



# ELEPHANTS IN THE LIVING ROOM

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WESTLAND, MI  
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## Introduction

## Bishop Tom Gumbleton

Good afternoon. In all the meetings we've had, we seldom have repeat speakers; but today we do, because those of you who were here November of 2017, I'm sure you remember how impressed we were, and stimulated we were, by Bob Mickens by his talk. So, he's back with us today; and we are very pleased that he is. You may recall Bob is originally from Toledo, Ohio, and grew up there, and went to school there until 1986, when he went to Rome and studied at the Gregorian University, the Jesuit University in Rome. And after he finished his studies there, he continued to live in Rome; and I can see why; I lived there for even a couple of year. I would love to live there, but he stayed on, and I came home. Bob began, after he finished school, working in Rome for Vatican radio as a Vatican reporter, and that went on for eleven years. After that, he began to write a column on a regular basis for the *Tablet Magazine*, which is the name of the lay edited Catholic magazine that comes from London, England. And he wrote a column every week about the happenings in Rome and at the Vatican, and probably Church news; and he obviously had very good contacts - you could tell from his column - he had the inside story on many things. And he continued writing for the *Tablet* for about ten years. And now he writes for the international edition of a well-known French newspaper, *La Croix* - if I say that correctly. He's the English editor of that newspaper and continues to function from Rome. Bob is with us again today; and he continues to be very much in touch with what is going on inside the Vatican, inside the



**Church with Pope Francis; and so, he is going to share with us today what we've called The State of the Vatican.**

**He will discuss the happenings, especially the struggles of Pope Francis, as he confronts the resistance that he is faced with, trying to transform the cultures and the bureaucracies of the Vatican. So, I am very pleased to have Bob with us; and I know you are too. So, I ask you to welcome Bob Mickens.**

*(Applause)*

## **The State of the Vatican**

**Robert Mickens**

**Thank you, Bishop Tom, for the kind introduction. I do have a link to this area. I went to Detroit Country Day School in my last two years, just up the way here, and I played hockey. That is the most important thing you need to know, and you left that out. See, Tom was a winger, I believe. Weren't you? Didn't you play wing? In hockey you were a winger, I was a defenseman. The thing that we have in common is that we both played on the left side.**

*(laughter and applause)*



**I think the last time I was here it was in November 2017. I am very happy to come back and it's always a joy to be with people who have a passion for the Second Vatican Council, which I know you have. And it's great to be in Gerry Bichard's house, because I have heard a lot about this place; so I am glad he's hosting this. It's a magnificent building. I feel like I am at the Armstrong's Space Museum down in Wapakoneta, Ohio. I don't know if you have ever seen it from the road; it's a dome, like the man on the moon.**

**Now since I was here the last time a few things have changed. First of all, Tom is now the senior bishop in the United States. Did you know that? Did you know that Tom? You are now the senior bishop by year of ordination.**

*(applause)* Tom just celebrated his 51st anniversary, if I'm not mistaken, 51 years on May 1st. He was named a bishop on March 8th of the same year that he was ordained 1968. And those are important dates, because March 8th is International Women's Day; and Tom has been a great supporter of women in the Church; and May 1st is International Workers Day, and Tom's has always thought of the rights of workers in Justice and Peace. So those are significant dates. Now Tom is one of those funny kinds of bishop, in the sense that he is a titular bishop. He doesn't have a diocese except one that used to be a diocese, used to exist; and they usually name a bishop. Because you gotta keep up this idea that a bishop is only a bishop if he is wedded to a people.

An auxiliary or assistant bishop - they have to have their own people - so they give them a titular church. And Tom's church is somewhere in Libya, I think, or somewhere in Tunisia; it's called *Oulului*, a titular diocese in Tunisia. And the last time I was here, I have to apologize, bishop, because I said that I tried to get you a better diocese, a more appropriate diocese, because this is the Elephants in the Living Room, right? And I noted that there is a diocese called *Elephantaria in Proconsulari*. It's also not too far from your own diocese. And I tried the best I could with the people in Rome but they—unfortunately, the man that is the titular bishop there wouldn't give it up. And then I discovered there is another *Elephantaria*; and that is in *Maricania*, and I tried again. The Pope was just over that way in Maruritius on the east coast of East Africa, and once more, the man would not give it up. So, no dice, I'm afraid, Tom, you are stuck in *Oulului*.

Now, all joking aside, I think we, after six and one-half years, have witnessed something very extraordinary that has happened in the Church. We could not have thought, I'm sure, when Benedict XVI announced his resignation in February of 2013, that a successor would be elected in the type of successor of Pope Francis, who has turned, in the six and one half years, very patiently and very steadily, I would contend, this Church in a very new direction. And it would be the direction of reigniting the teachings, the spirits, and the thrust of Second Vatican Council.

Now there are two things, I want to set up for my reflections here today with you on two kind of plains here. What Pope Francis has done since he has been the Bishop of Rome which he became in the spring of 2013. One is *ad intra*, i.e., inside the Church: the ecclesial reforms – the reforms that he is trying to implement in the Church, in the mentality of the Church, in the structures of the Church. And I mean by that also, but not just the Roman Curia, i.e., the Vatican, that's part of it. And I would say that the *ad intra* program of Pope Francis has been the promotion of synodality. You hear a lot of that word, the bishops and the people walking together. And he set that tone right from the very beginning, the very evening that he was elected, and presented himself to the people in St. Peter's Square; and he said, "Bishop and people moving together, walking together." And you remember, he bowed his head and asked for the people to bless him, pray over him, before he gave his blessing.

Decentralization has been another pillar of the *ad intra* approach of the pope - the ecclesial reform – decentralization i.e., de Romanization. Rome is not the center of the universe in the Catholic Church - at least, he does not want it to be - indeed: de-Europeanization: the Church is not Europe. The Church is not just the Euro-Greco-Roman world of thought and art, which is what it has been for so long; but he is moving the Church toward a global Church, becoming a more global Church.

