hyper-clericalizes Catholicism.

This is what happens at the Council of Trent. And, one has to say, the Council of Trent builds a Church that works on the assumption that the Church works or fails if the episcopate, if the bishops, work or fail. This is something Vatican II doesn't change. It is fundamentally an episcopal idea of the Church that is built on the episcopate. This has worked, to some extent, between Trent and the 20th century. Now, we see the collapse of that.

This is a big historical turn that we are seeing. It's not just another crisis, but that goes to the heart. It undermines, fundamentally, something that has been built, I think, five centuries ago. And so, there is a long process of dismantling, one, and two, clearing the way from the rubbles, and three, rebuild. It's a very long process.

The fourth phase in Church history is the Catholic Church between the 17th century and today, which is a slow shift from, as I said, a deeply clerical church, the Church of the Council of Trent, and of the century later, the 17th century, which makes a theological elaboration of the submission of the lay people to clerical power. What happens, which is really new compared to the Middle Ages, which are more secular, in some sense. It's a clericalization of culture and of formation, which is something whereby the Middle Ages is less clerical, again.

And then you have the 20th century with Vatican II in the middle of it, which knows exactly that the Middle Ages is not going to come back. That is the past. Well, until the 1930s-1940s, the Middle Ages is the model that explicitly the Church wants to go back [to]—politically, religiously, theologically. It makes us laugh, because there are some Catholics today who are saying that—that we should go back to the Middle Ages. They say that on Twitter, usually, which is all kind of fun. [Laughter.]

Vatican II says, we have this medieval legacy, and this legacy of Trent, we have a much different challenge from that of the empire in the Middle Ages or the challenge of Martin Luther in the 16th century, which is the challenge of the secular world. How is this Church able to interact with the secular global world? Only with the 1% in the Catholic Church of the ordained, or less than 1%, that are able to do things? And all the rest are the audience? Of course not. So, Vatican II really tries to keep something of the past that is workable and open a new path towards the future.

So, here, as I said, there are clearly myths in the theology of the lay people at the Second Vatican II. There's ambiguity; there is unresolved tension. And that's one problem. There is also another problem, which is that, together with the theological ambiguity of those documents and the elaboration of those documents, we now live in a Church, and in a Church in the world, where the Catholic laity has become fundamentally something different from what Vatican II had in mind, an experience about the lay people. It's a different kind of lay people.

I'll start with this. Until Vatican II and until the 1970s, I would say, in the Catholic Church there is one fundamental assumption, which is no longer true, I believe. It's this assumption: The conservative voices and the status quo in the Catholic Church are the ordained people. All the rest are lay people and they all want a progressive kind of church. This is the major change from the theology of the Second Vatican Council and the experience of the lay people. You have, both in the hierarchy and in the lay people today, a much more interconnected, intersected voices, cultures, and ideas of a church that wants to remain as it is until it burns down, probably, or going back to a new kind of Middle Ages, with Twitter or with social media on one side. And you have cultures of change on both sides.

At Vatican II, [there was a] defensiveness of the council against some radical theologies of the laity, because back then the idea was, "lay people want to change everything." Let's give them something we can still work with. Now, to be very blunt, I'm as shocked and ashamed as you are for the performance of the Catholic bishops. I have two small kids in a Catholic school in the Philadelphia area, so it is very practical for me. But I can assure you that as a Catholic theologian, I am more afraid of some lay people in the Church than of some clergy. This is something that no one would accept at Vatican II.

So, we have a lay Catholic laity that are much more fragmented and divided along social and economic lines, ethnic lines, national lines. Nationalism is infiltrating Catholicism, and it is remixing a lot of what it means to be in favor of a lay-driven church or a clerical church. So, it's a much more divided laity. If you want to change the Church, you cannot count on the existence of one laity. It has become a political market, in some sense. You cannot assume that being a lay people means something automatically in terms of change.

Also, because one of the major changes from the Second Vatican Council is that, now, lay people in the Catholic Church, without the issue of gender, means nothing. It means nothing.

