



SHARING IN THE CHARISM OF THE

Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

of Wichita

May 28, 2016

Fidelity to the Magisterium

Introduction: This article will sketch the meaning of “Fidelity to the Magisterium” as well as our Wichita Foundress’ Mother Joanne Brummel example of this loyalty, why fidelity to the Church Teaching is vital for all Catholics, and how we all---lay, priests and religious---can live this to our fullest capacity.

We all need to hear the right voices. Have you ever watched the Alfred Hitchcock movie, *The Man Who Knew Too Much?* starring Doris Day and Jimmy Stewart? It is one of the few Hitchcock movies that involve a famous song: *Que Sera Sera, Whatever Will Be, Will Be, the Future’s Not Mine to See, Que sera, sera.* (This song won an Academy Award in 1956) In short, a vacationing couple loses their son from kidnapping because they know that an assassination of a statesman will be committed soon in England. Their little boy is being held as a hostage. Doris Day sings this song in a strong voice only she can muster to her kidnapped son who was being hidden in an English foreign embassy, and he responded to her maternal strength of voice by whistling the tune, so she could find him.

Jesus Himself uses the analogy of “voice” when He compares Himself to a Shepherd that the sheep only follow. Why?

Sheep know their shepherd’s voice, its unique tone, his peculiar sounds and inflections. They can distinguish his voice from that of any other person. If a stranger should come among them, the sheep would not recognize nor respond to their voices in the same way they would to that of their shepherd.

It used to amaze and intrigue visitors to a man's ranch to discover that his sheep were so indifferent to their---this visitors'---voices. Occasionally he would invite them to call his sheep using the same words and phrases which he habitually used... to no avail. The ewes and lambs, and even the rams, would simply stand and stare at the newcomers in rather blank bewilderment, as if to say, "Who are you?"

This is simply because over a period of time, sheep come to associate the sound of the shepherd's voice with special benefits. When the shepherd calls to them it is for a specific purpose that has their own best interests in mind. It is not something he does just to indulge himself or to pass the time away.

His voice is used to announce his presence; he is there. His voice allays their fears and timidity. It calls them to himself so they can be examined and counted carefully. He wants to make sure that they are all fit and flourishing. Sometimes the voice is used to announce that fresh feed is being supplied, or salt, minerals, or water. He might call them up to lead them into fresh pastures or into some shelter from an approaching storm. No matter what, the master's call always conveys to the sheep a positive assurance that he cares for them and is acting in their best interests.

In all of this the key to sheep's contentment lies in recognizing the owner's voice. When the sheep hear that voice they know it is their master and respond at once, with a response much more than one of mere recognition. They actually run toward the shepherd! They come to him for they know he has something good for them. When we are faithful to the Church, we are being faithful to our Shepherd, Jesus, who has our best interests in mind. Recall what St. Joan of Arc said to her crafty questioners: "Christ and the Church are one." Do we run joyfully to the Church?

What exactly is meant by "Fidelity to the Magisterium?" Listening to the Magisterium, the Teaching Voice of the Church, means paying attention to the Pope when he is officially teaching and hearing Christ's voice in the Bishops united to the Pope.

Mother Joanne knew how to listen to the voice of her Shepherd. How? Mother Joanne, the saintly Foundress of our Wichita Institute, told us repeatedly it was through her love of Jesus in her prayer life

that she discerned the truth. She had a very intimate relationship with Him, which gave her the discernment to hear His voice speaking through the Church. She believed He was calling her to live the Church teaching on religious life in some better ways than the IHMs in California were at that time. (such as wearing a habit, living in a community, working at a church approved apostolate, living in a convent with the Blessed Sacrament, etc.)

When she could not make her conviction clear to her General Superior, she proposed living in another House with other like-minded Sisters to the General Council. As a member of the California IHM General Council, she received harsh rebukes for this proposal. On August 31, 1975, Mother Joanne wrote to Bishop Maloney identifying the increasing harassment from the authorities in California.

On the local scene the harassment increases.
Although my hands remain steady and my
spirit hopeful, every nerve in my body is protesting.

She then added humorously that at least it will be good for her loss of weight!

She also described how the Sisters had to meet in a cemetery, because, yes, there were spies. They had to hide their Vatican authorized plans from their own misguided Sisters! They even had to make up a different name for the Wichita Bishop, to protect his reputation.

