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The pitfalls of compassion

An ambiguous term

When one speaks of compassion, one thinks immediately of the suffering of another person, the tragic situation in which he finds himself. It is a matter of understanding, "sympathising" with him, sharing in his distress and bearing it with him. We must of course seek to alleviate and, as far as possible, remedy this painful situation. The word "compassion" also suggests the notion of psychologically and emotionally sharing in suffering, especially suffering beyond medical or other control. If we visit a person suffering from terminal cancer, we are able, by our presence, a word, a gesture of kindness, to express, as far as we are able, the extent to which we share in that person's suffering and seek to comfort him/her.

However, in cases of abortion, euthanasia and assisted suicide which appear in the news, compassion is frequently invoked to "justify" the act which has been or is about to be performed. If, before birth, a child is declared as suffering from a serious malformation, it will be asserted that, if the pregnancy is allowed to continue, the child will have a life which will not be worth living; abortion will then be recommended out of compassion, out of pity. We share, they say, the pain of that child's condition, but the best, in fact the only effectively possible way - they say - to help the child is to terminate its life. The child will be killed out of compassion.

Such persons go further, asserting that no one has the right to compel a woman to bear a child which would - they say - for her, for the father and for the family, be an insupportable "burden". Here, compassion for the parents will be invoked. Undaunted, they go on to say that one cannot

impose on society the burden of living beings whose maintenance is costly, yet futile; a child handicapped at birth contributes nothing to society. Abortion will then be allowed out of compassion for society which, "to its regret", has to resign itself to the elimination of one of its members. Such people will even venture to perceive in this act an example of social justice, of "ethnic cleansing", of eugenics.

Compassion can also be extended to the abortionist doctors. To carry out an abortion is for them - it is said - a "decision difficult to take" and an act they perform purely in obedience to their conscience. We must therefore sympathise with doctors who, for example, "for the good" of the child or its mother, take the "courageous" decision to go ahead with an abortion. Far from blaming such people, we should support them psychologically and morally, grant them appropriate legal protection.

These examples illustrate different aspects of situations currently grouped together under a single ambiguous term: compassion. There is, firstly, compassion in the usual sense of sympathy, commiseration. However, in the examples cited above, we observe that compassion is invoked and applied very differently depending on whether it creates a victim, the unborn child, or is intended to relieve the mother, justify laws or endorse medical intervention.

Compassion today

We can discern true and bogus compassion in acts and standpoints observable in the world today. This will reveal the ravages bogus compassion is wreaking on both the individual and human societies. We will consider a number of examples.

1) In 1962 the Assizes Court in *Liège* (Belgium) was called upon to judge a mother who, "out of compassion", had killed her child. During the pregnancy, the mother had taken Softenon, today known as Thalidomide. The child was born with serious malformations. The mother decided to terminate

the life of her child; which in fact she did. After a trial which attracted extensive media coverage, the woman was acquitted. She left the court a free woman, to hearty applause from the public.

2) Animals are increasingly the target of the "compassion" of mankind. In a "documentary" produced by Al Gore, entitled *An inconvenient truth*, dedicated to global warming, we see an animation showing an exhausted polar bear desperately seeking a safe foothold in order to save its life. The message is clear: if the polar ice- cap heats up and melts, the reason is to be sought in the excessive number of human beings who pollute the earth. ¹ It is therefore necessary to control population growth, which, we are assured, is the cause of the deterioration in the environment. In addition, "compassion" for animals and the protection of flora, fauna and vanishing species necessitate the introduction of quotas, determining the number, or even the "quality" of human beings authorised to reproduce. A variant on this argument exhorts "compassion" for Gaia, or Mother Earth, which - it is alleged - is deteriorating as a result of the devastation inflicted by mankind. Mankind must be sacrificed to the environment. ²