I would like to quote, "It's the A-gender." The agenda means nothing without the gender issue, which is something that is never part of any debate at the Second Vatican Council. It's still too early, because Vatican II closes before 1968, which is when a few things explode, including the gender issue in the Catholic Church.

In the church of Vatican II and of the 1970s-80s, if you ask a bishop or pope, what do you in mind for your typology the profile of the lay people in the Church? It's still fundamentally a white, Anglo-European person. Today, this is the minority in the Catholic Church globally, and that means a number of things that we don't know what they mean, actually.

So, here, there is the theology of the lay of Vatican II. And until recently, it is dominated by this idea that there is a kind of way, of style, of being a lay member of the Church that echoes or mirrors or reminds us of a certain ethics of citizenship, of being a citizen.

Now, the collapse of political representation, the collapse of our trust in the political institutions, in the judiciary—I'm not saying anything else—has enormous consequences, because it's the same Catholic laity. It's the same Catholic laity in this and other countries.

So, it is much more complicated. Much more complicated, also, because at Vatican II, there is a fundamental consensus as to the fact that the Church lives in this world and there is no real idea until recently that the Church can escape this world. If you have followed the Catholic debate these last couple of years, I don't know if you have heard of this book and of this debate on the Benedict option, which is the idea that the only survival for the Church is to retreat from the world. This is also interesting because this is an idea that comes from Catholic lay people, who suddenly think they will all want to become monks, again on Twitter, because this is ... [Laughter.] So, this is a new face of the Catholic laity.

I say this just to give you an idea of how complicated it is to make easy assumptions on what is the clerical identity and what is the lay identity. In some sense, this may be the beginning of a return to the earlier centuries, to the pre-5th century. So, it's not an accident that you talk about financial transparency, because this is how everything begins: two orders of Christians. We may go back to a church where it is already like this today, where the fact of wearing a collar or being married says almost nothing about your Catholicism, because this is what it is. It says almost nothing about your ideas, your theology, your lifestyle.

As you know, there are bishops and priests and cardinals that lead a much more glamorous lifestyle than me with two small kids. I can assure you—much more glamorous. So, whether it's legal and moral or not, it's secondary. My life, with two small kids, four and seven, is much more monastic—[laughter]—I can assure you. And this is not just me; it's the vast majority of Catholic parents. So, it says almost nothing if you're ordained or not. It says something in a liturgical setting, and even more in terms of who holds power. But, essentially, what kind of a Church you want, you have to ask many more questions.

So, what do we do with this? I think this—that we need to be sure that we cannot limit our debate on [whether] the theology of the Second Vatican Council on the laity and the rest, was it good or bad. This is part of the ... tradition. We need to build something on that tradition. But we cannot spend much time saying, was it good or bad, because it is a distraction.

I think the Catholic laity in the Church of today in this crisis has to reclaim not roles or functions that are not there, yet, but to reclaim spaces that are there already. So, here—and I think that an organization like Voice of the Faithful has provided a very important example of this—we need to make the best possible use of what is there already without making abstract claims.

I think that the present crisis has reshaped the agenda of the Catholic Church of now and of the next decade. I think that this Church is in survival mode in some sense, because, as I said before, this is the most serious crisis since the Reformation.

The Church survived the Reformation but in a very different way, and I think we are at this moment. So, there is no question that the future of the Catholic Church is in the hands of the lay people. My impression is that the lay people can be successful in fulfilling the mission it has. It's going to be more effective without making abstract claims, and it will be more effective reclaiming spaces that are available in the constitution of the Catholic Church—the constitution not as a document, but in the order of the Catholic Church. Because what we see is that the chaos in the Catholic Church today can be used for destruction or for rebuilding.

And this is, if there will be destruction or rebuilding, it will depend on what kind of action the Catholic laity will take, because in this Church history, the role of the hierarchy and of the papacy and of the Vatican has historically been much more about reaction and response to something that happens in the Church, much more than action to solve problems.