And what he is doing—and this is why he has made so many enemies, even people who are not believers, but who hold on to a certain type of vision of the world—he is moving the Church toward burying the last remnant, what I like to say, as burying the last remnants of the *ancien regime*, the post Constantinian Church, the throne and altar. The Catholic Church has so long been a mirror of a fallen Roman Empire. The structures of the Church completely replicate: the emperor is the pope; the bishops and cardinals are the other monarchs within that old Roman Imperial structure. Even the way that the Church is set up: dicasteries.

The language we use, so much of it is from the inheritance of the Constantinian world or the Roman Empire. And so, Pope Francis, in this *ad intra* program of ecclesial reform, is moving the Church toward something more radical, something more gospel rooted, rather than rooted in a culture, because the gospel is not just full of one culture; it is enculturated.

The model for this reform, and you all know it; I think you've probably read this, and studied it, and if you haven't, I encourage you to read this again: *Evangelii Gaudium*, the Joy of the Gospel. This was the pope's first major document, which he published in September of 2013. It is not an encyclical; it is an apostolic exhortation, but it is the blueprint for his pontificate, and not only, but a blueprint for reform and renewal in the Catholic Church. That's *ad intra*, that's the insight.

Another is the *ad extra* vision or program of this pontificate. But there is another aspect of the pontificate which has been very exciting and very enticing for people, especially who are not Catholic: the *ad extra* vision or program of this pontificate. And it's based not so much on *Evangelii Gaudium* but on his very first encyclical *Laudato si*, Praise be you, Lord -the hymn of Francis of Assisi, the saint's whose name he took for his papal name, Francis. *Laudato si*, which some have erroneously called an encyclical on the environment; it's not that; *Laudato si* is about the Christian vision, the gospel vision of creation. God's creation, from the rocks and trees, and what we see around us, to the child in the womb, and everything in between. This is God's creation, and our responsibility as custodians of that creation, as coworkers in this great creation. And in this *ad extra* vision or program of the pope - I like to call it the Church in the World, or the Church in the World of God's creation, based on a few principles.

First: Fellowship of the human family. We're all brothers and sisters—no sectarianism in Francis. He meets with Muslims. One of the main themes of his pontificate, and one of the major, I would say warnings, that he gives to all of us is do not proselytize. Dialogue, meet, create friendship with people. He uses the phrase of St. Francis himself, when Francis says "Preach! Preach the Gospel; and, when necessary, use words."

**In other words, not proselytizing, but befriending people; by our actions, we attract rather than trying to coerce. Pope Francis is not big on apologetics; he's bigger on witness. Witness for Pope Francis is the keyway of evangelizing, the keyway of sharing our Christian faith. In this *ad extra* program, creating fellowship with all God's children, one of the main principles is dialogue.**



**Pope Francis is a man of dialogue, and a man who encourages all people in the Church to be people of dialogue—dialoguing with other Christians who are not in full communion with the Church of Rome; dialogue with other religions, and we have seen the importance he has placed on dialogue with Islam. And I would contend that this has been one of the biggest contributions, the most important contribution, that Pope Francis has made to our global community, wherein, today is 9-11, and we remember what happened almost 20 years ago in the fallout of 9-11: the invasion of Iraq and the turning upside down of the entire world, the consequences of which we are continuing to live with.**

**I travel across the Atlantic often, and I spend a lot of time in airports; and the craziness of security, because of the decivilization of that very delicate global balance that happened with the invasion of Iraq. And the continuing violence that we witness today in Syria, which again is an offshoot of what happened after 9-11. Pope Francis believes very importantly, he knows that it is essential that we put aside our differences - very different from his predecessor who believed, and continued to preach, and said, "We cannot dialogue away the truth. We have the truth; not even for the sake of world peace." Pope Francis does not believe that. First of all, he doesn't believe that anybody possesses the truth, certainly not one Church; that we are all possessed by the truth, hopefully and seeking to understand it.**



**And the truth which we believe is in God, and manifest in Jesus Christ; but that we are seeking to understand that better; and we continue to try to discern and understand that better. But dialogue between the religions is fundamental in this pontificate—*ad extra*.**

**Second: Stewardship another. So, we have dialogue. We have stewardship. Again, this is something that unites all of the human family. Our world, the planet on which we live, the world in which we live, this is something not only the concern of Catholics, only of Christians,**

**only the people here in this town, in this parish. This is a concern of the entire world; and it is a theme that the pope has used to great advantage to find a way to unite all of humanity on a common theme that is of vital important to all of us. And I don't mean just our sister earth, as St. Francis calls it, but also stewardship, our care for the weak; part of the global economic system.**

**Pope Francis is very critical of the global economic system, because poor people are the ones that bear the brunt; and not only of that, but also climate change. The poor are the ones. And also, not just the weak, like the child in the womb, the unborn. People accuse the pope sometimes of not being strong enough on defending human life: he doesn't speak out enough against abortion. The pope, it is undeniable his approach toward human life. He even changed life, in all its form, at every stage of life.**

**And he has been criticized, because he changed the wording in the Catholic catechism on capital punishment, in a development of doctrine that we've witnessed over the last century or so. We've grown to understand, as a Church, that there is no reason to have capital punishment. We don't need to defend ourselves by killing other human beings. All people are born in the image and likeness of God.**

That's a hard teaching, even for even some Catholics, even cardinals in the Church. Cardinal Raymond Burke just recently said that “This is the pope's private opinion, Jorge Bergolio’s private opinion. He cannot change the teaching of the Church,” when, in fact, this is just a continuation of the teaching of his predecessor.

