



## Episode 952: Pope Francis: The Political Pope

Guest: George Neumayr

**WOODS:** *The Political Pope*, a very interesting book, and yet – I don't want to say it's been blacklisted, but I do want to say that the conservative Catholic press has not exactly been shouting about it from the rooftops, and I wonder if you feel comfortable commenting on that. Is that a false impression on my part?

**NEUMAYR:** No, I don't think so. The secular press has actually taken more interest in my book than the Catholic press, at least in America. The international Catholic press has taken some interest in it. Marco Tosatti, who's a very prominent Italian journalist who's covered the Vatican for decades, he has written about my book and endorsed it, as well as Carlo Franza, an Italian intellectual who writes for *Il Giornale*, and several other international – like *The Catholic Herald* in Britain has mentioned my book. *To the Point* magazine in Poland, which is a major Polish magazine, they did a three-page interview with me. But the American conservative Catholic press has pretty much completely ignored it. A few traditionalists here and there, like *1P5* has mentioned the book – or they did an interview with me – and a few traditionalists have mentioned the book, but for the most part, the so-called establishment conservative Catholic press has completely ignored it.

**WOODS:** Can you try to account for that, especially for listeners who might not know the political ins and outs of the Church, particularly of the Catholic right?

**NEUMAYR:** I guess I would describe it as a kind of right-wing political correctness. The American conservative Catholics in America, I guess at the end of the day, they tend to choose papalotry over the defense of the faith. They would rather – they don't want to be seen being too critical of the pope and they probably think that my book is over the top.

And oh yeah, I forgot. Maureen Mullarkey did a review of my book in *The Federalist*, which is a – you know, that's a secular online publication. And I appreciate that she went to the trouble of reviewing my book and engaging the book, but she basically took a negative view of my book. She thought I was being overly polemical and preaching to the choir and that sort of thing, so maybe that's the view of my book on the conservative Catholic right. I'm not sure. I don't know where exactly to place her. She says in the review that she shares my distaste for this pontificate, but I think that it turns out that she really doesn't share my distaste for this pontificate, at least not my theological distaste for this pontificate, and I would say that her objection to Pope Francis is more political than theological.

**WOODS:** Well, there is a key theological point that a lot of people who are not Catholic would be interested in, and that is the popularity of liberation theology, which was on the outs, let's say, for quite a long time, and there were statements on it that came from the CDF, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. But it seems to be enjoying a bit of a renaissance under Pope Francis, and I wonder if you can comment: what exactly is liberation theology, and is he simply slowly rehabilitating people or is he actively endorsing liberation theology? What's he doing to make it seem more acceptable?

**NEUMAYR:** Well, at the very least, yeah, you could say he's been systematically rehabilitating all of the condemned liberation theologians from the Pope John Paul II era. Leonardo Boff, for example, the Brazilian liberation theologian who was removed from the priesthood because of his environmental activism, or at least his – I'm not sure if he quit on his own or was forced out, but basically he left the priesthood because he was engaging in all of this environmentalist hijinks and the Vatican got sick of that and condemned him. Well, Leonardo Boff has been completely rehabilitated by Pope Francis, and Francis enlisted Boff as an advisor to *Laudato si'*, his encyclical on climate change. And according to Boff, Francis contacted him at one point and said, I'd like to see your plans for world government at the UN, because Boff has come up with this world government-style plan for extracting payments from all the countries of the world to fight climate change. And according to Boff, Francis contacted him and said he wanted to see his plans for that.

So that's just an example. That's just one of many examples of liberation theologians that this pontificate has been rehabilitating. The father of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez, he was one of the first guests at the Vatican in 2013, and he was welcomed to the Vatican. *L'Osservatore Romano*, the Vatican newspaper, declared that he was an impeccable thinker and was responsible for one of the most important theological currents of the 20th century. And so you know, what we can say, I think – I think it's fair to say that a total rehabilitation of the condemned liberation theology of the '80s has taken place under this pontificate.

