SUPPLEMENT TO

CONSECRATED PHRASES:
A LATIN THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY

Latin Expressions Commonly Found In Theological Writings

Additional Terms

Last updated September 29, 2017


By

James T. Bretzke, S.J., S.T.D.

Professor of Moral Theology
Boston College School of Theology & Ministry

Table of Contents

Corrections to the 3rd Edition: ......................................................... 1

[A] .................................................................................................. 1

[B] .................................................................................................. 2

[C] .................................................................................................. 2

[D] .................................................................................................. 2

[E] .................................................................................................. 3

[F] ................................................................................................. 3
SUPPLEMENT TO
CONSECRATED PHRASES
A LATIN THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY

Latin Expressions Commonly Found In Theological Writings

Update and/or Additional Terms

Corrections to the 3rd Edition:

p. 145, last sentence in entry of Motu proprio:
“.... which gave all priests the *rite* ....” should read “right” and *not* “rite”

[A]

Amoris laetitia

The Joy of Love

Title of Pope Francis’s 2016 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on The Joy of Love in the Family which followed upon the 2014 Extraordinary Synod and the 2015 Ordinary Synod devoted to the theme of the Family and Evangelization. Some parts of Amoris laetitia outlined a possible case-by-case re-admission to the Sacraments of those in irregular unions (usually the divorced and remarried) and this in turn occasioned some negative reaction in some quarters, perhaps most noted the Five Dubia (cf. Dubium) made public by His Eminence Raymond Cardinal Burke in September 2016. See also Bonum possibile, Deus vetet and Prima sedes a nemine iudicatur.

Amoris officium

Love [by virtue] of [one’s] office

Used in Pastores Dabo Vobis #23 to speak of the exercise of priestly ministry in pastoral charity and referencing St. Augustine, In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus 123,5: CCL 36, 678

Aut effectu aut affectu

emphasizing the effect; emphasize the emotion
Latin Dictionary Appendix


--------

**[B]**

*Bonum possibile*

A possible (in the sense of being realizable) good.

This moral concept is related to the virtue of prudence which aims at trying to live out concretely the life of charity in situations in which the abstract full ideal may not be realizable. To achieve the *bonum possibile* in a particular situation must be considered using inductive reasoning, rather than arbitrarily imposing a “one-size-fits-all” abstract norm. This particular discussion re-surfaced in connection with the interpretation of Pope Francis’ 2016 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* (q.v.). See also the other entries related to *bonum* as well as those related to the “impossibility” of the law, such as *Deus impossibilia non iubet, Impossibilium nulla obligatio, Lex non intendit impossibile, Nemo potest ad impossibile obligari, Nemo tenetur ad impossibile, Ultra posse (or vires) nemo obligatur*

--------

**[C]**

*Coincidentia oppositorum*

Coincidence [union] of opposites

Expression identified with the German philosopher, theologian, and mathematician Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464) in his 1440 essay *De Docta Ignorantia* (On Learned Ignorance) is often used in reference to mystical
Latin Dictionary Appendix

traditions, and also to the recognition of the transcendent union or oneness of things that may have believed to have been different.

Consummatus in breve, explevit tempora multa

Finished (one's life) in a short time, (but) had accomplished much in that time

Biblical phrase from the Latin Vulgate translation of the Book of Wisdom (4:13), often used in reference to saints such as Aloysius Gonzaga (and others) who though they had died young, but nevertheless had managed to accomplish great things.