I like to say, and I have said it here before, I think that Pope Francis is a radical pope. He is radical in the sense that he believes in the Gospel, *sine glossa*, i.e., you cannot pick and choose what you like in the Gospel. There are some people in the Church who believe very, very strongly in the commandment on divorce, that you cannot remarry. Those words attributed to Jesus in two of the Gospels; but they don't seem to understand the Beatitudes. So, Pope Francis buys the whole thing and wants us to embrace all of it; and that is why he is, at different times, and in different places, and from different quarters, misunderstood, or criticized; and I boil it down to this: he is an equal opportunity offender. (laughter) If you are, in some ways not perplexed or challenged by what he is saying, by some of the things that he says, then I would say, you are probably not listening to him, because he challenges all of us, each of us in our own ways.

Three: And finally, on the *ad extra* part, peacemaking. The pope believes very strongly that he has a role, and he should be using his pulpit as a builder of peace. Not just a builder of bridges, but peacemaking, for the sake in the future of humanity. What he has done is he has reignited or given lots more encouragement to the Vatican's own diplomatic service and Vatican diplomacy; and he's made Vatican diplomats, he's unleashed them in a sense, while Benedict XVI tried to diminish that, and focus on other concerns within the Church.





**Pope Francis has bolstered the Church's presence on the international scene to help in conflict resolution and peace building.**

**So, that is just the overview. Remember those two things: *ad intra*: the Pope's plan of ecclesial reform inside the Church; and *ad extra*: his role as a universal figure uniting humanity on key issues that are of vital interest and importance to all of us, whether we are Catholic or not, Christian or not, believers or not.**



**Now, there are a few things, I'd like in the time that we have here, I'll take a brief look at an update, as it were, on some of the things we have already talked about in the past, and some of the things you have been watching.**

**There is the reform of the Roman Curia. We have got a consistory. You know, the pope announced a consistory to create new cardinals. He'll be creating ten more cardinal electors on October 5th. And I want to look a little bit at the College of Cardinals, and why that's important, and what it means for the future, especially in**

**the post-Francis Catholic Church.**

**There is also synodality. I mentioned synodality as one of the key themes and mechanisms toward reforming the mentality of the Church and the structures. But the synod of bishops, itself, is a structure that was set up during the last session of the Second Vatican Council: and the last time I was here, I was saying they were preparing a synod assembly on young people, faith, and vocational discernment.**

**And, at that time, two years ago almost, I made a prediction that this is going to deal with some issues some people thought, after the contentious assembly that they had, the two assemblies they had on marriage and family, that this was Francis' way of punting and saying, "Okay, we are just going to take it easy and do some soft issue like young people and faith and discernment." And I said, "Don't bet on it! This is going to raise a lot of issues, because young people have questions and concerns and problems with the Church." And so, I will look a little bit about what happened there; and also take a look at what is likely to happen next month when the Synod of Bishops gathers again in a special assembly for the Pan Amazonian Region, the Amazon.**



**Also, I want to briefly look at, we cannot fail but to take the pulse a bit and see what has been happening, with how the pope has been dealing with sex abuse. Sex abuse is the thing that has really brought the Church to the crises point that we have experienced in the last 10 to 15 years, or more; and some would say that it is the reason why we are bleeding numbers, why many people have left the Church because of the Church's response. So, I will take a look at that.**

**And finally, you know the pope just came back yesterday from a visit to three countries on the Indian Ocean Coast in East Africa. Mozambique, Mauritius, and Mauritania. And while he was there, on the way over, you know, 70 journalists or so travel with him. I didn't do that this time; but my colleagues they took the trip with the pope, and it was a long flight, so, before the flight the pope comes to the back of the bus, where we get stuck, and he had an introduction, and then, allowed each journalist to come up and just say hello.**

**At the end of the trip, then, the pope holds a press conference. And it's there that Pope Francis often says things that make big headlines.**

**On this trip, my colleague, the French colleague from La Croix, Nichola Seneze, presented the pope with his latest book. Nichola has written a book called *How America Is Trying to Change the Pope*. It's not yet in English, but we are working on a publisher and translation. And Nichola gave the pope the book, and pope said, "Oh, I've seen the book, but I've not read it; but," he said, "I'm not worried. Actually, I'm honored when the Americans criticize me."**



**And he meant by that his American critics: Cardinal Burke, some of the people that you see on EWTN, some of the other people in the media, especially EWTN, sponsored media of the National Catholic Register. They have not hidden at times their disdain for the pope, coming very close to calling him a heretic. Some of the people that they have hosted on their shows have actually used that word heresy. So, the pope said he was actually honored when people criticized him, that he is being criticized by the Americans. This caused a big stink. Five days later, six days later, on the way back, he did the press conference and Jason Horowitz, from the New York Times, followed up on his comments and said, "What do you mean? Are you afraid of a schism?" And the pope said, "No, I'm am not afraid of a schism," rather than saying, "No, don't worry about that; that's not an issue." He actually entertained the possibility that some people could go into schism. We can talk a little about that too.**

**These are the issues: so, the reform of the curia, the new cardinals, the synods, sex abuse and the specter of a schism.**

Now, I work for a paper which the French founded back in 1890, or something like that. It's an old paper; and it's one of the French; and it is in print, as well, on paper; and it is one of the largest selling papers in all of France, that's including the dailies. It is the 4th or 5th largest selling paper. They started La Croix International, an English version, a smaller version of that, because they understood the importance of breaking out of just the French milieu, out of the French sphere, and getting into, not the English speaking world, but an international world where English has become the *lingua franca*. We publish some critical pieces, but we are kind of a loyal Vatican II critical, as I like to say, and I think the paper is too, I'm a pope critic. And by that, I mean, like a food critic or a wine critic or a music critic. I like the subject that I'm critiquing. That doesn't mean I don't like— food critics don't hate food; wine critics certainly don't hate wine; and pope critics don't hate the pope, whether it's Benedict or Francis or Pius XII. We like the subject that we are covering, but we use certain criteria to critique, to rate, to analyze the subject matter. And I try to use, and the paper tries to use, the criteria of the Second Vatican Council.