**WOODS:** And also he'll say things – I mean, we could just have a whole discussion of the strange things that he says. In fact, I think it's dignifying to call them strange, because they're only strange if you assume he means to say something sensible, true, Catholic, whatever. But maybe he doesn't, and so in that case, maybe they're not strange. But I don't know how to account for "I've met many Marxists who were good people." Now, as he said, "I've met many traditional Catholics who are good people" or "I've met many supporters of the free market who were good people" or "I've met many wealthy people who were good people?" I don't hear any of that, right? Maybe I'm just not listening.

**NEUMAYR:** Yeah, well, one of the most telling tweets he ever sent out was, "Inequality is the root of all evil."

**WOODS:** Right, I was going to ask you about that, yeah.

**NEUMAYR:** You could imagine Karl Marx tweeting that out, but no Catholic pope would ever say something that ridiculous, because we've been taught through sound theology that inequality is actually sort of baked into the universe, and it was Satan's refusal to

accept inequality that led to the Fall of man. And you know, reality is hierarchical, which means that reality is unequal in the sense that not everything is the same. And if we don't see that we're creatures and that God is the creator and if we don't accept that His will prevails over our own will and we should conform our will to His, that's the essence of the revolt against God, and that's why Saul Alinsky in *Rules for Radicals* dedicates his book to Satan and he says Satan was the first socialist. He was the first champion of the have-nots. So when the pope tweets out, "Inequality is the root of all evil," to me it just reveals that deep down he is much more of a socialist than he is a Catholic.

**WOODS:** All right, that's going to scandalize some people, but either you have to have a lobotomy as a Catholic or you're allowed to say what's obviously right in front of your eyes. Now, what could we have known about who Pope Francis would become based on what we could find out about who Jorge Mario Bergoglio was?

**NEUMAYR:** Yeah, I go into his background in Argentina in the book, and I think one of the most revealing biographical details about Jorge Bergoglio is that his mentor was a full-blown communist, a Paraguayan communist named Esther Ballestrino. She was his boss at a lab in Buenos Aires. He was kind of a minor assistant at this lab and she turned out to be his boss. And she was this very active communist revolutionary. She was from Paraguay, but she was active in Argentinian politics. And by his own admission, Bergoglio says that she played a very large role in shaping his political education. She introduced him to communist publications. She introduced him to communist thinkers. He said that he read about the Rosenbergs because of clippings that she had handed him.

So just like Obama's formation was – you know, critical to his formation was his relationship with Frank Marshall Davis, the communist out on Hawaii. The same holds true for Bergoglio. There's a parallel here. Bergoglio too also had a communist mentor, and by his own admission, he also had communist teachers whom he admired and whom he learned a lot from. So the exposure to hardcore leftism and socialism and communism in Argentina is very important to consider and to look at when thinking about Bergoglio and why he has the ideological instincts that he does have.

**WOODS:** Your book is called *The Political Pope*, yet there is material in here that some people might not think is strictly political in the sense of involving government policy. There's plenty of stuff about the internal workings of the Church. So why the name *The Political Pope*?

**NEUMAYR:** To convey the idea that he's more interested in left-wing politics than in Catholic theology. I mean, his political, left-wing political diletantism is unusually aggressive and really is the defining mark of his pontificate. He's much more interested in "saving the planet" than saving souls, and to that extent, he's a completely political pope. He's not a theological pope. He takes no interest whatsoever in teaching the faith, teaching theology. In fact, he's told people around them that he finds theology to be boring. So really what gets him up in the morning is the promotion of left-wing politics, and you can see that.

I've talked to people and there are many interviews in the book with priests and others which confirm this, but I recently was talking to a bishop off the record – you know,

he wouldn't want to be quoted – but he told me that he was just shocked by the way Bergoglio lives. He described his living arrangement at the Vatican as just ridiculous and absurdly casual and that he's spending his days not really in prayer but in just sort of hanging out at the Vatican cafeteria and talking to anybody about politics who happens to come upon him.

