Introduction

When I first proposed this paper I aimed to do the following:

To focus Pope Francis’s frequent use of what O’Malley calls epideictic genre is trickling down and how the Vatican culture may be changing in some key ways. I would then test this hypothesis by analyzing the October 2014 Extraordinary Synod of the Family documents and discussions, the International Theological Commission’s *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church*, November 2014 USCCB bishops meeting in Baltimore, as well as some key episcopal and dicasterial appointments. I then planned to conclude with a look forward to the upcoming “regular” triennial Synod on the Family scheduled for October 2015.

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1 An abbreviated version of this paper was presented at the College Theology Society Annual Convention held at the University of Portland, Oregon on May 29, 2015 with an accompanying Power Point presentation which can be found online at https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeFrancisEffectOnChurch.pptx (for the Power Point) and https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeCTSFrancisEffectScript.pdf (for the accompanying Script to the Power Point). The complete article is online at https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/BretzkeFrancisEffectOnChurch.pdf. I am especially grateful to Professor Reid Locklin of the University of Toronto for responding to my paper.
I have long-since discovered that this was just a tad bit overly-ambitious!

One obvious and incontrovertible “Francis Effect” is the sharply increased journalistic interest in not only the Pope himself, but the Vatican and even the Church on the local levels.\(^2\) Thus, while there is an extensive wealth of material related to my chosen topic, this advantage poses many particular challenges. First it is a bit like trying to score a bulls-eye on a very much moving target.\(^3\) As theologians we remember the Koine Greek New Testament archery term for this failure is termed ἁμαρτία (hamartia) which of course is rendered by the Vulgate as peccatum. However, trusting in Pope Francis’ over-arching message of mercy I hope that I shall be forgiven for missing the mark, if not sidestepping certain targets altogether.

To even scratch deeply the surface of my original proposal would occupy the entire CTS Convention, so instead in this briefer paper I wish to propose some concepts drawn from cultural anthropology and rhetorical studies that could serve as a framework to analyze and reflect on the significance of the events taken singly and collectively that affect, effect, and illustrate some of the more important ongoing developments in the Munus docendi & gubernandi of the Church in the current pontificate.

In case we run out of time before I can fully develop the various threads of my theme, let me put them out here in the form of bullet points that I think our conclusion would ultimately reach. Each of these merits considerable development, but taken together I think that any decent

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\(^2\) As veteran Vaticanista John Allen observed in a recent column for the Crux: “Pollsters and sociologists continue to debate whether there’s a discernible “Francis effect” on Catholicism in terms of measures such as Mass attendance and willingness to self-identify as Catholic. One arena in which there’s no doubt that Francis has had an impact, however, is journalism, specifically the willingness of media organizations to invest in Vatican coverage. Recently, for instance, the Wall Street Journal hired veteran Rome correspondent Francis X. Rocca, a friend and colleague.” See http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/04/18/beyond-powerlessness-over-anti-christian-persecution/?s_campaign=crux:email:daily (posted April 18, and accessed April 20, 2015). I would add, anecdotally, that my own Church-related media inquiries have roughly doubled since Francis was elected.

\(^3\) Indeed in the course of writing this article over the last two months I have added many substantive items on a daily basis, usually in footnotes, and so this project must clearly be ongoing!
reading of the Roman tea-leaves would find in the sediment at the bottom of the cup these interpreteive indicators as to what is going on, as well as possible “clues” to decipher the more than usual energy and emotion that this papacy has witnessed both among supporters and detractors.

Briefly listed without further note or comment at this point I would propose the following as the key perspectival divergences in our the first reading of our Roman tea-leaves:

- Shifting ecclesial landscape \textit{ad intra} and \textit{ad extra}
- Attitudes toward the “World” & the “Pope”
- Legal vs. Pastoral Paradigms & Deductive vs. Inductive “Reading” of “Truth,” leading to new (or at least differing) …
- Moral & Pastoral analysis of concrete situations
- Gradualism of the Law OR Law of Gradualism
- Doctrine & Tradition: Continuity & Change
- Conflict of Duties & Hierarchy of Truths
- Politics & Primacy of Conscience
- “\textit{Sensus Fidelium}” and the “\textit{Magisterium}”

\textit{Morto un papa… se ne fa un altro}

\textit{Morto un papa, se ne fa un altro}\textsuperscript{4} is a common Italian saying expressing roughly the similar sentiment of the French \textit{plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose}\textsuperscript{5} or the Latin episcopal motto

\textsuperscript{4} “A pope dies, they just make another” is usually generally to downplay the significance of what might be considered to be historical events of grand importance.
\textsuperscript{5} “The more things change, the more it’s the same thing.”
of the Holy Office’s Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani’s *Semper idem*. However, proving that all these generalizations indeed are false, Pope Benedict XVI shocked not only the cardinals gathered on February 11, 2013 in the consistory aula who could actually understand the official language of the universal Church the Pope was speaking, but the rest of the world once the translation was delivered that for the first time since Pope Celestine V in 1294 was a pontiff resigning on his own initiative.

Shortly after discerning that the smoke pouring out of the little chimney over the Sistine Chapel on the evening of March 13, 2013 was indeed *Bianca* the bells in churches around the world began to ring in anticipatory confirmation of the announcement of the senior Cardinal Deacon of the College of Cardinals. I was waiting on the phone with one of the local Boston new outlets when Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran stepped out on the loggia of St. Peter’s with the traditional formula *Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum: Habemus Papam!* The name---who is it, I wondered along with many others as Tauran continued with the formula *Eminentissimum ac reverendissum Dominum, Dominum* and then I had a moment of horror then as I heard next the Latin *Georgium Marium*.

Not being up on all of the middle names of the *papabile*, the first “George” that came to my mind was George Cardinal Pell of Australia and I had a flashback to a similar media interview in

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6 “Always the same.” For a concise translation and explanatory gloss on this and similar Latin ecclesial expressions see James T. Bretzke, S.J. *Consecrated Phrases: A Latin Theological Dictionary*, 3rd. ed. (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 2013). Ottaviani was the ultra-conservative who ran from 1959 to 1966 the “Sant’Uffizio” or “Holy Office,” whose formal title was Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition (today the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith). He fiercely resisted many of the changes of Vatican II and was instrumental in keeping Pope Paul VI from changing the Church’s teaching on artificial birth control in the latter’s 1968 Encyclical *Humanae vitae*.

7 For a video of the scene from the first white smoke to the appearance of Pope Francis see [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfAbTLlewis](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZfAbTLlewis) (accessed April 13, 2015).

8 The Italian word *papabile* has been taken over into many other languages to designate cardinals in a forthcoming conclave that supposedly better chances of being elected pope. However, the Italian saying *chi entra “papa,” esce cardinale* (the one who enters [the conclave] the “pope” comes out a cardinal) is true more often than not, and
2005 when I was told just before going on camera that the new pope was Joseph Ratzinger. We had all survived that moment I thought, as Tauran continued with *Sanctae Romaneae Ecclesiae Cardinalem Bergoglium*. So not “Pell,” but the relief was only momentary and slight. The only “Bergoglium” I knew was the notorious former Argentine Jesuit Provincial who was supposedly against liberation theology and had supposedly handed some of his own men to the military government during the period of the infamous “Dirty War” when so many thousands of people just “disappeared” if they were suspected on being in any way, shape or form, on the side the poor.  

Tauran continued, *qui sibi nomen imposuit Franciscum*, and I thought “well at least he didn’t pick as his papal moniker John Paul III or Pius XIII.” “Francis” I thought was a clever touch for the first Jesuit pope, as it would not allay some of the apocalyptic fears of the prediction that the end-times would begin with the election of Jesuit who, with the humility characteristic of Our Least Society, would take the name “Peter.”

What came next in the ceremony, though, began for me—and for tens of thousands of others around the world—the first sharp contrast of the “Francis Effect.” Papa Bergoglio appeared and spoke his first public words as Pope: *Fratelli e sorelle, Buona sera!* His accent was far better than his two non-Italian predecessors, though I thought his choice of words a tad too folksy—almost, I initially wondered, as if he were at a loss for words in the vernacular of his new...
diocese. But as he continued it was clear to me that he was quite fluent in the language I had learned in my own seven years in the Eternal City.

His next words and actions began to cement further my hope that this would not be just another morto un papa, se ne fa un altro moment accompanied with the usual pomp and pageantry. I am sure that you too remember this moment as well when he bowed his head and asked for the prayers of the gathered throng in St. Peter’s Square before imparting his first Urbi et orbi pontifical blessing.

While many of us were both struck and pleased, as I learned later even on the Loggia some were heard to mutter in horror, “questo é il fine del mondo!” The new Pope had eschewed the scarlet mozzetta, gold pectoral cross, and red Prada shoes employed by his recent predecessors in their first public appearances as Bishop of Rome, the Primus inter pares, Servus servorum Dei, and perhaps most importantly, the new Vicarius Christi.

The Over-arching “Francis Effect” Thesis

Indeed, it did prove to be a certain type of “fine di’ un mondo” though, not in the opinion of many the eschaton that was supposed to accompany the reign of a Jesuit pope. Clearly a variety of paradigms had begun to shift, and one reason for indulging in these personal reminiscences is to chronicle and recapture what I suspect were similar Kodak moments for many of us in regards to this world-changing pontificate.

For the central thesis on the so-called “Francis Effect,” I would propose the following: In their pontificates both Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI focused primarily on presenting the

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12 “This is the end of the world.”
13 “the end of one world…”
Church itself as the best bulwark of “truth” in a modern age severely disturbed, in their eyes, by the scourge of secularism with its infections of relativism, nihilism, gender ideologies, and so forth. Antidotes to these serious diseases were provided in magisterial documents such as Fides et Ratio, Veritatis Splendor, Evangelium vitae, Dominus Jesus to name but a few.