So, we have a distorted view, I think, of the papacy in this last century or so because of the media. We think that everything happens there. It happens there, but mostly, in Church history,

it is the papacy reacting to something happening with the lay people, in the empire, on the periphery, and

so on. This is, I think, a fundamental dynamic of the Catholic Church. I don't think we can expect actions that come from there right now. They can come from us and can come from you.

We should keep this in mind in terms of what reaction will be triggered by our action. That's how I see that. It may be seen as vague advice, like drink a glass of water in the morning because it's good. It sounds like that. But I am trying to limit my remarks this morning to what cannot work and what hasn't worked in these last few decades than about what to do. I think we can talk about this now in the debate.

So, I thank you for your patience. [Applause.]

Q&A Period

Q: When Father Orsi spoke to us many years ago, he mentioned that basically the governance or structure of the Church followed the public by about 200 years. Do you think that is still true? Are we in the 1600s, the 1800s, or are we really still back in the Middle Ages?

MF: It's very hard to disagree with Father Orsi, who's one of my good friends, and I don't disagree. There are clearly some aspects of the way the Church is governed; that is, before we accepted the idea, for example, of the separation of powers. This is not yet there. So, that is certainly true. The Catholic Church has accepted constitutional ideas for the political behavior or ideas of Catholics in the secular realities, but not within the Catholic Church. So this is certainly true.

I think there is something new that came up in these last few years, which is the very strong push to see the Catholic Church as a corporation. I'm not saying this just to defend Pope Francis, because he's not the CEO of the Catholic Church. That is one problem. And it's the minimal problem. But the major problem is that if you accept the corporatization of the Catholic Church, you will have a Church enslaved to money. And what's going on right now is that there are some groups, especially in this country, who are literally trying to buy the Catholic Church. [Applause.] So, this is dangerous, because, as we all know, capitalism is promiscuous. It is going to bed with everyone.

The Catholic Church, I think, now, is facing this. So, the big problem is, how to respond against the sex abuse crisis with accountability and transparency, justice system and so on, without becoming a victim of the corporate vision of the Catholic Church? Because this would also mean that there will be churches in the global Catholic Church that would become enslaved to the Catholic churches where there's money. This is what's going to happen.

So, I would complement what Father Orsi said. He's totally right.

Q: [Inaudible.]

MF: We need to change the governance model, I believe, without falling into a corporate model. So, how to do that is way beyond my "pay grade," so to speak, but this is the problem. Because we cannot make the jump from a medieval idea to a post-modern Google/Apple idea, because I think that would be destructive of the most defenseless in the Catholic Church. This is my concern. Because those who are trying to buy the Catholic Church are not doing that for moral reasons, but because they want to shape the Catholic Church according to their model of what the Church is, which is driven by a certain capitalistic idea. And I think it would be bad, because it's, first of all, unfaithful to the Gospel, and it would have enormous consequences.

Q: I've got a few questions here that have to do with the fruitful spaces available to us right now. You mentioned that the lay folks need to fill the spaces that are available. Could you tell us a little bit more about what you think those spaces here?

MF: Sure. Here, one of the big changes that happens between Vatican II and now, especially because of Pope Francis, is that Francis said, we have talked for 50 years about the collegiality in the Catholic Church, collegial church, which means that bishops have to work together. And Pope Francis says, we don't need just that; we need a synodal church where it is not really important at the synodality level who is a bishop, who is a priest, and who is a layperson. He said that many times. What hasn't happened so far is the invitation of making our local churches more synodal. So here, I think Catholic laity have a responsibility to ask from the bishops to open a synod in the churches. And they are terrified because they don't know what they're going to get—first. And second, they're terrified because they don't know what's going to happen on the front of the criminal justice against them.

So, the laity have the right to live in a synodal church. I think it would be necessary to ask formally of every bishop and every parish priest, we want to have moments and spaces when the lay people can talk and can talk not just for show, but can talk to be listened to for something to change. This is not happening because all of the bishops, or most of them, were appointed in this last 20, 30 years, exactly because of their opposition to their model of the Church. This is the conundrum. The Church right now has to work with this cohort, officials that were raised, chosen, and promoted because they are against a collegial church.