And the other day, he gave an interview to Eugenio Scalfari, the communist journalist in Italy, and the whole point of his summoning Scalfari to the Vatican for this interview was to denounce the United States and said that the United States had a distorted view of the world and that Europe needed to have a federal structure, a federal – kind of a United States of Europe structure in order to be a counterweight to the United States. So that just shows how aggressively political he is. I know a lot of popes in the past could be described as political, but I would say that the political activity and the clericalism of this pope is on a completely different level.

**WOODS:** All right, now you're saying some extremely controversial things, and far from pulling you back, I'm going to push you forward, because I guess I would say – and I know you want to keep your eye on the ball here. You want to focus on Pope Francis and you want to talk to a lot of Catholics who have very fond memories of previous popes, particularly John Paul II.

But I guess the way I look at it is, if it hadn't been for John Paul II, there would have been no Pope Francis. If it hadn't been for these – again, I'm not going to say "bewildering" like it's a mystery that they appointed these people. They obviously knew what they were doing. Absolutely terrible people have been appointed as bishops all over the world. Horrible people. People who should be sweeping floors somewhere are running the Catholic world. It's not a surprise that you wind up with a Francis as pope. If you're going to appoint Jorge Mario Bergoglio over the people of Buenos Aires and say, "That's a good decision. I'm glad I'm doing that," then I guess – I mean, we have no right to be surprised or think that this is anomaly when this is the kind of person who's been appointed. People in the Catholic world have suffered under Bergoglios for decades now. And it's not because of Pius XII. Over his dead body would a guy like Bergoglio have been appointed. So where does the buck stop?

**NEUMAYR:** Yeah, I agree that Bergoglio is the culmination of decades of literal softness and socialist infiltration in the Catholic Church, which conservative popes like John Paul II and unfortunately Benedict XVI didn't do enough to uproot. And you're right, a lot of bad bishops got in during the last two pontificates, before Bergoglio, and that's one of the reasons why he was allowed to become pope. The College of Cardinals is full of liberals.

**WOODS:** So then maybe John Paul II wasn't that conservative after all, because what could – would you have appointed any of those bishops? Would you have named Bergoglio? Then why are we letting him off the hook? I mean, I'm sorry I keep pushing you in that direction, but I feel like I have to.

**NEUMAYR:** Well, I think it's fair to say that John Paul II and Benedict XVI to a certain extent were lax and they didn't do a sufficient job of confronting the modernist crisis in the Church. But does that mean that they're liberals cut of the same cloth as Bergoglio? No. Both John Paul II and Benedict were formed by the pre-Vatican II

Church and they had a certain measure of sympathy for it, whereas Bergoglio has no sympathy for it. He is a product of the Vatican II Church. He was ordained I believe the year after Vatican II ended, so he's a son of Vatican II in a way that John Paul II and Benedict weren't. And he's completely committed to completing the project of the so-called spirit of Vatican II, which is to try and incorporate as much of modern liberalism as possible in Catholicism, a project.

And you could say – I think people could say that because of the weakness of the last two pontificates before his, the modernists got the ball to like the 30-yard-line, and now Bergoglio thinks he can run it into the end zone. And I don't know, maybe he can, because the unfortunate reality is that there are very few determined anti-modernists in the College of Cardinals, and that's really what you would need to stop this liberal revolution. You would need the cardinals to stand up and say, "The modernist movement is a massive crisis in the Church. We have to eradicate it completely."

I mean, here's one small example of how Bergoglio came about, as I understand it. Maybe somebody could correct me here, but Cardinal Kasper turned 80 the week that Benedict resigned, I believe, so technically he should not have even been allowed to vote in the conclave. For your listeners, Kasper is a very liberal German cardinal. So Benedict, if he had wanted to, could have told Kasper, "Sorry, but you can't vote in the next conclave. According to the rules, you're too old." But that didn't happen. They gave him a waiver and he voted in the conclave, and of course he was one of the great champions of Bergoglio.