By contrast I believe that Pope Francis is trying to focus the attention of the Church on the Gospel itself, and his view of the Church as a missionary field hospital populated by many deeply wounded souls who need the healing of the Gospel through the ministrations of health care workers not afraid to go out to them. While there is obviously a definite overlap between these recent papal perspectives, they are neither mirror images nor copies of one another and I would argue that it is this core perceived difference that accounts for both the strong support and considerable resistance the Jesuit Pope has occasioned.14 A logical corollary to this thesis is that voices have been added which during the previous two pontificates were either largely silent or quite muted in their utterances.15

**Optic of Fundamental Values and Root Paradigms**

While theologians, historians and journalists employ distinct categories and concepts in analyzing pontificates, one under-utilized discipline in my opinion has been that of cultural anthropology and rhetorical discourse. As someone who has had the opportunity to live for well over a decade outside of his native culture both in Asia and Europe, I have become convinced of two important, inter-connected truths: one, that culture is one of our core modalities of being

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15 One emerging, leading example of a voice that certainly supports the Francis Effect ecclesiology is that of Manila Cardinal Luis “Chito” Tagle. See, for example, the report of Joshua McElwee “Cardinal Tagle: Church should not look to 'idealized past' with nostalgia” published in the National Catholic Reporter, posted and accessed May 22, 2015 at http://ncronline.org/news/global/cardinal-tagle-church-should-not-look-idealized-past-nostalgia.
human, and two, that cultures vary considerably in shaping not only our basic institutions, art forms, and the like, but more fundamentally how we view the world, moral categories of right and wrong, good and bad, and even nature itself.

Since Vatican II much has been written fairly on these themes, but for the purposes of this paper I wish here merely to recall two core cultural anthropological concepts, namely “fundamental values” and “root paradigms.” Fundamental values express deeply-held cultural assumptions about the world as a whole, and in particular about human nature and concomitant appropriate behavior. For most Americans an example of one such “fundamental value” might be our notion of “justice as fairness,” or egalitarianism enshrined in the “one person, one vote” principle.

To a large extent I believe these terms are essentially equivalent to what Karl Rahner termed “global pre-scientific convictions,” that tend to be incorporated (hineingeschmuggelt [literally “smuggled”]) into argumentation largely unawares by those making the arguments themselves. Root paradigms are the ways in which these fundamental values are organized,

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18Though Rahner was writing about ethical argumentation, his basic insight can be employed in many other disciplines as well and is worth quoting here: “In order to substantiate moral precepts, proofs, often very rigorous and subtle, are adduced; and yet we gain the impression that these proofs tacitly and without reflection really assume from the outset the very conclusion at which they aim, that the conclusions are, so to speak, smuggled [hineingeschmuggelt] into the premises of the argument (in good faith, of course) and that the proofs are convincing only to someone who was convinced of what was to be proved even before any proof was forthcoming” (Karl Rahner, “On Bad Arguments in Moral Theology,” in his Theological Investigations, vol. 18, God and Revelation, tr. Edward Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1984), p. 74.
modeled, and instantiated, e.g., in our legal systems, electoral processes, checks and balances in our government, Church structures, and so on. Fundamental values and root paradigms are easily found in our theological cultures as well, and differing views on these may help to explain not only any number of theological debates, but even the more deeply troubling and perennial issue of the *odium theologicum*.

Theologically it will be important to realize the inherent limits of any paradigm theory. If we can accept the not overly daring premise that only God can *fully* know the whole of created reality exactly as it is, then perhaps we might be able to grant a logical corollary, namely that for the rest of us creatures our own knowledge will be necessarily incomplete and partial. Epistemologically we need to understand complex realities according to models and paradigms, and if this is true, then can we accept—at least in theory—that there might be a legitimate pluralism of such paradigms, and that these paradigms are not destined to be eternal and unchanging? The next conclusion would be the necessity of a basic stance of openness to revision of our paradigms, both due to the changing reality (which is a “constant” of human nature) as well as refinement in light of new insights.  

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epideictic genre of rhetorical discourse.20 Related to support for my thesis on the Francis Effect I would observe that a considerable amount of the change we have witnessed in this papacy can be tracked in terms of a return to this epideictic rhetorical discourse. O’Malley describes this genre in these terms:

The purpose of the epideictic genre, the technical name for panegyric in classical treatises on rhetoric, is not so much to clarify concepts as to heighten appreciation for a person, an event, or an institution and to excite emulation of an ideal. Its goal is the winning of internal assent, not the imposition of conformity from outside. It teaches, but not so much by way of magisterial pronouncement as by suggestion, insinuation and example. Its instrument is persuasion, not coercion.21

Taken as a whole the documents of Vatican II are for the most part characterized by this epideictic genre in that “[t]hey hold up ideals, then draw conclusions from them and often spell out practical consequences. This is a soft style compared with the hard-hitting style of canons and dialectical discourse. It is rightly described as ‘pastoral’ because it was meant to make Christian ideals appealing.”22

I think a fairly easy and convincing case can be made that regardless of whether Pope Francis has explicitly and knowingly adopted an epideictic rhetorical genre a good deal of the exercise of his papal munus docendi and to a lesser extent his munus gubernandi fit its broad characteristics.23 In this Francis has echoed the “medicine of mercy, rather than that of severity”
enunciated by John XXIII in the latter’s opening address to Vatican II, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*\(^{24}\)—an echo that any number of people have clearly caught. Many of those who have caught the echo have been encouraged and enlivened, and have also noted a contrast with a number of the themes and approaches of the two predecessors.\(^{25}\)

Others, as the fallout especially since the October 2014 Extraordinary Synod, has made abundantly clear, also have caught both the echo and the contrast, but without the accompanying optimism and encouragement. And I believe a central reason for these widely divergent responses to the same ecclesial events in the Franciscan papacy can be traced to significantly conflicting fundamental values and root paradigms operative in our contrasting ecclesial cultures.

Borrowing further from John O’Malley’s typology of the four cultures of the West (prophetic, academic, rhetorical, and performative) I believe that many who witnessed the initial papal appearance with either optimistic hope or pessimistic horror depended significantly on how they had been enculturated into differing ecclesial fundamental values and root paradigms. In the treatment of “culture four,” the artistic/performative chapter O’Malley concentrates largely on what we might term “high art,” and concludes that “in our era culture four tends to stand on its own, unintegrated into a larger scene, though a huge exception must perhaps be made for its


\(^{25}\)One of the more detailed early presentations of Pope Francis’ thought is found in the interview he conducted with Fr. Antonio Spadoro, S.J. in the summer of 2013 and published simultaneously in a number of Jesuit periodicals around the world, such as “A Big Heart Open to God” in *America* (23 September 2013) and available at [http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview](http://americamagazine.org/pope-interview) (accessed May 4, 2015).
popular forms, commercialized though they often are.”26 I would note that he really does not probe much the cultural underpinnings for differences and disputes in style, etc. This I believe is an oft-missed opportunity, since in the Church today some aspect of the “culture wars” certainly can be traced back to this important dimension of “culture four.”

For example, a considerable amount of the pushback and criticism of Pope Francis’ simpler liturgical vestments I believe can be traced back to the fundamental values and root paradigms inherent in differing conceptions of what constitutes legitimate “performative” culture. As with the other three cultures, one of the most visible icons here too would be His Eminence Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke. His preference for the Extraordinary Form of the liturgy with its accompanying baroque vestments is not just a matter of personal style ala an ecclesial instantiation of the old philosophical bromide de gustibus non disputandum est. This may be true in the limited arena of O’Malley’s “culture two” (the academic) but certainly cannot be verified in the other three cultures.

The Francis Effect on the Pope Himself

While the focus of this paper is how the other parts of the Church have registered, amplified, resisted, or rejected the effects of the new papacy, I believe it will be helpful to delineate very briefly some of the major effects of the papacy on the Jorge Maria Bergoglio himself. Before he stepped out onto the loggia of St. Peter’s the newly elected Pope reportedly experienced a profound “consolation.” In Ignatian spirituality this is not a positive emotional feeling of well-being or success, but rather a quite special grace, given by God, and for God’s own purposes—though primarily to encourage and strengthen us for the inevitable difficulties

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26 O’Malley, *Four Cultures*, p. 232.
that lie ahead.\textsuperscript{27} I suspect that Pope Francis interpreted that grace not as a validation of his success at coming in first in the conclave balloting, but probably more in line with the consolation Ignatius received at the little chapel in La Storta before entering Rome in 1537.\textsuperscript{28} If we accept being placed with Christ under the Standard of His Cross\textsuperscript{29}, God will bless our efforts in the way that Divine Providence (rather than human wisdom) judges to be best.\textsuperscript{30}

As I stated in my “thesis” statement, I believe that Pope Francis is trying to focus the attention of the Church on Jesus’ Gospel itself, rather than on the Church as an institution. This represents both a significant cultural change and a real paradigm shift in what I believe Francis sees as a necessary return to the priority of what I’m terming the “fundamental values” that the public ministry of Jesus aimed to incarnate. Mercy, and not sacrifice, would be chief among these fundamental values and here we see that Pope Francis has stayed remarkably on message. The root paradigm he has used repeatedly is the metaphor of the Church as a missionary field hospital that must re-focus on the necessary triage of responding first to the deepest wounds of

\textsuperscript{27} In the \textit{Spiritual Exercises} see especially the “Rules for the Discernment of Spirits for the First Week.” An online version is available at http://www.cfpeople.org/books/exercise/exercisep15.htm (accessed April 20, 2015).

\textsuperscript{28} “I will be propitious to you in Rome.” While this clearly was a central vision in his life, Ignatius speaks only very briefly of it in Chapter 10, “Venice and Vicenza (Late 1535-Late 1537)” of his \textit{Autobiography} and suggests that more details could be obtained from Diego Laynez who, along Pierre Favre, was accompanying Ignatius in his chapel visit. There is some disagreement over the exact words Ignatius heard in that vision, whether the “you” was singular (\textit{tibi}) or plural (\textit{vobis}): \textit{Ego tibi/vobis Romae propitius ero}. The artistic representation of that vision erected in behind the high altar of the Church of St. Ignatius in Rome gives it in the plural (\textit{vobis}) and increasingly many Jesuits now interpret this as a promise Christ made not just to Ignatius individually, but to the Society of Jesus as a whole.