---------

[D]

Deus vetet

God forbid

Usually expressed as a seemingly pious thought or prayer, such “Deus vetet” that ‘so-and-so’ would do or say ‘such-and-such’ bad thing, or what in English grammar might be termed a “conditional contrary to fact” or possibly employment the subjunctive mood. This Latin expression regained some contemporary currency when His Eminence Raymond Cardinal Burke made public his five so-called dubia (cf. Dubium) on Pope Francis’s 2016 Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Amoris laetitia (q.v.) and suggested a “formal correction” of Pope Francis might be necessary. This in turn led to various commentators, such as Dr. Edward Peters to weigh in on the possibility of a pope being heretical, and Dr. Peters stated “In sum...however remote is the possibility of a pope actually falling into heresy and however difficult it might be to determine whether a pope has so fallen, such a catastrophe, Deus vetet, would result in the loss of papal office.” (As quoted in a December 21, 2016 Life Site News article entitled “Cardinal Burke: A Pope who commits formal heresy ‘would cease, by that act, to be the Pope’” found at https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/cardinal-burke-if-a-pope-would-formally-prof
Latin Dictionary Appendix

ess-heresy-he-would-cease-by-th [accessed March 4, 2017]). See also Prima sedes a nemine iudicatur.

--------

[E]

--------

[F]

Fumus delicti

Smoke of a crime (apparent violation of the law)

Usually used in canonical fora to undertake a preliminary investigation to see if an accusation might be “credible” (cf. CIC 1717). The responsible ecclesiastical authority (e.g., the local bishop) is required to make a preliminary investigation into the facts behind a charge, and if there seems to be sufficient evidence that a crime has been committed (fumus delicti) then the process for adjudication of the case is continued. If not, then no further action is taken. See also Crimen, Corpus delicti, Delicta graviora, Epistula de delictis gravioribus, Graviora delicta, In flagrante delicto, and Sacramentorum sanctitatis tutela.

--------

[G]

--------

[H]

--------

[I]

In dubio, pro reo

When in doubt [find for the accused

Legal axiom that in cases where there is a legitimate reasonable doubt judgment should be in favor of the accused. This is enshrined in American jurisprudence in
Latin Dictionary Appendix

the well-known standard required in criminal cases of “being a reasonable doubt” before finding a person guilty. Pope Francis used this expression in his 2016 book *The Name of God Is Mercy* to indicate that when in doubt a confessor should give, and *not* withhold, absolution. See also *Da mihi factum, dabo tibi ius, Dubium facti, Dubium juris, In dubio factum non praesumitur sed probatur, In dubio favores sunt amplificandi, odiosa restringenda, In dubio pars tutior sequenda, Lex dubia non obligat, Melior est conditio possidentis* and *Sententia incerta non valet.*

--------

[L]

--------

[K]

--------

[L]

Late dicta
Broadly speaking
In moral theology this expression was often used to give an interpretative guideline to the notion of “moral certitude,” indicating that the level of certitude did *not* have to approach absolute certainty, but what could be judged to be a legitimate presumption based on the evidence available. The Latin word *late* is two syllables and has nothing to do with the English term for tardiness. See also *Latae sententiae* and *Moralis impossibilitas.*

Longe lateque
Far and wide
Another example of how the Latin word *latus* can be used. See also *Lata dicta* and *latae sententiae.*

[M]

Miserando atque eligendo
Lowly but chosen

Episcopal motto of José Maria Bergolio, which he retained upon his election as
Latin Dictionary Appendix

Pope Francis in March, 2013. 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. This motto also supports the notion of God’s mercy which is a core theme of Pope Francis’ *munus docendi* (*q.v.*).

*Munus regendi*

Role (office) of governing.

Used in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* #26 in which the priest “is called to express in his life the authority and service of Jesus Christ the head and priest of the Church by encouraging and leading the ecclesial community” (*munus regendi*). See also the other entries under *munus*, especially *munus gubernandi*.

--------

[N]

*Non esse respondendum*

It is not to be responded to

Phrases used in the Vatican curia as a reply to questions, issues, criticisms, etc., sent to the Holy See that the Pope or the pertinent curial officials deemed unworthy or inopportune for an official response. See also Dubium and Responsum ad dubium.

--------

[O]

*Officium pro officio valet*

One office holds (or “is valid”) for another

For example this axiom holds that a good faith attempt to fulfill some obligation attached to an office (like recitation of the breviary for those in major orders) would be met, even if the wrong liturgical hour or day were celebrated. However,
Latin Dictionary Appendix

this principle would not condone the view that celebration of another a part of the Divine Office would “substitute” for recitation of the whole. See also Dubium iuris vel facti and Ecclesia supplet.