As you can see, adhering to the Magisterium is not always easy; there are bloody martyrdoms, as we all vividly recall seeing the Orthodox Christian men about to be beheaded by ISIS; however, there also exists white martyrdom. None of the martyrdoms are easy, and were never intended to be so! Mother Joanne insisted to all of us and to her future daughters that we must be faithful to Jesus in prayer at any cost, or we too will yield to false voices.

How do we in today's times listen with fidelity as sons and daughters of the Church?

Obviously, you are doing this right now, by going to Our Lady and seeking her counsel and intercession. St. Louis de Montfort tells us that anyone going to Mary, truly entrusting themselves to her, will not be lost.

Please, please, please: avoid what the secular media and even some allegedly Catholic publications are saying about the Church and in particular Pope Francis today. “He is changing church doctrine on marriage.” “He is the anti-Christ.” “He is aligning himself with what the people really want.... more freedom from those authoritarian rules.” “He is going to ordain women to the priesthood.”

Who is the real Pope Francis? Now at this time you may be wondering about Pope Francis. Is he truly teaching the truth and strengthening the faithful, or is he some maverick pope leading a revolution? This caricature of a rebel stems from media frenzy.

One time Pope Francis was asked, “Who are you?” He answered simply, “I am a sinner who has been gazed upon by Christ.” This look of love upon Jorge Bergoglio as a person caused him to drop everything to follow Jesus. Our real relationship with Our Lord is the heart of the Gospel.

As the Pope well knows just from his personal life, before we get to issues of controversy we have to first connect with Jesus in a genuine encounter, just like Mother Joanne did. That is why Pope Francis stresses mercy, the heart of the Gospel. The Catholic Church is not a little chapel for the morally perfect (and who is?) but a community open to all. We are catholic, universal, for all, saints and sinners alike.

Our Culture Wildly Misinterprets the Pope’s Message of Mercy It seems that whenever much of the media hears the Pope’s emphasis on mercy, the journalists seem to frame “mercy” as Pope Francis eliminating sin. In other words, the Church is hitting the accelerator of the accepting sin.

If the Pope speaks much about mercy, it is not to diminish to but to highlight the Church’s moral demands. Mercy, by definition, only makes sense when there is sin. If there is no sin, there is no mercy.

So why does the unthinking culture get hyper about mercy? Someone once said that if a farmer does not see the difference between cows and bulls, he will never get anywhere. The culture does not seem to see the difference between cows and bulls, and we think that mercy means the elimination of sin. The irony is that it is just the opposite.

Jesus Himself says, “I have come into the world, not to condemn the world, but that it might be saved.” Then why should we be surprised that Christ’s Vicar has made a Year of Mercy? Actually, we should be surprised that people are surprised about the Pope’s stress on mercy!

Other Recent Controversies and Principles with Which to Respond: *Amoris Laetitia*, “The Joy of Love” First of all, the document is not infallible. Pope Francis makes it clear from the very beginning that it is not an infallible document (*AL*, 3) It seems that every time the Pope speaks, some people fall into the error of thinking he is infallible. He is not, unless there are certain conditions. For example, when Mother Angelica died, he immediately pointed upwards and said, “She is in heaven.” While I agree with Pope Francis, Monsignor Lombardi quickly clarified to the public that this statement was not an official canonization! Rather, the Church calls this “off the cuff” remarks that we all make. To think that every word the Pope speaks in an interview or even an Apostolic Exhortation is infallible is absurd.

The Pope has two bodies. the body which is his as an individual member of the body, subject to mortality, and the official body which is his as Vicar of Christ on earth and will endure until the Lord returns. In other words, he has a mortal body and the divine institution of the primacy of St. Peter and his successors. This very Magisterial teaching points to the non-authoritarian nature of the Church, so opposite to what many people think: The Church is ultra authoritarian! (Venerable Bishop Sheen wrote that people are not against the Catholic Church, but 99% of them are against misconceptions of the Church.)

Second, the document reflects strongly official Church teachings: marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman, openness to life, sacredness of life, the right of a child to a mother and father, etc.

Third, the document, in particular chapter eight, challenges us to look around at the gravely wounded members of our church. What is objectively right or wrong will always remain so; however, as we may have once learned as a child or teen, the gravity of the sin depends upon the knowledge, consent and

circumstances involved. For example, if Crystal, a baptized Catholic, knows little about her Catholic Faith, her sin is lessened.

The Pope realizes we are living in a post-Christian world, a world darkened by a mad pursuit of pleasure. Our culture places the stress on self, and what the self can get out of something. As Pope Benedict XVI termed it, we are living under the tyranny of moral relativism.