\textsuperscript{29} The Meditation on the Two Standards (Christ’s and Satan’s) is key in the Second Week of the Spiritual Exercises and a necessary propaedeutic to the Election regarding one’s life that the retreatant would make later on in the retreat. The text of the Meditation can be found at http://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/twostandards-text.html (accessed April 20, 2015).

\textsuperscript{30} While Ignatius was “clear” on receiving the vision of being placed by God under the Cross of His Son, Ignatius himself was confused as to what the “\textit{Ego Romae propitius ero}” would entail concretely, and initially Ignatius supposed it might signal a forthcoming physical martyrdom.

souls who desperately need the healing ministrations of the Gospel can provide through a Church if it is not afraid to go out to them.\textsuperscript{32}

**The Munus Docendi and the Munus Gubernandi**

Arguably the most pronounced Francis Effect is how the core munera or official duties of the Church have been impacted and re-envisioned. In the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* (hereafter *CIC*) the munus docendi is treated at length in Book III.\textsuperscript{33} Its exposition is hierarchically presented from the pope down to the baptized lay person, but it is worth keeping in mind that the *CIC* does explicitly allow for lay exercise of the munus docendi, as long as this is in cooperation with bishops and priests (cf. *CIC* 759). In the canonical paradigm the munus docendi is closely linked therefore to the munus gubernandi and for legitimate governance and jurisdiction sacramental ordination is presumed.

This canonical paradigm has not shifted appreciably in terms of who is empowered to exercise these munera since Bergoglio has assumed office, so in discerning the Francis Effect we will have to focus instead more on the “what” that is being taught, and the “who” is now doing the governing. In these two areas I believe we can not only outline many and important changes in the various sub-paradigms and fundamental values, but also---and perhaps not surprisingly---in these areas we also see increasing resistance and out-right rebellion. These latter negative dynamics I believe give further evidence for my basic thesis that what is essentially in play here are tensions akin to what the seminal thinker in regard to paradigm theory, Thomas Kuhn, has termed a “revolution” in operative paradigms.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{32} The *locus classicus* for Francis’ words in this area is his interview done with Fr. Antonio Spadoro, S.J. of *Civiltà Cattolica* and simultaneously published in a number of Jesuit periodicals. For the English version see “A Big Heart Open To God” in *America* (23 September 2013).

\textsuperscript{33} Canon 747ff. For an online link to the English translation of this Book of the current Code see \url{http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/__P2H.HTM} (accessed April 20, 2015).

\textsuperscript{34} Again, see Thomas Kuhn *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which I have already referenced above.
Material to be marshalled to support this premise is plentiful and diverse, and we cannot even briefly touch on the principal exemplars, so I will offer simply as partial illustrations the following topics (recognizing that an even larger set of potential themes will passed over without so much as honorable mention):

- The 2014 International Theological Commission document on the *Sensus fidei*, contrasting this with the 2009 document on the natural law
- Ongoing efforts to re-organize and reform the Roman Curia, including the Franciscan consistories creating new cardinals
- Appointment of bishops in key diocesan Sees such as Chicago, San Diego and Santa Fe
- Dealing with the Sex-Abuse Crisis and Episcopal Responsibility
- Follow-through on unfinished business from the Benedictine pontificate, such as the visitation of the American communities of religious women and oversight of the LCWR
- The Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy and the Bull of Indiction
- The October 2014 Extraordinary Synod and the forthcoming October 2015 regular triennial Synod on the Family and Evangelization

*Sensus Fidei in the Francis Pontificate*

Roman dicasterial documents can furnish one gauge for measuring change over time. The International Theological Commission (ITC) during the papacy of Benedict XVI published in 2009 a document on that natural law as furnishing a basis for a universal ethic.\footnote{See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20090520_legge-naturale_en.html (accessed April 25, 2015). For a largely quite positive commentary on the document see the essays edited by John Berkman and William C. Mattison, III, *Searching for a University Ethic: Multidisciplinary, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Responses to the Catholic Natural Law Tradition*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2014). One of the essayists, M. Cathleen Kaveny, believes the 2009 ITC document does show a rhetorical shift to the epideictic style, though I must admit I do not entirely share her optimistic view of what’s in play in this particular text. See Kaveny “From a Heart of Stone to a Heart of Flesh: Toward an Epideictic Rhetoric of the Natural Law,” especially pp. 229-233. For a more critical review of both the document and this essay collection see}
Pope Francis’ papacy the ITC released its document on *Sensus Fidei* in the Life of the Church.\(^{36}\) Certainly this document was in the works prior to the resignation of Benedict XVI, but it does indicate some recognition of the new Pope both explicitly and implicitly.\(^{37}\) Certainly some things brought forward in the ITC *Sensus fidei* document would not have appeared in the days of the John Paul II/Ratzinger collaboration, but one still is left with the strong impression in the current document of two baby-steps forward and one and a half in reverse, as we see in these excerpts:

80. There are occasions, however, when the reception of magisterial teaching by the faithful meets with difficulty and resistance, and appropriate action on both sides is required in such situations. The faithful must reflect on the teaching that has been given, making every effort to understand and accept it. Resistance, as a matter of principle, to the teaching of the magisterium is incompatible with the authentic *sensus fidei*. The magisterium must likewise reflect on the teaching that has been given and consider whether it needs clarification or reformulation in order to communicate more effectively the essential message. These mutual efforts in times of difficulty themselves express the communion that is essential to the life of the Church, and likewise a yearning for the grace of the Spirit who guides the Church ‘into all the truth’ (Jn 16:13).

77. The magisterium also judges with authority whether opinions which are present among the people of God, and which may seem to be the *sensus fidelium*, actually

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\(^{37}\) Pope Francis is referenced directly four times in the document, though the quotes hardly furnish more than a bit of “garnish” to a dish that was clearly already in the oven.
correspond to the truth of the Tradition received from the Apostles. As Newman said: ‘the gift of discerning, discriminating, defining, promulgating, and enforcing any portion of that tradition resides solely in the *Ecclesia docens*’. Thus, judgement regarding the authenticity of the *sensus fidelium* belongs ultimately not to the faithful themselves nor to theology but to the magisterium. Nevertheless, as already emphasized, the faith which it serves is the faith of the Church, which lives in all of the faithful, so it is always within the communion life of the Church that the magisterium exercises its essential ministry of oversight.

In the past, we would be scrutinizing such passages very carefully to see if we could discern any shifting sands in the official magisterial positions, but one of the key Francis Effects is that reading the Roman tea-leaves has taken on a quite different tack, based on a much larger variety of “leaves” in the cup, with residue much easier to see (and more difficult to ignore). Originally I had planned to a careful reading of these older tea-leaves, in what O’Malley would probably term “culture two,” the Academic. But now I believe our attention can be more profitably focused on these newer “effects” emerging from this papacy, even if we can only

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38 At this point in the ITC *Sensus fidei* document there is place a footnote (#95) which reads as follows: A fundamental disposition required for authentic participation in the *sensus fidei* is acceptance of the proper role of reason in relation to faith. Faith and reason belong together.[113] Jesus taught that God is to be loved not only ‘with all your heart, and with all your soul, … and with all your strength’, but also ‘with all your mind [nous]’ (Mk 12:30). Because there is only one God, there is only one truth, recognised from different points of view and in different ways by faith and by reason, respectively. Faith purifies reason and widens its scope, and reason purifies faith and clarifies its coherence.[114].

39 For a helpful article covering some recent scholarship and proposing an expansion of the understanding of *sensus fidelium* to involve the entire *triplex munera* of priest, prophet, and king in which all the baptized participate see Anthony Ekpo, “The *Sensus Fidelium* and the Threefold Office of Christ: A Reinterpretation of *Lumen Gentium* No. 12,” *Theological Studies* 76/2 (June 2015): 330-346. For more works on the relation of the *sensus fidelium* and the Magisterium of the Church, including the role of dissent see my online research bibliography *Magisterium and Moral Theology Bibliography* at https://www2.bc.edu/james-bretzke/MagisteriumBibliography.pdf.

40 One of the effects, perhaps, of the current papacy is the renewed interest this concept has occasioned. It will be the central theme of the forthcoming convention of the Catholic Theological Society of America meeting in Milwaukee June 11-14, 2015 and also was featured in “Wake Up Lazarus,” a theological list-serve that takes up different themes and invites theologians to post short reflections. For the latter see http://wakeuplazarus.net/2015/sensus.html (accessed April 26, 2015)
highlight them briefly. Taken together, though, I believe they provide a mosaic of the Francis Effect that more time will flesh out in greater detail.\(^{41}\)

**Reform of the Roman Curia**

When Vatican II opened the curial officials and theologians in the Roman institutions predicted a short and peaceful meeting. After all, these people had done all of the homework and had all of the schema ready for the assembled bishops collective *Placet*. Events obviously proved them quite wrong, but the curia officials were not overly disturbed, for, as the Italian *barzelletta* went, “granted the bishops and their *periti* may have found the “key” to the Council, but we (the Curia) will change the locks after they leave.” And indeed a strong case could be made that the Church locks had indeed been re-mastered. In the 2013 Conclave run-up it became clear that a significant number of cardinals voiced hopes for “reform,” but I suspect both they and the world were just expecting a little more lubricating oil poured into the locks’ chambers and not a whole-scale conversion.\(^{42}\)

This time, though, it seemed to more and more bishops and cardinals that the curial lock system needed more than a few squirts of oil, or a largely cosmetic re-arrangement as had occurred the last time the Curia had been threatened with an overhaul with John Paul II’s 1988 *Pastor Bonus*.\(^{43}\) If culture is as foundational as I am asserting in any society or organization then it should come as no surprise that when you attempt to confront long-standing and deeply

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embedded bureaucratic offices, practices and personnel you will have more than a little push-back. When money is involved the difficulties are magnified exponentially. I suspect that historians analyzing the Francis Effect will credit Pope Francis’ initiatives in these areas as being of particular significance. Actual deep-seated reform is a very tricky business which cannot happen quickly or by fiat, and there will always be a push-pull effect—a sort of tug-of-war between those who feel events are moving too quickly and others who hold the pace needs to be picked up considerably. So far, it seems that Pope Francis has resisted throwing his lot in with one side or the other.