Not all of the people, it seems to me, use the same criteria when they are judging Pope Francis, and some of those are even bishops, and archbishops, and cardinals. One of our writers is a theologian named Massimo Faggioli. Have you heard of Massimo Faggioli? Massimo Faggioli is a friend of mine. He is from northern Italy. He now teaches at Villanova University in the archdiocese of Philadelphia. Do you know who the archbishop is in Philadelphia? Charles Chaput. Do you know when Charles Chaput turns 75? In two weeks', time; September 26, to be precise. Now the interesting thing about Chaput is he doesn't really like what Massimo Faggioli writes, but he has never met with him. As a matter of fact, he has refused to meet with Massimo Faggioli. Massimo Faggioli teaches in his archdiocese at an institute run by the Augustinians.





**Massimo wrote an article that we published on July 16th. It was called, *The Rise of the Devout Schismatics*.**

**Archbishop Chaput wrote us a letter about it - wrote me and the editor in chief of The La Croix, Guillaume Goubert. He wrote this letter 2 days, as a matter of fact, after Massimo's article; and he said, "I draw your attention to this article by**

**Massimo Faggioli and ask you to note the following paragraph." This is what Massimo wrote, of which the archbishop contested: "These devout schismatics are not only politicians, they also include some theologians, priests, bishops and even cardinals. Their schismatic instincts have been on display since the beginning of Francis' pontificate, but they were particularly visible in August 2018, when some of them, such as Archbishop Charles Chaput of Philadelphia, and Salvatore Cordileone of San Francisco, as well as Bishop Joseph Strickland of Tyler, Texas, sided with Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, the former Apostolic nuncio to Washington, who called on Francis to resign." That's the quote that he's contesting.**

**The Archbishop then writes, "Putting aside the problematic tone and the content of the entire article, the allegation about my siding with Archbishop Vigano is false, and in context, deliberately mendacious. I admired and respected Archbishop Vigano, as did most U. S. bishops, for the quality of his service as nuncio; but I explicitly separated myself from his comments about the Vatican, and have never suggested, or supported, anyone's call for the Holy Father's resignation. Mr. Faggioli conflates me with other characters in his narrative in a repugnant and inexcusable way. I am astonished that this kind of depth lying, for that's what it is, would appear in a news publication like La Croix without my office ever being contacted for fact checking." He concludes "This is a serious matter, gentlemen. I've been a bishop now for 31 years and have learned to accept quite a lot of criticism, but not dishonesty.**

**I look forward to hearing from you with a retraction at your earliest convenience as a matter of justice. Sincerely yours in Christ, Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput OFM Cap, Archbishop of Philadelphia."**

**I never received the letter. I first found the letter. I share this with you to show you as kind of an example of what is going on in the Church today, because this is not an isolated incident. I would clarify Archbishop Chaput as one of our bishops, one of the senior members of our Catholic Church, who does not like Pope Francis, who is not in sync with Pope Francis, who has criticized Pope Francis many times, especially his teaching on morality and the family, and on economics, and all sorts of matters. I never received this letter. To this day I've not received this letter. This letter was dated July 18th. We are now September 11th. This letter has never arrived to me. The first I saw of it was Massimo Faggioli shared it with me, because Archbishop Chaput's secretary sent it to him to inform him that a letter had been written to me and my colleague in Paris.**



**My colleague did receive the letter, and so I wrote the response; and since it was published, Massimo's article, which is contented by the archbishop, was published on our site, and I wrote, "Thank you for your letter dated July 18th that was addressed to Guillaume Goubert and to me. I have just received a copy of the letter through Guillaume; and I understand that you are emotionally upset with the article by Dr. Massimo Faggioli (he called him Mr.), which La Croix published on July 16th. You specifically addressed the following paragraph" - which I read to you - and I say "You state my siding with Archbishop Vigano is false and in context deliberately mendacious. You then accuse Dr. Faggioli of conflating you with other characterization narrative in a repugnant and inexcusable way; you accuse him of depth lying and dishonesty."**

**And I write as in almost all publications, "The views and opinions expressed by our columnists do not necessarily reflect the views or editorial line of La Croix or La Croix International. In this particular case we defend Dr. Faggioli's right to express his opinion, but we reject the charge that he got the facts wrong or that he was dishonest in presenting them.**

**It is a matter of record, previously published in other papers, such as New York Times and others, that immediately after Archbishop Vigano published his open letter attacking Pope Francis you, through your spokesman defended Archbishop Vigano's integrity. It is surprising that as an archbishop metropolitan, who has twice received the pallium, that you did not first defend the integrity of Pope Francis, the successor of Peter and Vicar of Christ. Dr. Faggioli never claimed that you called on the Pope to resign, only that you vouched for the integrity of the man who did, a man who also explicitly called the pope a liar and charged him of being complicate in a vast conspiracy. Even in the light of all that has happened in the past many months, archbishop, you repeat sentiments of esteem for Vigano in your letter. We have seen no public record that you explicitly separated yourself from Vigano's views. Please provide these if they exist and we will happily publish them. Dr. Faggioli, as is his right, has interpreted your quick defense of Vigano as siding with the nuncio. In this he is far from alone as shown by a number of articles that both mainstream Catholic and secular media published in late August 2018. Dr. Faggioli also contends, and is supported by, substantial evidence that at almost every turn you have also sided with the sharpest critics of Pope Francis, and with the oppositional positions they have taken. We are sorry this has aggrieved you, but, on substance, we do not believe Dr. Faggioli has misstated the facts or I committed the serious matters of which you have accused him. Respectfully, Robert Mickens."**

