

## An Agreeable Pope and a Disagreeable Clergy?

Gennaro Matino (July 14, 2016)



A The pope speaks, newspapers make headlines of his strong words – at times de-contextualizing them – and priests and the Church end up on trial every day, with the result of putting the popular Pope and unpopular clergy into the public eye.

There are those who will certainly say that we have a Pope who speaks clearly, directly and frankly and that this is most certainly a good thing, but it is important to pay attention to the literary style of his speeches and understand if his exhortations are then accordingly accompanied by deliberations.

I would welcome this prophetic pastoral strategy if the church community were advantaged as a result, even though the purification of morals – which the church desires – cannot be achieved simply by a striking sermon. I'm not saying that Francis is wrong and I'm not saying that the Church doesn't need to reform; in fact I think that a reform of the pastoral structures of governance in the Church is indeed inevitable and entirely necessary for its survival.

But I question whether a lecturing and an exhortation – albeit provoking – will serve to revolutionize ancient and consolidated practices. The ecclesial world is complex, structured by a thousand joints and well beyond the individual will of single pastoral workers. What further damages the governing



structure is the lack of an implemented plan, understood and shared, of its governance.

The fact that every territory, diocese or parish is placed under the rule of a leader that is both unquestionable and untouchable makes the transparency of acts and the courage for invention difficult. Above all, it is almost impossible to comply with rules when they are entirely devoid of verification. Laws that are just, respected and verified make structures. Not everything can depend on Canon Law, but those who govern – and this is valid even for the Pope – have the duty to

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