3) In recent years, there have been a number of high-profile cases of *paedophilia*. In the USA, Mexico, Ireland and other countries, members of the lower and higher clergy have been involved in a number of legal actions. In the majority of these cases, the Church authorities have been accused of attempted cover-ups. For as long as they were able, these authorities pretended that nothing, or very little, had happened. The reason most frequently invoked is that of "compassion" for the perpetrators of acts of *paedophilia*. Compassion for the poor clerics, already suffering so much from their urges and whom their superiors should not condemn publicly or,

¹ *Le Monde* of 19 November 2009 ran a front-page headline: "The burden of the birth-rate poses a threat to the climate". This article, attributable to Grégoire ALLIX, continues on page 4 under the heading "Is birth control a remedy for global warming? The United Nations is calling for the demographic question to be discussed at the Copenhagen summit".

² Cf. our work *The hidden face of the UNO*, pages 61-70; this chapter is entitled "The Earth Charter and the ecological imperative". See also the words of St Paul in Romans 8, 18-22.

still less, expose to ignominious condemnation by the proper judicial authorities. If abortionists deserve protection, why not paedophiles?

This attitude brings to mind *the Recife case* (Brazil), which hit the headlines in March-April 2009.³ In both examples, referring to paedophilia and the Recife case, instead of expressing compassion for the young and innocent victims, "compassion" is extended to those who have inflicted immense harm on these victims, doctors in Recife, clergy elsewhere.

4) On 16 November 2009, the press announced an initiative from Ségolène Royal. A prominent media figure, the President of the Poitou-Charente Regional Council (France) announced the distribution of "contraceptive packs".⁴ These contraceptive packs contained condoms and "contraception vouchers". Ségolène Royal's aim was to "alleviate the distress of pupils" and reduce the social distress caused by "precocious pregnancies". After encouraging sexual intercourse by including condoms in the contraceptive pack, Ségolène Royal refers to a "circular making provision for the morning-after pill". Once again, adolescents and unborn children risk paying the price of pseudo-compassion.

5) We are today witnessing a radical questioning of *marriage and the family*. Christians are asking the Church to authorise divorce and allow the "remarriage" of divorced people. Some go even further, calling for the Church to recognize homosexual unions, with or without the adoption of children. These demands are all made in the name of "compassion". The Church would be wrong to show intransigency on these questions; it would be lacking in pity for married people unfairly abandoned by their spouses and for the children of divorced couples. It would be ignoring the homosexual

³ We recall that a young girl of 9 years old, "Carmen" was raped by her stepfather and became pregnant with twins. In spite of appeals for compassion from Dom Jose Cardoso Sobrinho (then Archbishop of Recife) and his closest collaborators, this young girl was subjected to a double abortion, partly as a result of pressure from radical feminist movements. Curiously, Dom Cardoso was vilified by a Church dignitary in Rome, who attempted to assert that those who wished to protect the twins had been lacking in "compassion" for the abortionists, "who had had to take a difficult decision".

⁴ See *La Libre Belgique*, 14 November 2009 and *Le Monde*, 16 November 2009.

tendency inherent in the constitution of some men and women. Here too, there is an appeal for "compassion". But what compassion?

When questioned on the issues of marriage and divorce, Jesus forcefully reaffirms God's original plan: marriage as desired by God is monogamous, faithful, indissoluble.⁵ Jesus redefines marriage, as conceived in the mind of God at the moment of creation.⁶ He makes no concessions concerning marriage, as intended by God. Even the Apostles are amazed at the severity displayed by Jesus.⁷ Like some today, they expected from Jesus a compassion on the cheap, a tolerance regarding the law and the intention of the creator, clearly laid down from the beginning of time. Here the justification, the sanctification enunciated can be seen as a return to the beginning, a recreation achieved through a conversion of the heart. What Jesus brings to the fore is the equal dignity of a man and a woman. Man cannot claim a "right" to repudiate his wife. What Jesus reveals is the power of God at work in marriage. It is God who unites. Compassion cannot be expressed in a rejection of the divine power always at work in a marriage. However, the *compassion of God* is expressed in the pardon Jesus offers to those who commit adultery, prostitute themselves or engage in homosexuality.⁸ The compassion of Jesus is certainly not an endorsement of sin; it is an invitation to receive pardon and return to the right path. The compassion of Jesus is mercy.⁹

6) In 1920 Binding (1841-1920), a jurist, and Hoche (1865-1943), a doctor, published a work which, although little-known, proved one of the most influential of the 20th century. The authors explain the need "to liberalise the destruction of a life unworthy of living".¹⁰ This is the title of

⁵ Cf. Matthew 19, 1-9; Mark 10, 1-12; Luke 16, 18.