--------

[P]

Plenitudo legis in Christo est

The fullness of the law is [found or achieved] in Christ

Expression of St. Ambrose commenting on Romans 10:4 that Christ is the end of the law. This theme was echoed in Pope John Paul II’s 1993 Encyclical on Fundamental Moral Theology Veritatis splendor (q.v., cf. VS #15). See also Lex nova and Usus legis.

--------

[Q]

Qualis rex, talis grex

As the king, so (his) flock

Expression that evidences a hierarchical understanding of the proper structure and functioning of society, such that the ruler should have the power and authority to determine the policies in his or her dominion. This principle was utilized by Pope Leo XIII in his social teaching such as his 1888 Encyclical Libertas “On the Nature of Human Liberty.” A similar sentiment (and practice) is found in Cuius regio, eius religio (q.v.) and certainly downplays the inherent rights and freedoms of the human person that have been developed in later Church teaching since Vatican II in documents such as its Declaration on Religious Liberty Dignitatis humanae (q.v.).

Quam terribilis est locus iste
Latin Dictionary Appendix

How awesome (terribilis in the sense being awesomely terrifying) is this place

Expression found in the entrance nave of San Giovanni Battista in Lecce, Italy and a phrase in part XII (Récit évangélique [Gospel]) in the large-scale work La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ written by the French composer Olivier Messiaen between 1965-1969, dealing with the Synoptic account of Jesus' transfiguration, and in turn echoes Peter’s words to Jesus—“Lord, how good it is that we are here!” (Cf. Mt. 17:4).

Quisquilia/Quisquiliae

This and that, odds and ends

Sometimes used derisively to denote theological topics held to be of importance, but which in reality are rather incidental and not crucial to larger questions of life, doctrine, the faith, etc.

Quod non fecerunt barbari, fecerunt Barberini

What the barbarians [who had sacked Rome] did not do, the Barberini [family of Maffeo Barberini, aka Pope Urban VIII] did

After Pope Urban VIII’s twenty-year reign ended with his death (1623-1644), the whole Barberini family entourage including their servants and allies all had to quickly flee Rome to save their lives. The expression points both to how those in power can misuse their office, especially in regards to nepotism, as well as the possible retribution that awaits a regime change. See also Sic transit gloria mundi.

--------

[R]

Reformatio in capite et in membris

Reform in head and members

Phrase dating back to church documents in the 13th century to discuss need and
goal of church reform in terms of authority and jurisdiction from the pope down to canons of a cathedral chapter. Reform aimed at the “head” then would be seen as moving down to the “members” in terms of its effects. See also ecclesia semper reformanda.

[S]

Seculum obscurum

The Dark Age(s)

Term supposedly coined by Caesar Baronius (1538-1607) to refer to the early Middle Ages following upon the fall of the Roman Empire.

Si casus ferat

Considering in some [exceptional] case(s)

Condition that indicates that in some cases there may be either an exception to a general rule, or special circumstances that must be taken into consideration in the application of a rule or policy. See also lex valet ut in pluribus and omnia parata.

[T]

[U]

[V]

Velle bonum

To will the good

Thomas Aquinas uses this concept to describe love (ST I-II, Q. 28, 1c), namely to
will the good of another. Somewhat similar to the Italian expression of real love which is rendered as *ti voglio bene*, which goes far beyond the English “I wish you well.”

--------

**NB: There is no "W" in classical Latin; "V" is used instead.**

--------

**NB: Very few words begin with "X" in Latin, and most of these are proper names of persons or places, or terms derived from Greek.**

--------

**NB: There is no "Y" in classical Latin; "I" is used instead.**

--------

**NB: Relatively few words begin with "Z" in Latin, and most of these are proper names of persons or places, or terms derived from Greek.**

******