**I wrote that on July 25th. I have not received a response. My intention was to publish both letters on our website, and any response that he decided to send; but we are going to let that be. There is no reason to make bigger polemics out of this. But this, folks, is what we are contending with.**



**Pope Francis is contending with all kinds of criticism from people in the Church; and I bring that up, because the question of schism that was put to him on the plane the day before, overnight, many people I respect in the Church, who are solidly behind Pope Francis, believe, perhaps, we've made too much out of this. I'm asked**

**often by people, Vatican II Catholics, "Why are you giving them oxygen? Why are you giving them publicity?" Well, because they have a bit of a reach. ETWN goes all over the world. I mean they have program money, ETWN, the world over. Raymond Arroyo, I believe just last week, they had two people on there, and Philip Lawler, who is an editor of a paper, and has done some very important and good work on the whole sexual abuse crises. They accused Pope Francis, basically, of heresy. This is on ETWN, which goes all over the world. Thanks to the Catholic bishops in the United States, the conference, we do not have any other outlet. We don't have any Catholic broadcasting network. That was killed. Mother Angelica took over that field. The bishops were very timid. Mother Angelica rushed in, and has built this vast empire, with the support of many groups within the Catholic Church, so called Catholic groups, including the top brass of the Knights of Columbus. I mean, these are guys who do fish fries, and help kids get scholarships in schools. They do good work, but their top brass does a lot of other stuff, and is in cahoots with a lot of right wing political groups. So, I use the letters as a way to open up the first issue we want to talk about today is schism.**

**Has Pope Francis sparked a schism in the Catholic Church? Well, first of all, he can't hardly be a schismatic, because he's the center of unity. I mean, yes, popes can err, but it would seem that the burden of proof is on those who are criticizing the pope. He said in his comments on the plane, and unfortunately, the English translations of the comments I've seen so far are not very good. I don't have at hand the Italian, but I would just summarize in saying that one of the things the pope said was, he doesn't like people criticizing him behind his back. He will take criticism if it is honest criticism, and if it leads to a dialogue.**



But people who criticize him, like for example the four cardinals, he didn't cite them specifically, but you know the four cardinals, the dubia (doubtful) cardinals, who challenged the pope to answer a series of questions, yes or no: "Is the Church teaching change on this?"

This came after the publication of *Amoris Laetitia* on Marriage and the Family following the two synod assemblies, where the pope opens up a way, which is classic Catholic theology and morality, a way of bringing people on a case by case situation to discern whether they can find a way back to the sacraments. Divorced and remarried Catholics. Benedict XVI talked about this as well, and so did John Paul II, although Pope Francis has refused to use a blanket response to every situation. The criteria have to be applied in each situation according to the conscience of the individuals and discernment. The four cardinals who challenged the pope were like the Pharisees in the Gospel, "Tell us who committed the sin. Ok, we found this woman in the very act of adultery; how did you do that?" I never heard it asked, "How did you find her in the very act of adultery. What were you doing? How were you there?" He bends down and draws a line in the sand, doodles a bit and who's the first to cast the first stone. Who is without sin cast the first stone? And they all walk away. This is exactly what the four cardinal dubias have done. At least, that is the way the pope has perceived it.

They didn't ask for a dialogue; just, "Yes or no." I tried to explain this to you he says; he didn't say this, but it's clear he has been trying to say this all through the pontificate. There are lots of gray areas, things are not black and white. Pope Francis is not dualistic, and this is hard. We are a Church that believes in the Resurrection. How do you do that? In dualism you cannot have death and resurrection. It doesn't work. Pope Francis is trying to stretch our understanding, but these people are hard headed and hard hearted. They are rigid; that is what he calls them. And so, on the plane he says. "I have no problem. Sometimes I get angry when people criticize me; but it makes me look at me. Did I do something wrong? Let me see. And then, if they are willing to have a dialogue, fine.

**But what I don't like, and it even happens in the Roman Curia, even the Vatican, people say, 'Oh yes, yes, yes,' and they smile; and they show their bright white teeth; and then, they stab you in the back. That I don't like. And I don't like those people who criticize, but don't want to have a real dialogue.”**

**“And the problem,” he says, “with much of this is rigidity. The septic morality which they place over the morality of the people of God; and that's not the morality of the Gospel. Shepherds have to lead their people through sin and grace. This is a delicate path. It's not just either or; it's just not black and white.” And he also said, “People criticize me, because they say, ‘Oh well, his teaching,’” One of the things they don't like about him is his teaching on social justice. And he says, “I am just repeating what John Paul II says. I copy him, and they say, ‘Ah, but this pope's a communist.”” And he says, “It is not just this pope that they have a problem with, it's the Second Vatican Council that they have a problem with.” And he's getting to the heart of it, I think, right there, that the people who are contesting Pope Francis really are contesting the Council, and what's happened with the Church after the Second Vatican Council. What they really like about John Paul II is that he came in and put everything back together again. He put order back in this crazy Church. Pope Francis has just picked up where the Council left off. He's allowed for dialogue again. He's allowed for us to talk about issues again.**

**And Benedict XVI came in and rolled the clock back even further; and now, we have people celebrating the pre-Vatican II liturgy, which makes no sense, because it doesn't express the ecclesiology of the Council. It expresses a whole different way of being Church. You can't have both. It's like changing the speed limit. “Well, it used to be 100 miles an hour on route 12.” “Not anymore.” “Yah, well, I'm going to use the old extraordinary speed limit and you use the ordinary speed limit.” That's insanity. You can't do that. It was changed! It was reformed! So, I think Pope Francis is on to something that the real contention that his critics have, not with him, not with this pope or that, it's with the Council. So, we'll see how that works out, because this is gonna—watch in the next few days; you're gonna hear a lot.**

And if you watch ETWN, they are going to be coming after the pope pretty hard and heavy on this one, on what he said on the plane. So that's the part of the schism.