⁶ Cf. in particular Genesis 1, 28; 2, 18-24; cf. John 1, 1.

⁷ Cf. Matthew, 19, 10.

⁸ Cf. Genesis 19, 1-29; Romans 1.

⁹ Cf. Luke 7, 36-50 describing the scene at the Pharisee's house; 15; 3-32; 19, 1-10; 23, 40-43.

¹⁰ In collaboration with Klaudia SCHANK, we translated and presented this work: *Euthanasie: Le dossier Binding et Hoche. Traduction de l'allemand, présentation et analyse de "La libéralisation de la destruction d'une vie qui ne vaut pas d'être vécue". Texte intégral de*

this book, which formulates and justifies the *programme of euthanasia* which would be implemented some years later by Hitler. As usual, the arguments advanced convey the impression that they are imbued with compassion. There are, we are assured, categories of individuals whose lives are not deserving of criminal protection. Their lives are valueless. Euthanasia will save them from living a life not worthy of living. Such persons must be euthanized in their own interests. But they should also be euthanized in the interests of society. These beings are not only without value, they are a burden on all who are useful to society. "Compassion" for society must be invoked by the same token as "compassion" for these beings, who must be liberated from their utter lack of value and utility. These speciously compassionate considerations conceal pseudoscientific arguments with strong eugenic and racist connotations. In this instance, compassion is being manipulated to benefit a political programme which is the very negation of compassion.

7) In the *Recife case*¹¹, we witnessed a flagrant example of bogus compassion. In brief, we were told to show compassion for the doctors who performed a direct double abortion. It was necessary to hush the affair up, as others had been hushed up.¹² However, medical literature records situations similar to that experienced by "Carmen", the young girl in Recife, where true compassion is expressed towards very young mothers and their babies. As early as 1959, the medical press recorded the existence of some 30 known cases of precocious pregnancies, frequently in girls under the age of 12. The most famous case is that of a young Peruvian girl, Lina Medina, born in 1933, who had her first period at the age of 8 months (*sic*) and fell pregnant at the age of 5 (*sic*). At the age of 5 years and 8 months, she gave birth to a boy, Geraldo. In 1954, Geraldo was aged 15 and his mother 20. The doctors had diagnosed precocious puberty in the mother which was constitutional, rather than pathological.

l'ouvrage publié en 1922 à Leipzig, Paris, Le Sarmant-Fayard Éditions, 2002, 138 pages, ISBN: 2-866-79329-3.

¹¹ Cf. section 3 above.

¹² See section 3 above, on cases of paedophilia.

What is remarkable in the story of Lina Medina is precisely that it was the doctors who established that the young girl's pregnancy was not pathological.¹³ The possibility of an abortion was never envisaged. On the contrary, the doctors showed true compassion to the mother and baby. The mother was last heard of living on the outskirts of Lima, Peru. The mother has never revealed the name of the father of her child. The child was born by Caesarean section and died in 1979 at the age of 40.

The article, published in the medical journal *La Presse Medicale* on 13 May 1939, states that the delivery was carried out by caesarean section by Dr Geraldo Lozada. This short article emphasises that:

“Little Lina was surrounded by meticulous care. A committee of married women was formed to assume responsibility for the care and material living conditions of the young mother and baby, now and in the future.”

The article of 31 May 1939, also attributed to Dr Escobel, urges compassion:

“We hope the Government and the *Foyer de la Mère* will protect this unfortunate child, who has triggered a surge of sympathy and pity in all our hearts, especially since her baby was born on the day the Peruvian nation celebrated ‘Mothers Day’.”