It was also a strategic stroke of genius to turn over the mandate for the Vatican finances to the other Georgium in the last conclave, Cardinal Pell of Australia. As the only cardinal from the continent of Australia it was virtually impossible not to include him in another of Francis’ bold initiatives, the so-called “Gang of Nine”—the cardinals who would act as an extra-curial cabinet to assist the Pope. While Pell is probably the most conservative of the group, by giving him this new “day job” the Pope both got him out of Australia and kept him very busy, leaving less time and freedom for the interview circuit ala Cardinal Burke. Changing culture, especially when it is interwoven with finance is particularly challenging and so it should come as no

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44 For an example of one Vaticanista who believes that real change needs to go both more deeply and more quickly see Robert Mickens’ interview with veteran liberal canon lawyer Ladislas Orsy, SJ published under the title “Can Pope Francis succeed in reforming the Curia?” in National Catholic Reporter at http://ncronline.org/blogs/roman-observer/can-pope-francis-succeed-reforming-curia#.VWTk-mClEew.twitter (posted and accessed May 26, 2015).
surprise that some of the Old Guard of the Curia have resisted these efforts in a variety of ways.  

With the other curial posts the Pope moved cautiously, but deliberately and key changes in the Secretariat of State, Congregation for Religious, and consulters for the Congregation of Bishops are probably the areas that most amplified the Francis Effect on the munus guberandi of the Church. Administratively at least Francis is seeking to steer a middle course so that no faction or wing can claim total vindication or lament absolute defeat. Benedict’s last major curial appointment, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, remains firmly in place, and the liberty he has taken to outline repeatedly positions that most would consider to be at odds with the Pope’s agenda may point to another key Francis Effect—namely the freedom to disagree publically. It is not, except perhaps for Gammarelli’s and its preferred customers with a penchant for baroque brocade, the fine del mondo.

Creating cardinals eligible to choose one’s successor has always been a most important way in which popes can continue to affect the Church from beyond the grave. In this sense Pope Francis is simply mirroring the strategies of his predecessors, but obviously the “who” of the

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47 The CDF itself seems to be functioning very much the same way as it did in the previous pontificate, and the May 7, 2015 appointment of Pell’s successor in Sydney, the conservative bioethician Archbishop Anthony Colin Fisher OP as a consultant would not be taken by many as a progressive tendency.


49 Gammarelli’s, located behind the Pantheon and across from Santa Maria sopra Minerva, is the pre-eminent ecclesial tailor shop that furnishes not only the papal cassock but most other hierarchical sartorial finery. Cardinal Burke would be one of their more important clients.
cardinalatial Who’s Who bear strong witness to the Francis Effect in the munus gubernandi. In
the February 2015 consistory the Pope selected men from 18 different countries and many
diocesan Sees which either had never had a cardinal, or had not had one in centuries. Here the
Pope clearly moved away from the cursus honorum tradition. New cardinals truly represent
genuine diversity and underscore the efforts of the Pope to make the hierarchical Church more
the “voice of the voiceless” to echo the vocabulary of the new Ethiopian cardinal Berhaneyesus
Souraphiel.50

In a follow-up to this latest consistory on April 13, 2015 Pope Francis appointed these
new cardinals as consulters to a number of Vatican congregations---where the real work and
corresponding influence would take place, and where past prelates such as Cardinals Rigali and
Burke excelled. Burke’s replacement on the Apostolic Signatura, Cardinal Dominique
Mamberti, was named to several of the posts formerly occupied by Cardinal Burke, such as
Bishops, Divine Worship, Secretariat of State, Saints. The other new cardinals who were among
the “surprises” named by the Pope were named consulters to the Congregation for the
Evangelisation of Peoples: Cardinals John Atcherley Dew, archbishop of Wellington, New
Zealand; Pierre Nguyen Van Nhon, archbishop of Hanoi, Viet Nam; Francis Xavier Kriengsak
Kovithavanij, archbishop of Bangkok, Thailand; Arlindo Gomes Furtado, bishop of Santiago de
Cabo Verde, Cape Verde; and Soane Patita Paini Mafi, bishop of Tonga. Despite the positive
dimension of bringing the periphery into closer proximity with the historical center of Roman
Catholicism, some honest questions have been voiced about the over-all, long-term effectiveness
of this increased geographical and cultural diversity.51

50 See http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/new-cardinal-vatican-should-be-voice-voiceless (accessed February 10,
2015).
51 Despite the positive dimension of bringing the periphery into closer proximity with the “dead center” or Roman
Catholicism, some honest questions have been voiced about the over-all, long-term effectiveness of this increased
Appointment of “Francis Bishops” in Key Diocesan Sees

Reforming the Church must include the appointment process for new bishops. It would be ludicrous to think that any pope could master the personnel dossiers of every possible episcopal candidate, but there is probably nothing more significant in the practical realm that a pope could do to leave a legacy of change that will last beyond his pontificate, whether it be long or short. The emergence of what are now being termed “Francis Bishops” was carefully prepared for by Pope Francis himself by first reconfiguring the consulters on the powerful Congregation for Bishops. Vis-à-vis the United States episcopacy, the removal of Cardinals Justin Rigali and Raymond Leo Burke has proved to be of monumental importance, as we now are beginning to see a run of new appointments that differ dramatically from the protégés of these once nearly all-mighty “king makers.” Examples of “Francis bishops” would include recent appointees such as Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago, Bishop Robert McElroy of San...
Diego, Bishop John Stowe, OFM of Lexington, KY, Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe.\textsuperscript{54} This cultural paradigm shift has been welcomed by many, including President Barack Obama,\textsuperscript{55} though conservative blogs such as Pewsitter.org make it clear that the sobriquet is meant only in the pejorative sense, usually adding to their headlines captions such as “Not a word about abortion, contraception, or gay marriage” to nail down the condemnation and dismissal of these new hierarchs. And to be honest, they have a limited point: indeed part of the Francis Effect seems to be picked up in these new promoted bishops’ political agenda which does indeed focus more on the common good, economic issues, resistance to the death penalty, a more Christian approach to immigration reform and so on.\textsuperscript{56} “Listening,” as Archbishop-elect John Wester put it, is the verb of choice in the exercise of the \textit{munus gubernandi}.\textsuperscript{57}

conference on poverty organized by Georgetown University May 11-13, 2015. McElroy lamented that “Society has learned to live with the notion that certain people have fallen outside the covenant, and that’s just the way it is. Our God does not believe that this is acceptable.” McElroy went on to say that Catholics also need “a spiritual framework of buy-in” when it comes to poverty. The degree to which Catholic communities accept the Church’s social teaching has “diminished,” he said. Believers must be “converted from a culture of indifference to the poor to a culture of solidarity with the poor,” he said, calling for structural reform “rooted in social and economic reality.” Growing inequality, he said, threatens the very existence of the United States. “A permanent, excluded underclass is contrary to the vision of our founders,” he said. “We seek to be a society that offers opportunity to everyone. The level of inequality we have now stamps out that opportunity, and we become a distorted society.” All McElroy quotes from Michael O’Loughlin, “Catholics, Evangelicals team up to fight poverty,” \textit{Crux} (May 12, 2015) at \url{http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/12/catholics-evangelicals-team-up-to-fight-poverty/} (accessed May 13, 2015).


55 Speaking at the same Georgetown conference as Bishop McElroy, Obama observed that “Nobody has shown that better than Pope Francis, who I think has been transformative just through the sincerity and insistence that this is vital to who we are, this is vital to following what Jesus Christ our Savior talked about” (quoted by Charlie Spiering, in “Obama: Churches Should Focus More On Poverty Instead Of Abortion And Gay Marriage,” \textit{Breitbart} (May 12, 2015) at \url{http://www.breitbart.com/big-government/2015/05/12/obama-churches-should-focus-more-on-poverty-instead-of-abortion-and-gay-marriage/} (accessed May 13, 2015). For more on Obama at the Georgetown Conference see Michael O’Loughlin’s May 12, 2015 \textit{Crux} column: “Obama: Christians need to act more like Pope Francis,” at \url{http://www.cruxnow.com/life/2015/05/12/obama-christians-need-to-act-more-like-pope-francis/?s_campaign=crux:email:daily} (accessed May 13, 2015).

56 See example a recent address of Archbishop-elect John Wester to the Utah League of Women Voters in which he says that real immigration reform has to begin with ourselves, so that we first see undocumented immigrants not as "illegals" but as brothers and sisters. See \url{http://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2452684-155/bishop-wester-immigration-reform-may-require} (accessed May 1, 2015).