Now, at any time, if you have questions, please raise your hand. We can have a conversation about his. I don't need to be the only one talking. We will have questions at the end.

**First Question** (from Fr. Charles Morris): You have spoken of the opposition to the Pope's agenda and to the Amazon Synod from the right. However, isn't it more complex than that? When you are talking about the conservative opposition, they are not all the same. As bad as the Ray Burke/EWTN faction is, there are folk to the right of them bordering on schismatic, such as Lifesite and Church Militant. And, as reported in yesterday's news, you also have folk on the progressive side, such as some of the German Synod of bishops, who are calling for direct election of bishops, I believe. Comment?"

**Answer:** Francis believes in dialogue, as I said, not only in society, but also within the Church. That's synodality; and he's explained it in terms of this is, not just democracy, where we take a nose count, or a hand count, and we say, "We will do it that way." It's a discernment together, a prayerful discernment. And he said, "We believe that the Holy Spirit is present when we gather; and we need to be prayerfully attuned to the Spirit; but we need to talk. What's amazing about Francis, I think, what I find really quite laudable, is his ability to find some way through the weeds. "Let's talk; let's figure out an option." And again, I think that has to do with the fact that he is not dualistic. He's willing to find a way to find a way to make a synthesis; and sometimes it takes time. That's one of the reasons why he believes in initiating processes. You don't make a decision right away. You initiate something that will unfold over time. Some of his reforms, I think most of his reforms, people have been very impatient. We've been impatient about the Roman Curia: we're six one half years and it's not been reformed yet. What's he been up to?

**You know, he called this C9, the Cardinals Nine, the cardinal advisors. It's a new kind of kitchen cabinet idea that he initiated just a few weeks after he was elected pope; and these are cardinals from places all over the world. There are nine cardinals - they are now down to about 6; he now has to replace some. One's in jail in Australia. That's another problem; but he has used this group to map out how to reform the Roman Curia; and everyone says, "Why does it take so long?" Then, the draft document was done back in March last year; and they were sending it out to bishops conferences to see what they thought about it, and some religious orders, and some professors; and they were going to give back some response; and at one point, one of the cardinals on the C9 said, "Yeh, it would be ready by June 29." Well, hell! they didn't even get the responses back by then. And we don't know, maybe by the end of the year. I've got a copy of that document. Some one of the bishops gave it to me; it's just a draft. But he has taken the approach that things that are done hastily are sometimes, or maybe often, are done badly; and so, we need to set down a foundation. The main thing is he wants to initiate a process, or bring about reforms, that are irreversible. That is the goal; and that will take time. So, we need to be patient; and I think the pope is patient on these things. So, with the German bishops, yeah, some of them are running a bit ahead and some are running behind.**



**Remember, the pope's image of the pastor, or the priest and the bishop having the smell of the sheep. He says, "The bishop most of the time, the pastor, the shepherd is walking ahead of the flock, leading the flock; but even more often, he's in the midst of the flock."**

Sometimes it's important to follow the flock, because the sheep know where the green pastures and where the water is more than the shepherd.” And that takes humility for a bishop, a pope, to say that.

So, I think what he's doing, he's waiting to see how this discernment plays out. I think the key to this is what happens at the synod assembly that takes place on the Amazon. They've got to deal with a number of issues. First of all, one of the major lungs of our earth is being threatened; and that threatens all of us, because people who know about science tell us, you change an ecosystem in that part of the world, it has a ripple effect all throughout the world. And there are pastoral concerns, not just the environmental concerns, but the pastoral concerns; and that means: how do we administer to our people? And ministry means: who does the ministry? We don't have enough priests, the question of having married priests, and maybe, greater roles for women. So, it's a process, it's unfolding, and I don't think the pope is afraid. As a matter of fact, apropos to the comments on the plane on schism, he says that, “We've always had schisms in the Church, I'm not afraid of schisms.” So, it will be interesting to see how that goes.

**Second question:** (Fr. John Romano) Is the pope stacking the deck in the selection of new cardinals?

**Answer:** Did you read my article? I just wrote an article last Friday. It's exactly what I said, “Pope's critics seeing red after the announcement of the consistory. They're accusing us of stacking the deck.” And my response to that is, that if you look at where those cardinals came from, who appointed them, who made them bishops in the first place, who appointed them to their Vatican positions as either consultants or officials, all, but one, has been promoted by either John Paul II and/or Benedict XVI. The only one that actually became a bishop or an official, because of Francis, is the guy in Morocco who is a Silesian; he named him as the archbishop of Rabat in Morocco two years ago. But again, it's a good question and as I look through, I was going to do an article this week on, not only the new cardinals, but also the Roman Curia. Most of the people in the Roman Curia are people that he inherited.

He's made very few changes; and the changes that he's made, he's taken people, almost every single one of them, who were already bishops or officials named by one of his predecessors. So, to say that he's stacking the deck is a bit rich; and I point this out to some of my friends at First things, or the Catholic Herald, or the Catholic Register, and these other places where they are critical of the pope. They don't really have an answer.

The classic, probably, one of the stronger criticisms recently is the Pope's reform or renewal of the *John Paul II Institute on Marriage and the Family*. And, there, he is being accused again of bringing in people who are against John Paul II and his teaching. Well, the person who is in charge of the John Paul II Institute, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, was named bishop by John Paul II, and was appointed the president of the Pontifical Council for the Family by Benedict XVI. So, if they are for Francis now, they certainly were men already respected by John Paul and Benedict. I think what is interesting about the College of Cardinals is that, right now, as it currently stands, there are 118 electors. After October 5th there will be 128, as you said, 10 more. That will put Francis' cardinals in a slight majority, okay? Right now, as it is, of the 118, so, if there were a conclave tomorrow, or any day before the 5th of October it's the people who have the red hat now who vote. Those guys are not cardinals until the ceremony ends on October 5th, the day before the Synod Assembly and the Amazon begins, by the way. Right now, this is the way it is. Of the 118 electors now, 19 by John Paul, that's 16%. 42 of the electors, current electors, were created by Benedict, that's 35.5%. And 57 of the current 118, 57 cardinal electors were created by Francis, that's 48%. So, almost half.