8) Because of its serious nature, AIDS is also a disease which triggers compassion. Public and private bodies have specialised in the prevention and/or treatment of this disease. Reception and treatment centres have been set up to welcome, treat and support sufferers to the end. Religious congregations specialising in medical care have adapted their programmes to the new circumstances created by the expansion of this pandemic. The example of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta attracted a following. However, not everyone was inspired by the exemplary compassion displayed by Mother Teresa.

¹³ See “La plus jeune mère du monde”, a short article in the medical journal *La Presse Médicale* (Paris), 13 May 1939, page 744; see also a letter from Dr. Edmundo ESCOBEL (Lima), “La plus jeune mère du monde”, in *La Presse Médicale* (Paris), 31 May 1939, page 875. This case is also referred to in a work by Rodolfo PASQUALINI, *Endocrinología*, Buenos Aires, El Ateneo Editions, 1959. See in particular pages 684–686. Pasqualini cites Escobel’s article on page 686. For further information, key in Lina Medina in *Wikipedia*.

In March 2009, on board an aeroplane taking him to Africa, Pope Benedict XVI was cornered by journalists because he had dared to say that the condom was not a real solution to the problem. Always ready to enrich their collection of "Belgian tales", the Chamber of Representatives, including a number of "Christian" representatives, condemned the Pope's "irresponsible" and "unacceptable" words. The honourable Belgian Deputies were on the point of calling for an urgent meeting of the UN Security Council! Thank God, the Belgian Senate failed to endorse the anti-Christian hysteria displayed by the Chamber of Representatives.

But the same Chamber could have claimed the backing of a number of eminent clergymen. These included cardinals, accorded wide coverage in the media and therefore well-known, who, curiously, recommended the use of the condom, presenting it as a lesser evil, the greater evil being to avoid the danger of fatal contagion in the absence of this precaution. The reason invoked is therefore compassion.

The reasoning usually runs as follows: given that the sexual urge is irresistible and uncontrollable, use of the condom is the only effective means of avoiding AIDS. Some "moralists" have even come close to invoking the Vth commandment of God, "Thou shalt not kill!", presenting use of a condom as a moral obligation! Other moralists and pastors/ministers have developed a variant on this argument: they preach sin without risk.

With regard to AIDS, compassion is therefore invoked for two different reasons. Certainly, compassion should primarily be addressed to patients suffering from this terrible disease. As for all those suffering from serious illnesses, we must ensure that their suffering is relieved and they receive the medical care they need; we must speak to them tenderly; convey to them the tenderness of men, but also the tenderness of God. However, in the example we are discussing, compassion is being invoked falsely: the condom is necessary - it is implied - due to the uncontrollable nature of man's passion, his powerlessness in the face of the urges assailing him.

It is not our intention at this point to reproduce the discussions on AIDS, its causes, treatment, etc. However, there are two findings which should give the proponents of false compassion cause for reflection. Firstly,

one only needs to flick through consumer magazines to learn that the condom is not 100% reliable. If this is the case for contraception, why should it be 100% reliable in preventing the transmission of AIDS?

But there is a further aspect of the problem, largely unrecognized by many eminent pastors/theologians. This is what economists call the *rebound effect*. The image of a bouncing ball is suggestive: after an initial parabola, it touches the ground, but immediately leaves the ground again, travelling higher and further. Two familiar examples serve to illustrate this argument. The arrival of low energy light bulbs has been heralded with enthusiasm: an 11-watt bulb provides as much light as a conventional 60-watt bulb. We exclaim: "What a saving!" In fact it has been observed that, precisely because of the low consumption of these bulbs, people tend to illuminate their homes more, by multiplying the number of bulbs and increasing the number of hours of lighting. The low-energy bulbs therefore tend to cancel out the savings they were designed to achieve, and may even lead to an increase in consumption.