And all these sort of semi-conservative rubber-stamp types at the conclave just listened passively as the Kaspers were touting Bergoglio aggressively, and they just went along with it on the basis of very little information and a silly, five-minute speech that Bergoglio gave about a self-referential Church. And they showed no due diligence at all in selecting him as the next pope. And now some of these guys are feeling some buyer's remorse, and probably at the next conclave they're going to want to go with somebody safer.

But you know, yeah, you're right. This is the culmination of a century of liberal softness in the Church, or at the very least – I was talking in the book, there was a serious left-wing infiltration, socialist infiltration of the Church and a modernist, theologically modernist infiltration of the Church, which goes back over a century. So Bergoglio's election was really not about the future of Catholicism; it was about the past Catholicism. His election marks the victory of the modernists in a war that had raged for over a century and that the conservatives had fought very weakly.

**WOODS:** Well, just to amplify a bit of what you're saying about the differences between Francis and John Paul II, I did think it was significant the way you discussed it in the book about the canonization of John Paul II, that Francis decided to pair that with the canonization of John XXIII. Now, to my knowledge, there is no global following of John XXIII. I know of no organized movement to pray to him for miracles or anything like that, or devotion to him. I would say most people in America have probably never even heard of John XXIII. But it seems like a way to water down the canonization of John Paul II, about whom Francis said very little, and interestingly, with all those Poles there, he says nothing about Poland whatsoever. Very odd.

**NEUMAYR:** Right. Yeah, and the Poles are still furious about it. They felt terribly insulted by the way in which he conducted the canonization ceremony. They felt he was just phoning it in and that, yeah, by coupling it with this liberal pope, that that was his way of diluting the canonization of John Paul II. And they resent it and they think that he – yeah, it was interpreted widely as a snub.

And another thing to take into account, the question is why would he be so rude. And my theory is that – Well, there are two things he didn't like about John Paul II. Number one, he didn't like that John Paul II went after the liberation theologians in Latin America. He didn't like the anti-communism of John Paul II. And the other thing is he didn't like John Paul II's description of modernity as a culture of death. And obviously, one of the first things that Bergoglio said when he became pope was the Church should stop talking about abortion, or talk less about abortion and gay marriage and contraception. So that was an indirect condemnation of John Paul II and Benedict XVI.

**WOODS:** Now, meanwhile, in terms of the internal Church matters, we read stories about appointments and sackings and he's going to clear out this group and that group and demote this person and whatever. Can we clearly see a pattern of people who were conservative – at least in the post-Vatican II sense. There's almost no people who would be considered conservative in the hierarchy of the Church in a pre-Vatican II sense. But nevertheless, even the conservatives of that stripe, are they being systematically replaced by people who are loyal to Francis?

**NEUMAYR:** Oh yeah, there's no question that a conservative purge is being conducted by Bergoglio and his people, and they're just – Müller was one of the last Benedict guys to be tossed out. The significance of his firing or sacking is that Pope Francis now feels finally that he's sort of free of all the conservative restraints from the Benedict era now that Müller's gone, and now he feels that he can pursue his projects without any sort of resistance. And what I've been told is that the few sort of placeholders, the Benedict era placeholders that are still there, they've been completely frozen out and they have no real input and the people with real power at the Vatican are all modernists whom Bergoglio selected.

**WOODS:** Yeah, now, do we know anything about his governing style? I've heard anecdotally that he governs with an iron hand, even though he gives this image of being extremely humble and a very sweet person, that behind closed doors he's anything but.

**NEUMAYR:** Yeah, that's exactly what I've heard, that he operates like a low-level Argentinian politician. And I think that's one of the reasons why people call him the Peronist pope, is that he behaves like a left-wing autocrat in the Latin American style. So he'll call people out – This one priest told me a story about how his friend was once yanked out of a meeting very rudely by Francis and then chewed out for making comments that Francis perceived as being critical of him. It was a completely trivial matter, so it was just a petty power play kind of thing. So yeah, he's doing stuff like that all the time.

And you know, Müller's criticism of the pope's handling of his sacking really didn't go to the theological implications of it; it went to the personal implications of it. He felt

that Francis had treated him in a very high-handed way and fired him the minute after his term and didn't give him any reason for firing him. And then so Müller said, "When is the Church's teaching on social justice applied to Vatican employees?" So that just tells you how vindictive and thuggish he can actually be.