After the 5th of October, those numbers shift. Francis has 10 more cardinals; and he has a 52% majority. These are cardinals appointed by him among the electors. What does this mean?



It could mean a lot of things, because one of the guys that he made a cardinal is Gerhard Mueller. Now you wouldn't call him a Francis bishop, or a supporter of Pope Francis; quite the contrary. On the other side you've got people like Christoph Schönborn in Vienna or Oscar

Rodríguez Maradiaga in Honduras. These two were created cardinals by John Paul II. They are very much Francis bishops. You have the guy that you mentioned in Germany, Cardinal Reinhard Marx, or you made reference to Germany. Marx is the president of the conference, and a great ally of Pope Francis. He was created a cardinal by Benedict XVI. So, it's hard to know.

There may be some in the group of these 67 cardinals that Francis has created; one we know is Cardinal Mueller, the former head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, that will not be supportive of Francis too. But the more cardinals he makes, and he seems to be selecting people who have his vision, rather than picking people from say a diocese that normally has a cardinal, like Philadelphia or Los Angeles; these guys don't have the red hat. He is choosing the people rather than the places. He is going to make a Jesuit, who's not even a bishop, though will still be an elector; he's going to make him a cardinal. Michael Czerny, who is a Canadian, born of a Czech family, immigrated to Canada when he was a little kid. Michael Czerny is now the under secretary; it's like third down in the Dicastery for Human Development; that's the former justice and peace, migrants, itinerants etc. Michael is in charge of the migrant section of that. He's going to become a cardinal. That was the biggest surprise to me. I didn't see that one coming. I didn't see the announcement coming at all. That was a big surprise. But Michael Czerny was a real surprise, because this has not happened in a long time.

People say, "Well, will he become a bishop, because, you know, Avery Dulles? He didn't become a bishop; he was a Jesuit." Well, most of the over 80s don't become bishops, actually, if they are not.

**They're theologians. John Paul II started the practice of naming theologians from Vatican II, who were at the Council. He would name of few of those, and maybe another over 80, as well, to become cardinals, to recognize their service to the Church. Most of those who were not already bishops, because John XXIII made a law that, if you were not already a bishop, you were to become a bishop before becoming a cardinal. But laws in the Church can always be derogated from, and so hardly anybody became a bishop of those over 80. Michael Czerny's different, because he is an elector; but he's not the first one to become a cardinal, who is of the electorate age, who is not a bishop.**

**Just quickly, Paul VI created a Dominican, Luigi Ciappi, he was an official in the Roman Curia, made him a cardinal in 1977. That was the same year Joseph Ratzinger was made a cardinal. And I'll add one more, it was quite normal not to be a bishop.**

**You remember the name Cardinal Ottaviani was made a cardinal by Pius XII. I believe he was a secretary of the Holy Office, because the pope was always the president. Ottaviani was a cardinal for 11 years before he became a bishop—11 years. We have to look at history. Again, I think this is a problem in our environment right now. We don't have an historical memory; and we also don't have any patience. We want everything done yesterday. So, your question about the cardinals is a good one, and I would say, “Yes, he is choosing people who share his vision of the Church; and yes, I think that is important.” It's not important that Los Angeles has a cardinal. Maybe the guy in San Diego will become the cardinal, the next one, or maybe a guy in Santa Fe, or somewhere else, but I think it is important, I think the pope understands that the only and the most important thing the cardinal does, is choose the successor, to choose the bishop of Rome. Yes, in a kind of way he is kind of stacking the deck.**





**Third Question: (Fr, David Buersmeyer) One area that strikes me with the pope: his understanding of gender ideology. Why is the pope so adamantly against gender ideology? Could you give us a few words on his thinking on gender ideology?**

**Answer:** Well that's a good question. Thanks for asking it, because it gives me the opportunity to say that not everything that the pope does is infallible; and we all disagree. And why him? Well, he's 82. Well, he is a Latin American priest; and I think that has a lot to do with it. It also has a lot to do with the way he deals with women. Now I don't think he's a misogynist, but he is a creature of his culture. I loved my grandfather, but he couldn't understand how I could be gay, for example. Now do I love him less? Do I say, "You are an idiot?" No! It's just, "Yah pop, I get it. It's hard for you to understand this. It was hard for me to understand it too, believe me." But it has to do a lot with his upbringing. He's a Latin American priest; and I think that the jokes he makes about women are getting really old. You know, they are the strawberry on top of the cake, or whatever; or the jokes about mothers-in-law jokes, all the time. Okay? Some people actually like their mother-in-law, you know. He wouldn't know; he's not married. So, I think that is part of it.

I also think there is a lot of confusion about gender— gender theory. What exactly is gender theory? And I think the way it has been presented to the pope is that anybody can just pick or choose whatever he or she wants to be; and that's not exactly the way I understand gender studies and the whole complicated ... I mean, look the pope is very good because he meets a lot of people. I don't understand why he is so adamant on this issue, because, as you know, he has met transgender people, and he knows transgender people. But, I think, part of it is that in his mind intellectually he thinks ... I think, that he believes gender theory perhaps it really isn't; that he's been told gender theory is that kids can choose what they want to be rather than try to figure out who they really are. I think that's what it is. Maybe I am wrong.