A further example: some cars, previously fitted with a greedy engine, are today fitted with a low-consumption engine. Here also, people say: "What a saving!". But if the car consumes, let's say, 5 litres of petrol, rather than the 8 litres consumed by the previous car, people find driving has become less expensive and they drive more than they did in their old car. They drive more in a car which consumes less. The outcome is that the saving achieved by the new-generation engine is offset by an increase in mileage and frequently an increase in the speed at which the driver habitually travels.

A third example of the rebound effect has been highlighted by Jacques Suaudeau¹⁴. When the wearing of seat belts became compulsory in England, it was discovered, to everyone's surprise, that the number of accidents and accident victims rose. An exhaustive study revealed that motorists believed that wearing a seatbelt provided greater safety. But they were taking more risks and driving faster than before. The benefit anticipated from wearing a seatbelt was offset by greater risk-taking.

¹⁴ See Jacques SUAUDEAU, article entitled "Sexualité sans risques", pages 905-926 of the *Lexique des termes ambigus et controversés* produced by the Pontifical Council for the Family, published by Téqui, Paris, 2005.

The rebound phenomenon is also observable with regard to use of the condom and the incidence of this usage on the propagation of the disease. Eminent moralists should take account of this phenomenon. Media hype urging the use of condoms to limit the propagation of AIDS has produced a perverse effect: the condom provides a false sense of security. When using a condom, people tend to compensate for the reduced risk generated by the condom by engaging in more relationships placing them at risk, changing partners, varying their relationships and having their first sexual relations earlier and earlier.

We must point out that this was explained by Dr Edward C. Green on 19 March 2009, after the media lynching to which the Pope was subjected during his trip to Africa.

“Our best studies [...] demonstrate a constant association between the greater availability and increased use of condoms and a higher (not lower) rate of HIV infection. This may in part be due to a phenomenon known as *risk compensation* (our emphasis, MS), which means that, when one uses a "technology" which reduces risk, such as condoms, one frequently forfeits the benefit (risk reduction) by "compensating" or taking greater risks than those one would have taken without the technology which reduces the risk".¹⁵

Here again, with reference to AIDS, is a remarkable example of "compassion" which is bogus and violent. Bogus because based on assertions whose falsity is perceivable by a person with even a modicum of knowledge. Violent, because, on the basis of false premises, one is objectively urged to risk dying and causing death.

9) Can one give Communion to members of Parliament who publicly declare themselves to be in favour of abortion? Some pastors have, practically or theoretically, responded in the affirmative to this question. We must, they say, have compassion for these members of Parliament, who are torn apart inside. As Christians, they say, they are of course opposed to abortion; but, during Parliamentary debate, they vote for legislation in favour of abortion. These representatives, it is said, are experiencing a crisis

¹⁵ Edward C. GREEN is director of the AIDS Prevention Project at the Harvard Centre for Population and Development Studies. The text we quote can be found on <<http://www.lifesitenews.com>> for 19 March 2009, which contains further information.

of conscience and should not be sent away if they present themselves to receive Holy Communion. Comparable situations arise, for example, in the case of well-known abortionist doctors, magistrates, political leaders, etc. All these people need spiritual comfort and should be allowed to approach the Lord's Table.

A number of standpoints recently adopted show that the Church cannot endorse this pseudo-compassion. Let us examine two examples:

a. In November 2009, Juan Antonio Martínez Camino, a Jesuit, Auxiliary Bishop of Madrid and Secretary General of the Spanish Episcopal Conference, reminds us that, by approving and voting for a law in favour of abortion, baptised Catholics are objectively placing themselves in a state of mortal sin.¹⁶ Persons promoting such laws are sinning publicly and cannot be admitted to the Lord's Table. To press his point home, the Auxiliary Bishop of Madrid adds that any person who affirms it is lawful to take away the life of an innocent human being is guilty of heresy and liable for excommunication *latae sententiae*.¹⁷