**WOODS:** And yet, just because I think it would be interesting, let me mention something quite anomalous, nevertheless, in all of this. I want to say something about – and I'm going to introduce it to the audience here – the Society of Saint Pius X, which is an order of priests going back quite some time, at least to the 1970s, whose head was the now deceased Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, who had been an African missionary. And he was of the opinion that the traditional liturgy of the Church needed to be preserved. We needed to ordain priests who were going to hold fast to that. Not to mention he had some doctrinal problems with the Second Vatican Council.

So they existed in an irregular canonical situation for a long time. And then in 1988 when there were negotiations going on with the Vatican that broke down, Lefebvre went ahead and ordained four bishops basically without the pope's authority, and therefore, at least according to some canonists, incurred an excommunication *latae sententiae*. And so he and his bishops, although not his faithful, were said to have been excommunicated, and so they were in, again, a highly irregular situation.

John Paul II then gave limited permission to have the Traditional Mass of the Church that had been modified after Vatican II available to faithful requesting it, and bishops didn't go along with that very well. Then Benedict XVI said, Well, you don't even have to ask your bishop. Anybody can celebrate the old liturgy. But the Society of Saint Pius X is still around. I mean, the last I heard about it, they had at least a million faithful. They have many priests. They have churches all over the place. They are still not in a regular canonical situation.

But my point is they're very traditionalist, and Francis seems to be quite interested in reaching some kind of an agreement with them. Now, on the other hand, dates by which this agreement was supposed to have been announced and implemented have come and gone, as they have for the past 20 years. But how do you account for his apparent desire to see that through, even though normally these are people he would strongly dislike?

**NEUMAYR:** I actually think it's part of a somewhat devious plan to ghettoize the Old Mass. And maybe I'm wrong, but I think there's some reason to think that one of his motivations here is he wants to keep the Latin Mass, the Old Mass within one personal prelature run by the Society of Pius X and he wants to take it out of the so-called mainstream parishes. And he wants to say to all of the Latin-Mass-going Catholics in the mainstream parishes, Well, if you want that Mass, you should go to a Society of Pius X church. So I think this will actually end up weakening the Latin Mass movement in the Church. It could end up ghettoizing it.

And I have no problem with the Vatican regularizing the relationship with the Society of Pius X. That's not my point. My point is that this is – You know, I wouldn't trust Francis' motivations here, and I think the cardinals and the bishops should make it crystal clear to Bergoglio that they will not accept his ripping up *Summorum Pontificum*, which mainstreamed the Traditional Latin Mass throughout

the Catholic Church, and that movement cannot be stopped by any kind of overtures to the Society of Pius X.

**WOODS:** I personally think that Pope Emeritus — such a crazy title — Benedict XVI ought to offer the Traditional Latin Mass publicly. Despite his insistence that he's going to be humble and invisible, he hasn't really been invisible, so he can get over that hang-up I think easily enough. But something to send some kind of a message to the Catholic world — what has he got to lose? What is he, 90 years old? What on earth has he got to lose at this point? Why doesn't he do it?

**NEUMAYR:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** Why doesn't he say something?

**NEUMAYR:** One of the things I mention in the book is this little report that Sandro Magister put out very early on in the pontificate of Bergoglio, which was that Benedict XVI was pretty upset by Pope Francis' harassment of the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate, the order in Italy that was using the Old Mass. And Francis made it clear to them that he wanted them to stop using the Old Mass, and so he sent representatives to kind of harass them and make sure that the order didn't become a Traditional Latin Mass order. So Sandro Magister, who's an Italian journalist, he reported that a visitor to Benedict asked him about the treatment of the Franciscan Friars and that Benedict said to him that he thought that Bergoglio's behavior was completely contrary to *Summorum Pontificum*. And I don't think that that reporting has ever been refuted. So I think yeah, privately, Benedict XVI probably looks at the hostility of Bergoglio to the Old Mass, he probably thinks that that's a bad thing.