57 See \url{http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/05/02/abp-elect_wester_my_first_priority_is_to_listen/1141254} (accessed May 3, 2015). For more on Archbishop-elect Wester from the \textit{Albuquerque Journal} see “John C. Wester:
Dealing with the Sex-Abuse Crisis and Episcopal Responsibility

While removal and re-assignment of the “Bishop of Bling,” His Excellency Franz-Peter Tebartz-van Elst58 of Limburg, Germany could in fact have been done by Pope John Paul II, and perhaps more reluctantly by Benedict XVI membership on the episcopal endangered species list was largely confined to those considered doctrinally suspect such as supporting women’s ordination.59 Dealing with the scourge of the dysfunctional episcopal administration that allowed for cover-up of decades of clerical sexual abuse was a much larger and more complex cultural manifestation of clericalism that neither John Paul II nor Benedict XVI could really even “name,” much less effectively address.60

Of course, some of the initiatives undertaken by Pope Francis had been prepared by both the USCCB Dallas Charter and the efforts of then Cardinal Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, to confront better the insidious evil of clerical sex abuse. However, it was only Francis who was finally able to take the “next step” which Benedict and the American bishops frankly were loathe even to contemplate, namely bringing into the consultative process lay men and women who had been abused, and finally to take action against a bishop guilty of a relatively recent effort at business as usual in the cover-up game. The “De-Finn-istration” of the deeply conservative Kansas City Opus Dei prelate Robert Finn was a pill too bitter to swallow by those who looked

58 A theologian who focused on Catholic identity and evangelization to counter what he considered increasingly secularism in Germany, Tebartz-van Elst was first named an auxiliary bishop of Münster by Pope John Paul II in 2003 and then promoted by Benedict XVI to the See of Limburg in 2007. His lavish renovations (€40 million) of his episcopal palace, including a $20,000 bathtub with head-rest provided the tipping point that led to his removal of the diocese by Francis in October 2013. Many observed there was a definite “odor” here, but it did not come from being in close quarters with the “smell of the sheep.”
59 E.g., the events leading to the removal of Bishop William Morris of Toowoomba, Australia by Pope Benedict XVI in May, 2011.
60 Consider in this context the case of Auxiliary Emeritus Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit, who was told in 2011 that he had to resign as pastor for violating the communio episcoporum by speaking in favor of extending the statute of limitations in filing reports by victims of clerical sex abuse. Gumbleton had been a thorn in the magisterial side for decades on a number of issues ranging from war and peace to acceptance of homosexuals among the clergy.
first and foremost to preserving the interests of the institutional Church, and like many other similar changes in the munus guberandi this too exhibits a line of action never really possible in the previous two pontificates. Even after Finn’s belated resignation many conservatives, led most notably by William Donahue of Catholics United for the Faith lamented the forces that had driven this “orthodox” and “traditional” bishop from his office without even the benefit of the usual tried-and-true exit gambit of promoveatur ut amoveatur. Some of the conservative postings noted, not without some justification, that reactions from the left exhibited mixed in with the genuine relief that the Church was finally rid of the meddlesome bishop a certain amount of delectatio morosa as well.

The Francis Effect on Diplomacy


62 For a sampling of these reactions see Gloria TV: “Hated For Being Catholic: The true reason why Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City-Saint Joseph was sacked on April 21 is obvious: He was a Catholic” http://www.gloria.tv/media/1e9B8K7vo1Z (accessed April 24, 2015); “Finn Removal: Before It's Over FrancisChurch Will Be So Squeaky Clean There Won't Be a Catholic Left” (Frank Walker of Pewsitter.org on April 21, 2015 at http://www.pewsitter.com/view_news_id_201798.php; “Poor Bishop Robert Finn finally hounded from office” Tantumblogo on https://veneremurcernui.wordpress.com/2015/04/21/poor-bishop-robert-finn-finally-hounded-from-office/ (accessed April 21, 2015). Of all the conservative reactions, though, Donahue’s was the most disingenuous, as it seemed to suggested Finn had been sacked for moving towards greater transparency in removing any semblance of cover-up by episcopal superiors of the misdeeds of their clerical subordinates: “Our prayers are with Bishop Finn, and we thank him for cleaning up the mess he inherited. It will make his successor’s job that much easier” from http://www.catholicleague.org/bishop-robert-finn-resigns/ (posted and accessed April 21, 2015); “An Honorable Man, Unjustly Disgraced” (Peter O’Dwyer for Church Militant.com, quoting a letter published by Father Gregory Lockwood, the Secretary for Seminarians and Parochial Administrator of Christ the King parish in Kansas City, posted and accessed April 29, 2015 at http://www.churchmilitant.com/news/article/an-honorable-man-unjustly-disgraced).

63 “Promoting so as to remove.” E.g., the “promotion” of then Archbishop Raymond Leo Burke from his diocesan see of St. Louis to the Apostolic Signatura in Rome during the papacy of Benedict XVI. Burke had caused something of a brutta figura with some of his less rigid American brother bishops by his intransigent refusal to admit to Communion Democratic Party candidates, most notably 2004 presidential contender John Kerry, who had been explicitly welcomed to Communion by Kerry’s diocesan ordinary, Cardinal William McCarrick of Washington, D.C.

Pope Francis and the Francis Effect are being increasingly felt in the world of diplomacy as well. We do not have time to probe this sufficiently here, so I will simply outline a few bullet points that deserve further treatment before turning to the next topic:

- Regime change in the Secretariat of State: Bertone out, Parolin in
- 2014 Prayer Service with Shimon Peres of Israel, & Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority in the Vatican gardens
- Being “Undiplomatic” in Denouncing Armenian Genocide in Turkey
- Brokering a Breakthrough on US-Cuba Relations
- Recognition of the Palestinian State

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65 One diplomatic story that still had not been resolved at this writing concerns the status of the French nomination of Laurent Stefanini as proposed ambassador to the Holy See. Stefanini is an “open homosexual” but has not public partner. He had the public support of the Cardinal of Paris Vingt-Trois and Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran, the former Vatican foreign minister who now serves as president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Unnamed cardinals in the Roman Curia expressed opposition and the Pope himself took the unprecedented step of meeting with Stefanini at the Vatican on or around April 18, 2015. After this meeting contradictory reports pro and con Stefanini’s chances found their way into the press, but now it seems that the Pope may have given the go ahead to accept Stefanini as ambassador (see Il Messaggero for May 15, 2015: http://www.ilmessaggero.it/PRIMOPIANO/VATICANO/disgelo_vaticano_franca_diplomatico_gay/notizie/1354925.shtml). Phil Lawler believes he knows the whole backstory which he outlines here: http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/the-city-gates.cfm?ID=1070 (accessed May 28, 2015).

Not surprisingly, the reaction in the conservative blog-o-sphere reports this as just another example of Pope Francis “capitulating” to the homosexual agenda: see Gloria TV of May 18th: http://gloria.tv/?user=6084&media=videos#1-media%3DbfMKhiCAfDr (accessed May 21, 2015). However, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the prefect of the Holy See’s Secretariat of State seemed to signal that the decision still had not been made as of May 26, 2015 in a press conference reported in the Irish Times saying that “dialogue is still ongoing” between France and the Holy See. See http://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/religion-and-beliefs/vatican-calls-irish-referendum-a-defeat-for-humanity-1.2226957 (accessed May 27, 2015). Andrea Tornielli, writing in Vatican Insider, gives an “exegesis” of Parolin’s brief comment here: http://vaticaninsider.lastampa.it/en/the-vatican/detail/articolo/parolin-stefanini-41367/ (accessed May 28, 2015).


Beatification of Oscar Romero & Normalization of Relations with Liberation Theologians

Francis Effect and Women in the Church

As with every other section in this overview, a proper consideration of issues relating more directly to women in the Church would demand more than the paragraph I can allot. To support my thesis on how the core cultural concepts of fundamental values and root paradigms do mark this papacy I would point positively to the happy, though frankly unanticipated, conclusion of the Apostolic Visitation of communities of American religious women, and more especially the de facto truce arranged in the Vatican oversight of the LCWR. Neither felicitous

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68 The May 23, 2015 beatification of Salvadoran martyr-bishop Oscar Romero is also widely viewed as a result of the “Francis Effect” and a more positive toleration, if not acceptance, of liberation theology. On this point see John Allen’s column “Beatification of El Salvador’s Oscar Romero a turning point for Catholicism” in Crux at http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/16/beatification-of-el-salvadors-oscar-romero-a-turning-point-for-catholicism/?s_campaign=crux-email:daily (posted and accessed May 18, 2015). Another journalist suggests Romero’s own vision corresponds to Francis’ plan for guiding the Church. See Pat Marin’s “Does Romero’s beatification signal where Francis is leading the church?” http://ncronline.org/news/global/does-romeros-beatification-signal-where-francis-leading-church (accessed May 21, 2015). For background on why Romero’s path to sainthood was blocked during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI see the discussion around Fr. Ashley Beck’s the recently updated 2008 booklet, Oscar Romero: Archbishop of San Salvador and Martyr, CTS (Catholic Truth Society), Salford UK. An interview with Beck can be found under the title “Why did Romero have enemies at the Vatican?” at http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2015/05/21/why-did-romero-have-enemies-at-the-vatican/ (accessed May 26, 2015).


end-game would have been in the playbooks of the curial benches in the last two pontificates—or indeed in any pontificates’ similarly peaceful “non-definitive” resolution of such an acrimonious conflict since the Borghese Pope Paul V mandated a cease-fire peace between the Jesuits and Dominicans over the multi-season “Will & Grace” ratings war of the late 16th—early 17th centuries.

In other areas we probably have a mixed score card,71 though on the whole clearly more progressive than his predecessors.72 The Pope has repeated that the women’s ordination issue has been settled, but it no longer seems quite the litmus test it once was for the granting of nihil obstats or episcopal promotion (or demotion). He welcomed Lutheran Archbishop Antje Jackelen of Uppsala, the first woman to head the Church of Sweden, to the Apostolic Palace on May 3, 2015.73 Women have been appointed to more positions of responsibility in the Vatican Curia74 and in American dioceses women have a much higher percentage of key positions than in the workplace at large.75 Pope Francis has also come out recently calling for equal pay for

71 Lest there be too much jubilation over the resolution of the LCWR standoff, the editors of the National Catholic Reporter observe that as long as there are no systemic changes to this particular mode of exercising the munus guberandi in the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith there would be little to prevent another such scenario from occurring. See their editorial “Hierarchy's flaws persist despite collegial end to LCWR investigation” at http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/editorial-hierarchys-flaws-persist-despite-collegial-end-lcwr-investigation (posted and accessed May 1, 2015).

72 See, for example, a recent report on Pope Francis’ audience with an international group of male and female religious working in the Archdiocese of Rome on May 16, 2015 which provided some important context on how he sees the role of women in various sectors of the Church, including spiritual direction. See National Catholic Reporter Cindy Wooten on Church needs women's voices, input, experiences, pope tells religious” http://ncronline.org/blogs/francis-chronicles/church-needs-womens-voices-input-experiences-pope-tells-religious#.VVpV3-nj6a8.twitter (accessed May 18, 2015). The full transcript translation can be found at http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-q-and-a-with-consecrated-persons (accessed May 19, 2015).

73 The event though got only a short mention with no photo in L’Osservatore Romano which probably indicates not everyone was pleased by this papal outreach. For another report, with photo, see Robert Mickens’ “Letter From Rome” posted to http://www.globalpulsemagazine.com/preview/keeping-secrets/1197 (accessed May 6, 2015).