On 27 November 2009, the Plenary Assembly of the Spanish Episcopal Conference published a declaration to the effect that politicians who vote in favour of a bill liberalising abortion in Spain place themselves in "a state of objective sin and, if this situation persists, cannot be allowed to receive Holy Communion."¹⁸

b. On Sunday 22 November 2009¹⁹ Patrick Kennedy, Democrat member of the US House of Representatives, announced that the Bishop of Providence, Thomas J. Tobin, had requested him to abstain from receiving Holy Communion and asked the priests in his diocese

¹⁶ Source: <<http://www.elmundo.es/>>, 12 November 2009. See also <<http://www.sectorcatolico.com/>>, 30 December 2009.

¹⁷ Cf. Code of Canon Law, 751; 1364, §1; 1398.

¹⁸ Cf. <<http://www.lifesitenews.com/>>, 27 November 2009. The unequivocal position reaffirmed by the Secretary General of the Spanish Episcopal Conference (CEE), His Excellency Mgr Martínez CAMINO, has also been affirmed by Isidoro CATELA MARCOS, Director of the CEE's Information Bureau. See website of ACI Prensa <<http://www.aciprensa.com/>>, 4 January 2010, which in turn refers to <<http://www.conferenciaepiscopal.es/>>.

¹⁹ See website of *The Providence Journal* <<http://www.projo.com/>> on 23 November 2009 for an article by John MULLIGAN entitled "Kennedy: Barred from Communion" and the links provided.

not to give it to him. It must be remembered that, some time before this prohibition, Congressman Patrick Kennedy had publicly declared his opposition to the Church's teaching on respect for human life.

10) The pitfalls of compassion we have discussed have been the subject of a number of declarations of the highest importance from His Excellency, Mgr Raymond L. Burke, Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura and Emeritus Archbishop of Saint Louis, MO from the USA. We will restrict our analysis to three of these documents.

a. On Friday 3 May 2009, Archbishop Burke delivered the keynote address at the “National Catholic Prayer Breakfast”, attended by Catholics praying for the American nation. The title of this address was *The teachings of the Catholic Church*.²⁰ The Prefect provides an analysis of practices hostile to life, marriage and the family.

Denouncing bogus compassion in the actions of public authorities, the Archbishop stresses that attacks against life, marriage and the family are destroying the foundations on which the American nation is built (page 8 et seq.) and the nations attached to these foundations. He alerts Catholics - physicians, politicians, businessmen, etc. - to respect the natural law and the moral law at the heart of the Church's teaching (10). The Archbishop urges us to prayer, fasting, confession and Holy Communion, asking the Lord to enlighten our leaders (15). Special attention must be reserved for young people attending Catholic universities and educational institutions. They must be prepared to recognize that, where God is rejected, secularisation and relativism are paving the way for immoral laws and political programmes (18). Conversely, it is necessary to put pressure on electors and legislators to change laws which are gravely unjust (23 et seq.)

Finally, “the fact that a doctorate honoris causa has been conferred by Notre- Dame University on a President who aggressively

²⁰ The full text can be found at <<http://www.lifesitenews.com>> for 8 May 2009. The figures in brackets refer to the text of Archbishop Raymond L. BURKE's address.

promotes an agenda which is anti-life and anti-family is a source of the utmost scandal" (19).

b. On 18 September 2009, Archbishop Burke took the floor at the XIVth Annual Partnership Dinner organised by *InsideCatholic*.²¹ On 26th September 2009 this speech was published in the form of an article in *Crisis Magazine* under the title "Reflections on the Struggle to Advance the Culture of Life".

The Archbishop offers us an address of exceptional force. Here, quoting freely, are some of the key sections of the address.