On the other hand, they know they are in the weakest possible spot in the Catholic Church right now. So, I know that you can count right now on a sympathetic press, and I think there should be formal public requests. And I don't know if it takes more courage for them to say yes or to say no—honestly. If you say yes, you don't know what you're going to get, and it may be bad. If you say no, you're sure it's going to be bad, right? [Laughter.]

Q: Do you have any ideas on how Voice of the Faithful or the laity can provoke the ordained to abandon clericalism?

MF: How many days do I have? [Laughter.] The problem is this—I've just said something that reflects my opinion on most of the bishops today. The real problem is that the young generation of priests tend to be even more clerical. [At] this moment is a clash between those who want to have a less clerical church and not the status quo. Because the status quo doesn't exist anymore, basically. It's between those who want to go back to the 1950s, or the 1950s, or the 1350s, right? This is the problem.

I think we have a right to be furious with our bishops and so on. [But] let's not be fooled by the idea that the next generation will necessarily be more open to this. In the Catholic Church, many things do not need permission. I think that especially in a church like in the U.S., where there is a very strong sense of citizenship, of ownership, of the Church, it's less clerical than in Italy, for example—my own country. I can assure you.

So, we cannot have, as a goal, to replace formally all these bishops and priests. I'm reluctant to that—not because it's utterly impracticable, I think, but because that's not the point. I think that those bishops who covered up and abused, they should absolutely [be removed]. I would limit myself to this without making of that fight against the bishops an ideological one, because I don't see that as a battle that we can win.

We have to demonstrate that the Church lives without them, or survives without them, on the one side. And on the other side, there is the job of theologians like me making a case for the unsustainability of a model where only bishops or priests can manage finances. It's a very confused moment. If you look at the young generation of seminarians, it's hard.

Q: Right. I see them. They're in cassocks and everything, which is definitely turning back the clock. The role of women and their money—how can we make that make a change to the Church? You mentioned the issue of gender, and the issue of women comes up all the time. And women probably have the money—Catholic money. How can women make their voices heard with their money or by withholding their money?

Is that going to have any impact at all?

MF: Of course. Very briefly, here. I think there is, politically, in the Catholic Church today, much more consensus on the fact that we need to have more transparency, accountability, and so on, and lay voices where decisions are made. This is something where I see a large consensus across the ideological spectrum. I think it would be bad for that issue to match that with broader claims about women priests, for example, on which there is no consensus in the Catholic Church, right now. I'm totally in favor and on the record on women deacons. I think it should happen tomorrow morning. [Applause.] There's no question. Women priesthood, the issue right now, would automatically alienate large portions of the Catholic Church.

If we want to be realistic, this is my assessment. So, here, there is no ideological or theological objection to the fact that women should sit on boards. And this is something where I believe there is a space in this moment to make that case, which is one of those decisions, again, that when saying yes may be dangerous, but if you say no, it's a PR disaster. I believe this is one of those issues where there is the most space as compared to others, I guess.

Q: Can we use a different term besides laity? Is there a different term we should be using?

MF: Yes, we should use "Christian." [Applause.] It's an old debate. The whole issue at the Second Vatican Council was, are lay people Christians, fully Christian, like the ordained? So that was 50 years ago. Right now, the theological consensus is [that] all Catholics, even the ordained, they are lay people, they have some lay component in them. All of the ordained are lay people, have a lay component.

Q: Well, before they were ordained, they were lay.

MF: Well, before, but it's not something you leave. Being lay comes from your baptism, and that never leaves you. So, here, we should use 'laity' only when we talk about canonical issues, canon law, right? So where is power? But functionally, in terms of ministry, of testimony, we should use 'Christian.' This is an easy answer for a very complex issue. But the theology of the laity is 20th century, and I think it should be used in quotes now.