75 32% of the top 571 diocesan key posts in the 197 US dioceses are filled by women, as compared with 18% for Congress and 5% of Fortune 500 CFOs. Nevertheless, 35 dioceses still have no women in these posts, and many of these would be run by bishops more closely allied with the ethos of Pope John Paul II and/or Pope Benedict XVI. Data taken from Michael O’Loughlin’s May 14, 2015 Crux article “Most US dioceses have women in key posts, but
women, based on the Christian concept of radical equality—a something Pope John Paul II would have been particularly uncomfortable with since the Polish Pope stated repeatedly that women’s highest vocation was to be exercised as mothers in the home. One of the more prominent “Francis Bishops,” Archbishop Blase Cupich of Chicago recently named a woman as the chief operating officer for the entire Archdiocese.

The Synods on the Family: October 2014 and October 2015

In terms of sustained media attention clearly the two Synods on the Family would capture first place. Similarly in the academy a good deal of scholarly reflection has been devoted to these Synods, so I will not attempt even a brief summary here. In terms of my over-arching thesis on the Francis Effect’s primary focus on the Gospel as the healing message which should guide the Church, let me very briefly lift up just a few aspects of the recent and forthcoming October Synods that can further support this thesis.

First, I would underscore the importance of the 2014 Instrumentum laboris’ accent on listening, which was then lifted up in the Relatio post disceptationem (aka Mid-Synod Relatio)
to provide the organizing framework of “Listen, Judge, and Act.” This triad was explicitly attacked in the Extraordinary Synod’s 2nd week’s *circuli minores* discussion in the group chaired by Cardinal Burke which argued that “Listen” should be scrapped and replaced with the “clearer” and more active “See” and then move decisively to “Judge” and “Act.” The October 2015 Synod though has retained the triad beginning with “Listen” and this certainly represents not just a shift in vocabulary but in culture as well.

Another Francis Effect came directly from the Pope himself in his Opening Address in which he explicitly called for openness or “παρρησία (*parrhesia*—the Greek term meaning to speak candidly or boldly, and without fear). This also was another cultural change of some significance, allowing for what in Italian might be called a *Confronto Americano*—literally an “American-style Confrontation.” My fellow Americans would probably translate this as a “frank discussion,” and we see it as an important and necessary step towards arriving at consensus on controversial issues. But in the ecclesial culture of Italy this *Confronto Americano* is usually seen as a type *brutta figura* (literally an “ugly figure”) which generally is to be avoided at all costs.

There was obviously plenty of παρρησία (*parrhesia*) before, during and after the Extraordinary Synod, and I am presuming that most of us are already well-acquainted with the debates over the possibility of admitting divorced and remarried Catholics to Communion, so I

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80 The working language of the report was in Italian, and there was pushback in the first English translation which seemed to be too positive to gay and lesbian issues. So the first English translation was replaced by what clearly is a “dynamic un-equivalence” translation on the Vatican web-site (e.g., removing from the Italian the term “*dei partners*” and replacing it with “*these persons*”). Since this inferior translation though remains the most accessible version I will supply its URL here: [http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/13/0751/03037.html](http://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/en/bollettino/pubblico/2014/10/13/0751/03037.html) (accessed 10/16/2014 2:23:13 PM). The various translation issues are treated briefly in my two Synod presentations referenced above, but which time does not allow further treatment here.

will not revisit that well-trodden ground except to observe that even having the discussion represents a profound cultural shift in the Church that would have been utterly unimaginable in virtually any previous pontificate.\textsuperscript{82} While not the central focus of the Synod discussions I believe that perhaps the most revealing example of both paradigm shift and culture clash came not in the discussion over Communion but almost as an aside introduced in the speech given by one of the invited lay participants, the Romano and Mavis Pirola from Australia, when they recounted the following:

For example, the Church constantly faces the tension of upholding the truth while expressing compassion and mercy. Families face this tension all the time. Take homosexuality as an example. Friends of ours were planning their Christmas family gathering when their gay son said he wanted to bring his partner home too. They fully believed in the Church’s teachings and they knew their grandchildren would see them welcome the son and his partner into the family. Their response could be summed up in three words, ‘He is our son’. What a model of evangelization for parishes as they respond to similar situations in their neighbourhood! It is a practical example of what the \textit{Instrumentum laboris} says concerning the Church’s teaching role and its main mission to let the world know of God’s love.\textsuperscript{83}

Strong applause broke out in the Synod aula but at least one person who was sitting on his hands---Raymond Cardinal Burke who quickly took to the airwaves, giving an interview in which he

\textsuperscript{82} In this same vein Peter Steinfels proposes that the 2014 “παρρησία openness” might be carried over in the October 2015 Synod to include a fuller discussion of the Church’s teaching on contraception which certainly would hardly have been imaginable, much less possible, before. See Peter Steinfels, “Contraception & Honesty: A Proposal for the Next Synod,” \textit{Commonweal} https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/contraception-honesty-0 (accessed May 15, 2015).

\textsuperscript{83} For the full text of their address see http://www.we-are-church.org/413/index.php/activities/synod-on-the-family-2014/340-mr-and-mrs-pirola-s-address-to-the-synod-on-the-family-6-october-2014 (accessed May 1, 2015).
frankly deplored the “aggressive homosexual agenda” present in society today and then addressed the Pirolas’ anecdote in these words:

If homosexual relations are intrinsically disordered, which indeed they are — reason teaches us that and also our faith — then, what would it mean to grandchildren to have present at a family gathering a family member who is living [in] a disordered relationship with another person? We wouldn’t, if it were another kind of relationship — something that was profoundly disordered and harmful — we wouldn't expose our children to that relationship, to the direct experience of it. And neither should we do it in the context of a family member who not only suffers from same-sex attraction, but who has chosen to live out that attraction, to act upon it, committing acts which are always and everywhere wrong, evil.84

Besides grievous scandal, Burke went on, the mis-guided “acceptance” of the gay son and his partner by the family would ultimately harm further the son himself who was engaged in a lifestyle directly repugnant both to the natural law as well as Scripture and constant Church teaching.

Stepping back from both parties I do believe that this encounter highlights a goodly number of fundamental values and root paradigms that lead people to applaud one party and deplore the other, and if time allows in our discussion this might be one example to probe further in terms of how these cultural concepts are played out in the concrete.

Mercy in the Papal Triple Munera: Docendi, Gubernandi, & Sanctificandi

Much more can be said on each of these topics, as well as many more that I have not had the time even to mention. Saving the best for last, though, I would underline as one of the most

84 This interview, given to Life-Site News on October 9, 2014, can be found at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MOfho3wGi4&list=UUY1miD9L0dMycenfBy2al0Q (accessed May 1, 2015)
important “Francis Effects” the message of mercy. *Lumen gentium* #25 lists “character, frequency and manner” as the three principal criteria in helping the faithful determine the proper *obsequium religiosum* to give to teachings of the ordinary magisterium, i.e., that which is not defined as infallible, irreformable, and calling for the assent of belief.\(^85\)

Theologically “mercy” certainly is a core message of the Gospel and many would argue an essential characteristic of God as well.\(^86\) Therefore, it certainly would rank very high in the “character” criterion, and I think it can be plausibly argued much higher than some of the other neuralgic issues in the Church such as the “grave evil” of masturbation, artificial contraception, in-vitro fertilization, and so on.\(^87\) While no one apart from the lunatic fringe of the ultra-right-wing of the Church would directly contest “mercy” in public, it nevertheless seems clear that many would not like to utter a profound “amen” to Jesus’ words that God desires mercy and not sacrifice.\(^88\)

There is likewise no possible doubt of satisfying the “frequency” criterion, as “mercy” and related themes occupy Pope Francis’ exercise of the *munus docendi* on virtually a daily

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\(^85\) “His [the Pope’s] mind and will in the matter [of the teaching] may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking.” *Lumen gentium* #25, official Vatican translation found at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html) (accessed May 1, 2015, emphasis added).


\(^87\) The terminology and list comes from Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone’s proposed language for faculty contracts and handbook for teachers in the San Francisco high schools under his direct supervision. There is a considerable amount of conflict in the Archdiocese over the Archbishop’s initiatives. For the original proposed text see [http://www.catholic-sf.org/printer_friendly.php?id=63175](http://www.catholic-sf.org/printer_friendly.php?id=63175) (accessed 2/4/2015 1:16:35 PM). A revised preamble to the faculty handbook was released by Archbishop Cordileone on May 11, 2015 and is quite, quite different in both tone and content. See [https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0YiEphdTy4XeU1Zc1ZZSHpVS2M/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0YiEphdTy4XeU1Zc1ZZSHpVS2M/view?usp=sharing) (accessed May 22, 2015).

\(^88\) For an example of a lament from the lunatic fringe see “Fr. Z’s blog” in which he criticizes the Pope’s failures to expand on the spiritual work of mercy of “admonishing the sinner.” See [http://wdtprs.com/blog/2015/04/a-curious-lacuna-in-misericordiae-vultus-the-bull-for-the-holy-year-of-mercy/](http://wdtprs.com/blog/2015/04/a-curious-lacuna-in-misericordiae-vultus-the-bull-for-the-holy-year-of-mercy/) (accessed May 2, 2015). Regrettably this is not a solitary voice crying the wilderness; a few of my seminarians likewise have criticized “hyper-mercy” in my Sacrament of Reconciliation course.
basis. He truly lives his episcopal motto, *Miserando atque eligendo* and has consistently stayed more on the message of mercy than probably any other of the many themes he has covered in his various homilies, allocutions, and writings.

While it would be both unexpected and unnecessary to present “mercy” as *de fide definita* exercised in the Extraordinary Magisterium, instituting the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy with its corresponding Papal Bull of Indiction, *Misericordiae vultus* would be nearly the highest “manner” available in the papal magisterium, and one in which Pope Francis has joined his munus docendi to the munus sanctificandi, which could also be interpreted as an exercise of the munus gubernandi.