"It is not possible to be a practising Catholic while supporting the right to abortion or the right to marriage between persons of the same sex (page 5). We must recognize the scandal given by Christians in public life who fail to ensure respect for the natural moral law. Such an omission creates confusion and is misleading to the general public (page 6). By our actions and omissions, we can lead men and women to evil and sin and cause serious harm to our brothers, sisters and the nation. Our Lord was unequivocal in his condemnation of those who, by their actions, give rise to true scandal, that is, those who plunge others into confusion or lead them to sin.²² This is why the discipline of the Church prohibits the giving of Holy Communion and the granting of a Church funeral to those who persist, after admonition, in grave violation of the moral law.²³ Certainly, the Church confides every soul to the mercy of God [...], but that does not excuse her from proclaiming the truth of the moral law. When a person has publicly espoused and cooperated in sinful acts, [...], his repentance of such actions must also be public (page 7)."

Calling things by their name, Archbishop Burke goes straight to the heart of the problem:

"One sees the hand of the Father of Lies at work in the disregard for the situation of scandal or in the ridicule and even censure of those who experience scandal." (page 8).

c. On 29 September 2009 Archbishop Burke intervened in defence of pro-life militants protesting against the scandal of the

²¹ The text has been published on the website <<http://www.insidecatholic.com>> and is dated 26 September 2009. The printed pages to which reference should be made are indicated in brackets.

²² Cf. Luke 17, 1-2.

²³ Code of Canon Law, 915;1184,§ 1, 3°

media-hyped grandiose funeral celebrations for Senator Ted Kennedy.²⁴ This "Catholic" Senator had frequently distinguished himself by his unacceptable positions with regard to respect for human life and the family. Some Catholics, out of compassion for the Senator, vigorously attacked the pro-life and pro-family militants, accusing them, among other things, of damaging the unity of the Church. The Archbishop's clarifying statement was not long in coming:

“One of the ironies of the present situation is that the person who experiences scandal at the gravely sinful public actions of a fellow Catholic is accused of a lack of charity and of causing division within the unity of the Church.”

“In a society whose thinking is governed by the 'tyranny of relativism' and in which political correctness and human respect are the ultimate criteria of what is to be done and what is to be avoided, the notion of leading someone into moral error makes little sense [...]. What causes wonderment in such a society is the fact that someone fails to observe political correctness and, thereby, seems to be disruptive of the so-called peace of society. Lying or failing to tell the truth, however, is never a sign of charity.”

An inescapable question

Pseudo-compassion, frequently invoked in favour of the perpetrators of acts which are inherently wrong, such as abortion, hence leads to scandal; it invites others into grave sin. Scandal is the first thing to be avoided.²⁵ Pseudo-compassion also leads to heresy and division within the Church, because it incites the faithful to deviate from a non-negotiable element of the doctrine of the Church: the duty to respect innocent life. Pseudo-compassion reinforces the movement towards the "tyranny of relativism", observable in some pastors and/or theologians. Ultimately, pseudo-compassion could lead to a situation in which the Church's doctrine

²⁴ Cf. article by John-Henry WESTEN, “A Vatican Archbishop: Kennedy Funeral Critics Not Hurting Unity but Helping the Church”, on <LifeSiteNews.com>, 29 September 2009. The quotations are taken from this article.

²⁵ Luke 17 1 *et seq.*

and natural morality would be the outcome of a procedure of consensus based on compromise.

Some, misled by the pseudo-compassion extended to those who publicly sin against life, regard the Church as over-severe on these issues. The Church does not mince its words: "Those upon whom the penalty of excommunication or interdict has been imposed or declared, and others who obstinately persist in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion".²⁶ Now, if one recalls the bogus and violent nature of pseudo-compassion, one will immediately perceive that this severity is apparent only, that it is actually a high expression of charity. It is an urgent call to a change of life. Refusal to give Communion for the reasons we have cited above is nothing more than an expression of the love of the Church for the weakest and an invitation to repentance, addressed to those who run the risk of remaining shackled by their sins, and shackling others.

A delicate, yet inescapable, question remains. Given that, under the conditions described above, Holy Communion is to be refused to a *lay* person, does the Code of Canon Law impose suspension measures, on the twofold grounds of scandal and heresy, on *clergy* who publicly express pseudo-compassion for abortionists?

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²⁶ Cf. Canon 915.