Q: So, 'Christian' refers to a whole broad spectrum of different churches. Is that any point of confusion?

MF: Well, if you don't want to use 'Christian,' I would say 'witness of Jesus of Christ' or 'testimony of Jesus Christ,' but Christian" is something that should be more visible than your being lay or ordained. I think we should limit our discussion on the laity when we talk about the institutional questions of power and authority. There, canon law is still binding. But theologically, that division between the lay people and the ordained has been blurred for decades. Who is more lay between me and the president of a Jesuit university? Have you seen his apartment? [Laughter.] In terms of lifestyle and of personal spirituality, this is largely irrelevant right now—whether you are a lay or an ordained person. This is gone. This is worse than medieval; it's archaeological. [Laughter.]

Q: Are you sure the demographic tipping point on the majority of the Church is white European, or was that late? And I think you had mentioned that that was—I've forgotten which century in which you mentioned that was happening.

MF: Well, I'm not an expert on this. It's clear that the majority of the Catholic laity, if not already, it's going to be very soon in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

Q: So that's the next question. The Church is increasingly becoming a non-white church. How do we learn the skills to live and share the power? Because the white church may not have as many people but it has a lot of the money, and yet the bigger portion of the Church is not.

MF: Well, I can just tell you that the problem is that this Catholic Church lives in a more globalized world. It's a more globalized church, where different national geo-cultural identities have now more difficulties to communicate than before. We have become more fragmented than before. The churches tend to become a bit more nationalistic or national than before.

But this question is still right in saying that there is a lot of learning that is not taking place. I go every year for a few weeks to Australia, for example, to teach. And it's a fairly similar culture to the Irish Catholicism. But it's a totally different Catholic culture. It's very different. And I've learned a lot from them.

For example, in terms of how to get out of this abuse mess in the United States, I think we should learn something from Australia, actually. Do some of the things that they have done, the USCCB, for example, they should do something, and this is not happening. And so this is a key point, I believe.

Q: How is the Church in Australia so different from ours?

MF: Well, there is no separation between church and state. This is a constitutional difference.

Q: What do you mean, no separation between church and state?

MF: Well, most countries in the world have no separation between church and state. The U.S. is an exception, in a sense. [Australia is] different in the sense that it has become much more open to a multi-cultural, indigenous Catholic culture of the native aboriginals, so this is very different. It has huge problems, but the difference is that intra-Catholic debate is not dominated by the two-party system that has become typical of the U.S. Church. So, in this country, the two-party system in Congress has basically produced a two-party Church. This is something that you don't have [in Australia]—yet. We'll see.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of the Australian Church, appointed by the Australian bishops, had been run by a lay person, Frank Sullivan. The plenary council that they are preparing for 2020-2021 has as an executive committee where lay people are the majority right now. Just to give you a few ideas.

Q: Thank you. So, one last question, because we're just about out of time, and of course, this is the million-dollar question. As long as the Church continues to collect money from us, are they ever going to be compelled to listen or motivated to change? And the question that always comes up is, I like what my parish does, I don't want to stop funding my parish or the good works that they do and the ability for me to go to mass, but I really don't feel comfortable giving money to the Church that's going to wind up at the diocese and be used in coverups, etc.

MF: This is a complicated question. I think here there should be a form of consensus objection in terms of giving money. This is something I totally agree with. On the other hand, I wouldn't be too confident in the fact that our refusing to give money to the Catholic Church can stop the system, because the system can find your money and my money 10 times, where they know already there is money for their agenda.

It must be something that is about a moral argument. We cannot think we can strangle the institution by withholding our money. It has to be that [but] together with a larger argument. Because, again, this is what's happening. All of these new watchdogs, anti-reform or reform-in-their-own-way Catholic groups have deep pockets, unlimited checkbooks, so this is not a problem. We need to use that argument because, for local churches, it's still important, but together with a moral argument and a theological argument that can only limit itself to that amount of dollars, I think.

Q: Thank you, Massimo. [Applause.] [End.]