The Bull is also the best sustained reflection to date on Pope Francis’ understanding of the critical importance of mercy in the economy of salvation and the mission of the Church, and while it merits a much fuller discussion than is possible here, let me simply cite just one key passage: “Mercy is the very foundation of the Church’s life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her

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89 “Lowly but chosen.” Pope Francis prefers this translation of the Latin, which is a reference taken from the homilies of the Venerable Bede on the call of the tax collector in Matthew’s Gospel, and speaks of God’s mercy in choosing him as bishop and then pope.

90 E.g., see his homily on Monday March 23, 2015 based on the readings of Susanna in the Book of Daniel and the Woman Caught in Adultery in John’s Gospel: [http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/03/23/pope_%E2%80%9Cwhere_there_is_no_mercy_there_is_no_justice%E2%80%9D/1131468](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/03/23/pope_%E2%80%9Cwhere_there_is_no_mercy_there_is_no_justice%E2%80%9D/1131468) (accessed March 25, 2015). Some conservative bloggers have acerbically noted, though, that the Pope’s homily falls short, since he omitted Jesus’ final words which they feel must be the central message: “Go and sin no more.”


witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The Church’s very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love (MV #10).” Therefore, I would simply conclude this section by re-affirming my belief that Pope Francis’ message of mercy is not only one of the principal effects of his papacy so far, but also clearly satisfies three criteria for calling for a sincere religious respect of both the intellect and will on the part of all Catholics, starting with the ordained members of the Church who have been charged in a special way with this mission of mercy.

Resistance to the Francis Effect

As Isaac Newton has taught us in another discipline, for every action there is an equal opposite reaction and so not even a pope is exempt from this law of (human) nature. As with every other section of this paper, at least a book could be written outlining the growing resistance and rejection of the Francis Effect in some conservative corners of the Church community.94

Some, like Bishop Thomas Tobin of Providence, Rhode Island, have been breathtakingly “frank” in their remarks about Pope Francis after the Extraordinary Synod: “Pope Francis is fond of

‘creating a mess’. Mission accomplished.”95 Others, like Cardinal Burke protégé San Francisco Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, seem not to have gotten the memo yet on priorities and policies that are currently endorsed by the Holy Father, as can be seen from the differing responses to the homeless and a number of policy “priorities” in terms of “Catholic identity.”96

As Robert Mickens recently observed even events such as the “March for Life,” which might seem logical to include social concerns beyond abortion and euthanasia which nevertheless are clearly “life issues” don’t seem to find much traction with a lot of the power-brokers in the previous pontificates.97 Veteran Catholic journalist Michael Sean Winters makes a similar point

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96 As with so many other topics, we could write at least a chapter on these individuals. More “noteworthy” in the Archdiocese of San Francisco would be the contrasting approach to “showers” for the homeless between the Vatican and the Cathedral. In the latter case those unfortunate who sought shelter under the overhang of the St. Mary’s Cathedral portico found themselves doused repeatedly by water for 75 seconds every half-hour as a way to “discourage” them taking up temporary residence there. Much more can be said on Cordileone, and for one assessment see the April 16, 2015 column in the local San Francisco Chronicle by C.W. Nevius, “S.F. Archbishop Cordileone wanted a fight, and now he has lost,” http://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/nevius/article/Time-for-Catholic-church-to-face-up-to-reality-in-6204533.php (accessed 4/19/2015 7:53:45 AM). It does seem, though, that Cordileone is bending slightly to pressure on some of his initiatives: the anti-homeless water feature has been turned off at St. Mary’s Cathedral, a problematic pastor, Fr. Joseph Illo, has been given another priest to take charge of chaplaincy oversight at Star of the Sea School, and the Archbishop’s quite controversial faculty handbook language seems to be undergoing revision. On this last development see Daniel Morris-Young and Mandy Erickson’s National Catholic Reporter column “Draft of revised San Francisco faculty handbook statement takes a broader approach” at http://ncronline.org/news/faith-parish/draft-revised-san-francisco-faculty-handbook-statement-takes-broader-approach (accessed May 21, 2015). The text of the revised handbook preamble can be found at https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0YiEpHdTy4XeU1Zc1ZZSHpV52M/view?usp=sharing (accessed May 22, 2015).

97 See Robert Mickens’ May 11, 2015 National Catholic Reporter column “Merciless zealots in defense of life and truth” in which he observes on the May 10, 2015 Rome “March for Life” had the personal participation of Cardinal Raymond Burke in addition to the official backing of six Vatican officials, including Cardinals Angelo Amato (Congregation for the Causes of Saints), Marc Ouellet (Bishops) and Zenon Grochulewski (retired), as well as Archbishops Vincenzo Paglia (Pontifical Council for the Family) and Zygmunt Zimowski (health care). “But like many groups that identify as pro-life in the United States, numerous organizations that joined the Italian march were clearly not pro-life at all, at least not in the broad sense. The slogans they displayed on banners or sang in protest-like chants added up to saying no to three things and three things alone: abortion, euthanasia and same-sex marriage … One would have looked in vain for even a single sign calling for an end to the death penalty. And unless the sun was just too blinding to see them, there were no banners to ban the bomb or protest placards to put an end to war. As for outrages against the immorally lucrative international arms trade that continues to stoke the "piecemeal" Third World War, as Pope Francis calls it, none could be heard.” http://ncronline.org/blogs/roman-observer/merciless-zealots-defense-life-and-truth#.VVEcYE8nxIM.twitter (accessed May 13, 2015).
vis-à-vis the American bishops and their perceived priorities---e.g., why do we not have a “Fortnight against Poverty” along with the much ballyhooed “Fortnight for Freedom”?  

Part of the resistance no doubt is due to the diminishment of power and influence of those who clearly held sway in the papacies of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. However, the sour grapes phenomenon accompanying any significant regime change cannot account for the depth and energy of those bent on fighting any and all change attributed to the new Pope. I believe instead that this anti-Francis Effect though shows in a different way the truth of my governing thesis about how the core dynamics of fundamental values and root paradigms function in contested areas of Church dogma, discipline, mores, and even morality in the exercise of the munus docendi and munus gubernandi. The dust-up over the possible change of discipline concerning admitting the divorced and remarried to the Sacraments may be the most “high profile,” example, but it is hardly a solitary instance. Using O’Malley’s four cultures taxonomy we might analyze resistance to the Francis Effect in terms of a preference for culture 2 (the academic) over culture 3 (the rhetorical). Attractive as this hypothesis may seem at first glance I believe it is insufficient to account for the depth, and breadth, of increasingly vitriolic, polarizing discourse coming from those who used to pride themselves on being in the front lines of the papal shock troops.

It really is more profoundly about truth claims contained in these various fundamental values. “Catholic beliefs are not simply a matter of opinion; they are a matter of fact” asserted

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99 Mutatis mutandis, the observations in an op-ed piece “The end of casual Christianity” published in the Washington Post of Michael Gerson on the Pew Center research study on the decline of formal religious affiliation in the United States I believe can be applied to this segment of the Church: “One option, clearly, is for conservative Christians to imagine themselves as an aggrieved and repressed remnant. This attitude is expressed as stridency, but it is really the fear of lost social position. America, once viewed as the New Israel, becomes the new Babylon. The church engages the world to diagnose decadence and defend its own rights.” See http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-end-of-casual-christianity/2015/05/25/75e6b06c-009f-11e5-833c-a2de05b6b2a4_story.html?tid=sm_fb (accessed May 26, 2015).
Rev. Dwight Longenecker in a recent *National Catholic Register* blog on “Why Same-Sex ‘Marriage’ Is Impossible for Catholics.”Clearly Pope Francis’ oft-repeated line of “Who Am I to Judge,” is not credibly extended by anyone to signal a forthcoming change in Church dogma on same-sex relationships, much less to advance the possibility of Catholic sacramental acceptance of same-sex unions. But what probably discomfits the Father Longeneckers of the Church is the Pope’s unwillingness to use the term “facts” in speaking of Catholic beliefs. Here we have a key clash of cultural paradigms. As Longenecker goes on to “explain”

> Catholic teaching is a unified, coherent and consistent body of thought that encompasses not only religious beliefs and behaviors, but also includes history, anthropology, political and economic theory, sexuality, cosmology and ecology. In other words, what we believe about God and humanity touches everything. … A sacramental marriage is between one man and one woman for life, and we can’t change it any more than we can say the grass is purple or the sky is green. We can’t change the content of the sacrament because that’s the way things are. The fundamental definition of marriage between one man and one woman was established from the beginning of the human race and validated by Jesus Christ and established as a sacrament for our salvation. Catholic beliefs are not simply a matter of opinion; they are a matter of fact. Even if we want to, we can’t change the

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essentials of the sacrament of marriage — not because we can’t change our beliefs, but because we can’t change facts.\textsuperscript{102}

Challenges and Opportunities for the Future

What started out for me as an article has now ballooned into the research for at least a book, but let me conclude with some brief take-aways from our all-too-rapid consideration of the effect Pope Francis has had on the Church since Cardinal Tauran proclaimed \textit{Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum: Habemus Papam!} on that March evening two years, two and a half months ago.

As I believe I have at least outlined, a key part of the Francis Effect is that a thousand flowers are beginning to bloom. Voices once quite muted, and moderates long out of power have emerged clearly in both the religious and secular spheres. Taking a cue no doubt from Pope Francis’ most quoted phrase, “Who Am I to Judge?” some hierarchs have begun to express themselves in terms unthinkable in the previous pontificates on both sides of the ideological spectrum.\textsuperscript{103} Probably the main focus of these discussions is the forthcoming October Synod on the Family, but this is not the only exemplar. A related, but different recent example of this

\textsuperscript{102} Longenecker, \url{http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/why-same-sex-marriage-is-impossible-for-catholics/}.