Pope Francis is a realist. He is aware that the culture forms and informs us, often without our knowing it. Does it not influence us in other areas? The Pope understands that people will not accept the Magisterium—the teaching authority of the Church---without first seeing the joy they will receive from living this teaching. If someone just sees “rules” without the joy, he sees binding chains, rather than the joy that flows from an encounter with Christ who urges us to live this way.

He also accepts what St. John Paul II tells us about the “law of gradualness”: the human being knows and loves the moral laws by different stages of growth. (*AL*, 295) The Pontiff tells us “a little step toward virtue in a very uncomfortable situation may be more virtuous than a big step toward virtue in a more comfortable situation.”

The Church, in short, is a field hospital for the gravely wounded. If a gravely wounded person comes to a nurse, she is not going to take his temperature, but do the most basic things to keep the person alive. The Pope wants us to do the most basic things, like accompaniment, friendship, mercy, understanding and listening, without compromising official teaching. The Church is not only a chapel for the few, but a Community for the world.

Ok, What Should I Do?

Let us look to a saint famous for her love of the papacy. St. Catherine of Siena found herself in a much more confusing time than ours. Jesus urged her to encourage the weak Pope Gregory living in a luscious palace in France to come back to the poor and dangerous city of Rome. She did this, with many people mocking her. A year later, the conclave, mostly made of French Cardinals legitimately elected

Pope Urban, who turned out to be cruel to the French prelates. He even would walk around them saying his Office while they were being racked for their past sins.

He isolated himself from just about every cardinal by his utterly tactless remarks. St. Catherine urged him to surround himself with saintly cardinals and to stop being so cruel, but to win them through mercy. Although Pope Urban loved St. Catherine for her loyalty, he did not follow through with her saintly advice.

St. Catherine denounced the actions of the Pope privately, but prayed and offered all her sufferings for him and the Church, while respecting his office. With both weak willed Gregory and cruel Urban, she called them *Mia dulce babbo*, “My sweet daddy”, as well as “My sweet Christ on earth.” She was referring obviously to the office they had as Christ’s Vicars, not to their individual persons.

Let us follow St. Catherine by praying and sacrificing for the Pope. Let us not listen to the sirens around us, luring us to a caricature of the Magisterium, but let us be discerning through our own authentic life of prayer.

OK, But What Should I do? One of our IHM charisms is to constant study, especially of magisterial teachings. You may immediately say, “I am not that smart nor do I have the time,” Well, there are many trusted experts who do have the time in order to help us. I recommend the following social media for all: Listed are some for you to peruse:

- Bishop Kemme’s---(our local ordinary’s) statements in the *Catholic Advance* and/or his podcasts
- Our local diocesan priests (We live in a diocese strikingly faithful to the Magisterium) Our priests have links to their homilies on podcasts
- EWTN (television, You Tube)
- *The Word on Fire* (Internet)
- Bishop Robert Barron’s You Tubes or articles
- *National Catholic Register*, a bi-monthly periodical

- *VIS Vatican Information Service* (on the Internet.... (a primary source, undiluted)
- The actual teachings of Pope Francis, made available free for you on the Vatican website
<http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>

Conclusion Little Hank in the Hitchcock movie knew his mother's beautiful singing voice; like Hank let us attune ourselves to our Mother's voice, not only of the Church's, but of our Mother Mary, who will always lead us to Her Son, Whose Body is the Church.

Bibliography

Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, The Joy of Love

Mother Joanne Brummel, IHM, *Letter to Bishop David M. Maloney*, August 31, 1975

John A. Hardon, SJ *Modern Catholic Dictionary*

Cardinal Raymond Burke, *Amoris Laetitia* and the Constant Teaching of the Church as printed in *National Catholic Register*, May 1-14

Bishop Robert Barron, First Thoughts on “The Joy of Love,” as printed in *The National Catholic Register*, May 1-14

Bishop Robert Barron, <http://www.wordonfire.org/resources/article/first-thoughts-on-amoris-laetitia/5134/>

Bishop Robert Barron, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0gHG8RCq4Q>

Father John Hay, Pastor, St. Paul Catholic Church, a University Parish,

catholicshockers.com/about/news/parish-headlines/9441-this-sunday-father-john-will-help-us-understand-better-the-pope-s-document-amoris-laetitia

<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0049470/>

<http://www.keithhunt.com/Sheep3.html>