**WOODS:** Yeah, but it's going to take more than that.

**NEUMAYR:** He would need to — I mean, I think yeah, of course he should make his — as crazy as it might be, he should make his criticisms of Bergoglio known somehow, and one way to do it would be to say the Old Mass publicly.

**WOODS:** Yeah, yeah. And I mean, then he can at least die in peace, at peace with himself. Well, anyway, listen — there's —

**NEUMAYR:** I have a whole chapter in my book dedicated to documenting the reversals by Bergoglio of all the policies of his predecessors. And there are multiple reversals.

**WOODS:** Yeah, see, now this — See, even if the Mullarkey criticism of your book were true — that it's just preaching to the choir — even if that were true, the choir doesn't follow every single detail. I mean, you're a journalist. You're interested in the Church. You were editor of *Catholic World Report*, isn't that right?

**NEUMAYR:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** Okay, so you know this stuff better than any layman does, better than any ordinary layman would, and so for you to be able to just collect it in one place and

show this isn't just an isolated newspaper report here and there; this is a systematic program – well, that can open people's eyes. That's very important in and of itself.

**NEUMAYR:** Right. I mean, yeah, people need to grapple with the information in the book, and if – I document all of the informational claims that I make in the book, so if they want to – I don't think – I mean, I think anybody, even a critic or even just an admirer of Pope Francis might find the book useful as far as – yeah, it's a systematic description of his four-year pontificate and it highlights all of the really seminal, critical moments of his pontificate, which people can debate. But nobody's done this so far. All of the books on Pope Francis before my book fell under the category of hagiography, really, and my book is the first book to attempt to be – well, you know, candid about his pontificate and to look at not just the soft highlights of it, but all of the critical moments of it.

**WOODS:** All right, I want to close with this question: give me two scenarios. One is the scenario you'd like to see happen. What's the best-case scenario that's realistic that you'd like to see unfold in the Church over the next few years, whether it's cardinals standing up to the pope or whatever? Or what do you fear is going to be the condition of the Church three, five, ten years hence?

**NEUMAYR:** This might sound glib, but the best-case scenario that I could envision would be if the pope converted to Catholicism, because it's pretty clear that he has very serious objections to Catholicism and that he's much more of a Protestant in his theology than he is a Catholic. So if he were to somehow undergo some sort of conversion away from modernism towards Catholicism and took his responsibilities as teacher of the faith seriously and taught the faith in an orthodox manner, that would be the best outcome.

But I think that's highly unlikely, unfortunately, and so I think the next scenario, the more realistic scenario: he's going to continue to drive a wedge between Catholics and their faith, and that's going to cause a sort of unfolding chaos in the Church. And the conclusion of his pontificate is going to be very dramatic and very ugly, and I frankly don't know how it will end except that I know that it will be very ugly, because what he's doing to the Catholic Church is very ugly and Catholics are going to have to decide whether they value the faith over papalotry, whether preserving the integrity of the faith is more important to them than maintaining this sort of phony appearance of unity. So the cardinals are going to have to decide whether they're really defenders of the faith or not, and if they do make that decision, then they have only one choice, and that is to declare to the faithful that the current pope is a bad pope and he must be resisted for the good of the faith.

And what specific [inaudible], I'm not sure, and I'm not even sure what to recommend. All I know is that at the very least he's a material heretic. It's impossible to say he's a formal heretic because you have to know what's in his heart and in his mind, and that's hard to say. But if he were to respond to the dubia – you know, Cardinal Burke and the three others who wrote that dubia to him – and if he were to stand up and say, Look, I disagree with Church teaching in divorce and remarriage. I just think the Church has been wrong on this and the Church needs to change her teaching," well, at that point the cardinals would know that he's a formal heretic, and then they could, as Robert Bellarmine and other Church theologians over the centuries have

said, the cardinals could stand up and say the pope has committed himself to formal heresy and therefore he's automatically self-vacated the Chair of Saint Peter, and therefore we can move to fill the Chair of Saint Peter with a new pope. That is the ultimate, most dramatic scenario that could happen, but I have no idea. My guess is that they'll never answer the dubia, and so he's going to make it impossible for anybody to identify him as a formal heretic.