\textsuperscript{103} In this vein we see increasing examples of a “hermeneutic of suspicion” that now has risen to the level of outright conspiracy theory, such as this “take” on a recent theological symposium held on May 25, 2015 at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome: “BREAKING - European "Progressive" Bishops Planning Synod Coup: Secret Meeting in Rome on Monday” posted on \textit{Rorate Caeli} at \url{http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2015/05/breaking-european-progressive-bishops.html} (accessed May 22, 2015). This theme was taken up by the \textit{National Catholic Register} in its report on the one-day conference, making it sound like a Mafia meeting that they had infiltrated. See \url{http://m.ncregister.com/daily-news/confidential-meeting-seeks-to-sway-synod-to-accept-same-sex-unions/#.VWW8QM9Vikq} (accessed May 27, 2015). This was followed up in short order by veteran attack journalist of the \textit{NC Register}, Edward Pentin, who in Woodward/Bernstein fashion drew on his sources to expose the nefarious dealings of the Coup Conference: \url{http://m.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/list-of-participants-who-attended-gregorian-shadow-synod/#.VWgCYM9Vikq} (accessed May 28, 2015). \textit{Rorate Caeli} followed up its initial story with an executive summary of some of the more provocative items that supposedly were discussed. See \url{http://rorate-caeli.blogspot.com/2015/05/so-what-did-progressive-bishops-discuss.html} (accessed May 28, 2015). A silver lining in the gloom and doom clouds was suggested by Sandro Magister who found the “defection” of some German bishops to be a hopeful sign: \url{http://chiesa.espresso.repubblica.it/articolo/1351056?eng=v} (accessed May 28, 2015). Nevertheless, spokespersons for some of the participants themselves said there was no attempt to change doctrine or undermine the Church. See \textit{National Catholic Reporter} \url{http://ncronline.org/news/vatican/study-day-synod-did-not-aim-change-doctrine-spokesman-says#.VWXd6zJikie.twitter} (accessed May 28, 2015).
cultural paradigm shift in process can be seen in the both the lead-up and aftermath of the Irish referendum on same-sex marriage that was approved by an overwhelming 62% of the high turnout electorate on May 22, 2015. While the Irish hierarchy did make clear that they opposed the measure and individually were all voting “no” on the ballot question, there was comparatively little stridency in their public pronouncement and two bishops even went on public record as saying that individual Catholics could in good conscience vote for the measure. Any number of Irish priests publicly parted company with the official party-line and indicated that they were voting for the referendum and some poll watchers estimate that roughly one-third of the Irish clergy voted “Yes.” Reminiscent of Romano and Mavis Pirolas, the Australian Catholic couple’s speech on family acceptance of a gay son in the October 2014 Extraordinary Synod that so exorcised Cardinal Burke, was an Irish referendum support video by an elderly couple, Brighid and Paddy Whyte, that went absolutely viral.

After the vote, the bishop with perhaps the greatest “street cred” of the much beleaguered Irish hierarchy, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, said to reporters that

The Church has to find a new language which will be understood and heard by people.
…We have to see how is it that the Church's teaching on marriage and family is not being received even within its own flock. …There's a growing gap between Irish young people

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105 See the New York Times article http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/23/world/europe/for-one-irish-couple-backing-gay-marriage-is-a-matter-of-family-values.html?_r=0 (accessed May 23, 2015). The article contains a link to the video itself. Like the Pirolas, the Whytes indicated they were faithful, observant Catholics, married nearly fifty years, but they felt they could no longer in good conscience support a position that denied marriage equality to individuals such as their gay son.
and the Church and there's a growing gap between the culture of Ireland that's developing and the Church.106

Another recent example comes from my former Jesuit companion from graduate studies at the Gregorian in the late 1980’s, Bishop Juan Vicente Córdoba. Speaking at a conference about gay marriage and adoption hosted by the local University of Los Andes, Bishop Córdoba asserted that “no one chooses to be gay or straight” and that said that homosexuality isn’t a sin. “Sin is something else. It’s not respecting the dignity of others. Not loving God and our neighbors as we love ourselves, not feeding the hungry, not giving water to the thirsty” and that it is far more important for Colombians “to have dignity, a proper health system and food for all, rather than talking about whether they’re gay or straight.”107

Thus, while indeed many of us would still say “Amen!” to this gaudium magnum,108 it is also now distressingly clear that significant portions of the Catholic community do not, or no


107 As reported by Inés San Martín in the Crux at http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/15/colombian-bishop-floats-idea-of-gay-apostle-lesbian-mary-magdalene-says-no-one-chooses-to-be-gay-or-straight/ (posted and accessed May 15, 2015. Córdoba’s remarks are particularly noteworthy in that he studied psychology and theology at the Gregorian in the “Rulla Institute” whose professors strongly held that homosexuality was a profound disorder that was not a constitutional orientation, and that views to the contrary were just due to the “gay lobby” among American psychologists who succeeded in declassifying homosexuality as a mental disorder in the 1973 DSM (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders). Not entirely surprisingly the reaction was swift and furious, and Bishop Córdoba had to “clarify” his remarks and reiterate his support for Catholic teaching. See http://www.cruxnow.com/church/2015/05/16/colombian-bishop-apologizes-for-gay-apostle-remarks/?s_campaign=crux:rss (accessed May 17, 2015).

108 The “Francis Effect” certainly has not been confined to the religious press. In the main-stream secular press Pope Francis has enjoyed consistently very positive assessments, with very little negativity, as exemplified in this May
longer, share in this great joy.¹⁰⁹ One part of the Francis Effect pulse-taking that remains for me as one of the most disquieting is the level of acrimony that seems to have come to the surface. Not only those perceived to be “too liberal,” such as Cardinal Walter Kasper, but even the Pope himself are increasingly subjected to a level of critique that could only be classified morally as calumny and slander.¹¹⁰ Probably the most visible Church figure doing his best to counter what he considers the most dangerous evils of the Francis Effect would be Cardinal Raymond Leo Burke.¹¹¹ Again, I am presuming that most of us are fairly well acquainted the main thrust of His Eminence’s frequent interviews, homilies and assorted obiter dicta. Troubling as these are, I would like to signal at least one possible contribution Cardinal Burke et al. are making to the world of theological discourse, and here I am referring to a re-casting of the understanding of the primacy of conscience. Until the papacy of Pope Francis many conservatives such as the moral philosopher, German Grisez, pundit George Weigel, Australian Cardinal George Pell, etc. held to

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¹⁰⁹ Consider, for example, the recent “slip” of Msgr. Nunzio Galantino, the general secretary for the CEI, the Italian Bishops Conference, who said during one gathering at the latest meeting on May 23, 2015: “Quando la Chiesa era cattolica e la messa era in latino…” (when the Church was Catholic and the Mass was in Latin…). This may, indeed, have been just a slip of the tongue, as Galantino in general has shown himself more open than many to pastoral solutions to various questions such as irregular marriages, married priests and the like. This particular quote was seized upon and reported in a much longer essay by Antonio Scocci that is a very good illustration of one cultural paradigm view of the Church that finds increasing discomfort with the “Bergoglio effect,” as they term it. See “Effetto Bergoglio in Irlanda: La Messa e’ finite” (Bergoglio Effect in Ireland: The Mass has ended”) at http://www.antoniosocci.com/effetto-bergoglio-in-irlanda-la-messa-e-finita/ (accessed May 26, 2015). An uneven English translation can be found at https://fromrome.wordpress.com/2015/05/24/the-bergoglio-effect-in-ireland-the-mass-has-ended/ (accessed May 26, 2015).

¹¹⁰ Documentary evidence for this observation is so overwhelming that any Google search will yield more than ample illustrations. On the definitions of these terms see James Bretzke, S.J. A Handbook of Roman Catholic Moral Terms (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013), pp. 25-26, 219. See also the Catechism of the Catholic Church #2477-2479.

¹¹¹ For a somewhat amusing compilation of Burke’s various quotable quotes, accompanied by photos of his various ecclesiastical attire see http://www.stpeterslist.com/13590/i-smell-heresy-11-cardinal-burke-memes/ (accessed May 21, 2015).
a strong Roma locuta, causa finita view of even the “non-infallible” teachings of the so-called Ordinary Magisterium. If Rome seems to have spoken the matter is closed. Period. ¹¹²

Now we see the outlines of at least a theoretical position that allows dissent from Church positions with which they might fundamentally disagree. Of course in all fairness, Catholics on the other side of the ideological divide had come to a similar conclusion a few generations earlier. It may be that the forthcoming Synod lift up again the position held firmly since the time of Thomas Aquinas (died 1274) that we are required always to follow our conscience presuming of course that we have taken sufficient care both to form and inform it.

The Church remains a very human institution, which means it is necessarily a cultural and political organization as well, and so it should surprise none of us to see evidence “lobbying” and “spin” from a variety of corners. It is my hope that by introducing the concepts of cultural fundamental values and root paradigms this may provide another methodology for analyzing what is going on in the Church today. In theory at least I think virtually everyone could admit that human knowledge is always limited, and so it is not only “possible” but indeed probable that our individual and corporate views on any given issue will be culturally conditioned and paradigm-dependent. If we can acknowledge this epistemological fact then perhaps we have laid at least one foundation stone to build a bridge to cross over the conflicts that impede the spread of the Gospel. This, I think, is what Pope Francis was trying to do in his Closing Discourse at the October 2014 Synod.¹¹³

Here both St. Ignatius of Loyola’s “Presupposition” in the *Spiritual Exercises* and St. Augustine’s guidelines for discernment may provide at least partial antidotes to the perennial problem of *odium theologicum* which are worth recalling here: *in fide, unitas; in dubiis, libertas; in omnibus, caritas.*

And to quote again Bishop Thomas Tobin of Providence: “Relax, God is still in charge.”

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114 *Spiritual Exercises* #22: “In order that both he who is giving the Spiritual Exercises, and he who is receiving them, may more help and benefit themselves, let it be presupposed that every good Christian is to be more ready to save his neighbor's proposition than to condemn it. If he cannot save it, let him inquire how he means it; and if he means it badly, let him correct him with charity. If that is not enough, let him seek all the suitable means to bring him to mean it well, and save himself.” From [http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/seil/seil06.htm](http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/seil/seil06.htm) (accessed May 6, 2015).


116 Bishop Thomas Tobin, “From Bishop Tobin: Random Thoughts about the Synod on the Family.”