**WOODS:** Well, and that's just it. Even though he's obviously no intellectual – I mean, he's not in any way impressive as a thinker – nevertheless, he's cagey and smart enough to know that you don't just come out and say, "No, I disagree with Church teaching." Modernists never do that. It's always, "Oh, you know, the Church's tradition must be respected. Of course, in current circumstances we have to understand and be sensitive to blah, blah, blah." It's always something. Or it's always one phrase in paragraph 87 that they blow up into the meaning of the whole document. It's never outright, "There are four persons in the Trinity." They wouldn't try that.

**NEUMAYR:** Yeah.

**WOODS:** Although, you would find the same people who are blacklisting your book on the conservative Catholic right, if the pope did come out and say there were four persons in the Trinity, they would say, "Well, you know, isn't that implicitly what we believed all along?" I mean, you just cannot have too low an estimate of some of these people.

**NEUMAYR:** Yeah, "Here's what he really meant by 'four.'"

**WOODS:** [laughing] Exactly.

**NEUMAYR:** But his advisor, Antonio Spadaro, the Jesuit editor of that Vatican-approved Jesuit publication, he said, "Under Francis, two plus two now equals five." And that really is the relativism of this pontificate.

**WOODS:** Yeah.

**NEUMAYR:** And they're just throwing out all sorts of ambiguous, contradictory statements, doing all sorts of contradictory things, but they're not issuing a press release saying, "We reject Church teaching on divorce and remarriage." Instead they're saying things like, "Oh, *Amoris laetitia* is perfectly consistent with Church teaching and Church orthodoxy; we only disagree on how to apply the teaching," and things like that, which of course is nonsense. It's a complete rejection of Church teaching. And the rejection is made known through a footnote in which the pope is endorsing adultery. He says in a footnote that adulterous couples would have a hard time maintaining their marriage if they couldn't continue to commit adultery. That's what he put in the footnote. And there you see the rejection of Church teaching.

But as Archbishop Bruno Forte, one of the advisors to that document, said to the press, he said that Francis came to him and said, We can't make our opposition explicit. We can't change teaching explicitly; we have to do it subtly and we have to kind of indirectly put the premises in the document and then let others pastorally

work them out. And then Forte made the funny comment, he said, "Well, this is typical of a Jesuit." So the situation ethics of this pope is being advanced jesuitically. It's not through press releases and overt, direct statements but through footnotes and making these sort of vague pastoral noises about how we need to be more understanding and things like that. Who am I to judge? So all of that together ends up driving a wedge between Catholics and their faith, and that really – does it really matter if that's the way you get there rather than issuing press releases? So I think the modernists moved the ball down the field slowly, but they continue to move the ball down the field.

**WOODS:** I'll just say I remember early on in the pontificate when he would say things that were shocking to people, and then we'd get this clarification from either, I don't know, the Vatican Press Office or *L'Osservatore Romano*, the mouthpiece of the Vatican, saying, Well, what he really meant was blah, blah, blah. And this just kept happening. "Well, he meant this, he meant this, he meant this." And I kept saying, Whoever's issuing these clarifications, why don't we just appoint that guy the pope? Just cut out the middle man. Let's have this guy [laughing].

So anyway, well, I'm sorry it has to be under such tragic and horrifying circumstances, but I'm glad that you and I had a chance to talk, particularly about your book, I which I think people are going to find to be not a boring read. It's called *The Political Pope: How Pope Francis Is Delighting the Liberal Left and Abandoning Conservatives*. And the conservatives who have been abandoned are so shell-shocked and yet still so devoted to, in effect, the cult of the papacy, they won't even listen to what George is trying to tell them. But you should and you'll find this very informative, and indeed, it reads like a novel, but it's all too real. Best of look with it, George, and thanks so much.

**NEUMAYR:** Thanks for having me.