**We can go forward here then: the College of Cardinals. I want to go back to that, because we now have a situation where about 43% of the college - only 43% now is Europe. The number, continentally, shifted only slightly. As a matter of fact, there will be five more Europeans among the electors after October 5th. So, you say, “Well, I thought he was trying to decentralize it. I thought he was trying to take away Europe.” On the other hand, now 22 of those are Italians, he named another Italian, but one will age out by October 5th, so they stay at 22. Well, North America goes from 12 to 13 but electors from the United States remain at 9. The last cardinals from the United States were Joe Tobin, Blase Cupich and Kevin Ferrell, who actually was born in Ireland, naturalized citizen, he was bishop of Dallas, and he's a Vatican official now. Here are our electors.**

**What a line up! Donald Wuerl: he's the oldest; but he is going to age out; he's going to turn 80 on November 12, 2020, so a little more than a year from now. And if you want to ask why didn't our friend in Washington, the former president of the conference, Wilton Gregory, why he didn't become a cardinal? That's why. Because the normal rule, although it has been broken, or it has not always been kept, is that you don't have two electors in the same diocese. If Wilton Gregory were to become a Cardinal, Washington would have two votes, if there were a conclave before Wilton turned 80. Cardinal O'Malley is the next one; it is four years away, 2024. Cardinal Burke was born in 1948; so, he's got a few more years left folks for a vote. Cardinal Blase Cupich, Dan Dinaerdo, president of the conference (USCCB), who has shown himself, at best, lukewarm towards Francis. James Harvey, anybody know James Harvey? He was a Vatican official, a friend of Cardinal Burke, from Milwaukee originally. Worked in the Vatican forever, he doesn't turn 80 till 2029 or something. Then there's Tim Dolan, our friend in New York. He'll turn 80 in 2030. Not very exciting to hear this news, I know.**



Now the youngest of the 9 cardinals electors is Joe Tobin in Newark, Redemptorist from Detroit here; and I understand he is going to be talking to the priests of Detroit next month, I guess. Lucky you! I don't know how that happened, but I very much applaud the archdiocese for inviting him. Joe Tobin doesn't turn 80 until 2032; so, he is the youngest of the U.S. cardinals. And those are the 9 electors.

The numbers of cardinals in Latin America have gone up consistently within this pontificate. There will be 23 electors and compared to the 13 in North America; Africa 17; Asia 16; and Oceania 4. So, it's interesting to see how the college is shifting slowly, but surely toward the global south; and, like I said, it is one of the most important things that a pope can do is to name cardinals; and the most important job of the cardinal, the only reason really for which a cardinal exists, except for wearing the distinctive garb, is to elect the bishop of Rome.

Now what shall we talk about in the last couple of minutes here? The reform of the Curia, the Synod, or sex abuse? Is there any consensus here about Synod ... Curia ... sex abuse? Oh, looks like a draw. I will split this up really quickly; and then you can ask any questions too. I just want to go quickly over this, because I think this is really important.

The Reform of the Roman Curia. There is a draft document called *Praedicate Evangelium*; and it was put together by this council of cardinals in consultation with the Vatican offices. The principles, the prolog of this document, is very interesting, because it looks at the Curia, and makes a major philosophical change of what the Roman Curia exists for, not just for the pope, but for all the bishops. What has happened over its 500 years of existence, or so, is that the Roman Curia has become the intermediary between the local bishops and the bishop of Rome, the pope. And often the people, the officials in the Roman Curia especially, if they were cardinals, would speak almost as if they had the authority themselves.

And how many bishops would go to Rome to be put in their place by a Curia cardinal or archbishop? James Malone from Youngstown, Ohio, like Bishop Tim Hoffman who was my bishop in Toledo, who likes to tell this story on his first *ad lumina* visit. The bishops from Ohio went over; and they were at a meeting at the Congregation for Divine Worship; and the cardinal was not there. They showed up, and one of the officials said, "No, you have to wait." And Malone says, "How long do we have to wait?" "Well, we don't know, because the cardinal's not here." And Malone said, "That's fine. We'll go back to our hotel and you just call us when he's ready." And the official didn't know what to do. And Hoffman said, "Are you going to do that?" And he said, "Look! They work for us; we don't work for them."

And that's right. That's the theology of the Council, but the power of the official of the Curia has been clawed back. Pope Francis is the first Pope to have been the president of a bishops' conference, so he understands this dynamic, how dealing with the Roman Curia, especially with certain congregations; he's trying to change that with the reform of the Curia.

Now, and I will just wrap this up, people are upset because, as I said before, why has this not been done by now? The draft document is out. It's only a draft; and my colleagues have been reporting on this, as if all they have to do is tie it up in a ribbon and launch the thing. That's not going to happen. I contend the reason the pope took this draft, and then, after the Roman Curia was able to see how he was going to stiff them, I mean, he's not going to implement, it doesn't do it in the document, he wouldn't do it, he couldn't do it, they would not approve it. He's given it to the conferences, to the religious orders, and to university professors, certain faculties in Rome. And what does that mean? What it means to me is the pope will take further suggestions to make the changes that he wants, whether they are suggested by these people or not. But he will have reason to say, "I have been given suggestions." I think that what's going to happen, probably by the end of the year, that document will be presented, maybe in the spring, they will start to implement it; and while there has not been a whole lot of change in the personnel in the Vatican up to now, because he is waiting for this. I suspect somebody, like this Father Michael Czerny, will become a cardinal, will become the prefect of a new congregation, once the reform is done.

On the sex abuse, I could say a lot more; but again, *Evangelii Gaudium* is the blueprint, even for the Roman Curia reform. On the sex abuse, so much has happened since I was last with you two years ago. So much as happened in just one year. The whole thing in Chili, after the papal visit in Chili at the beginning of 2018, the pope having to walk back his support for a bishop, who was shown to have been negligent in reporting sex abuse, and even covering up for the priest, who was his mentor, who was the serial sex abuser. The pope has had to walk that back. He sat taking the resignation of half, or more, of the bishops in Chili.

The problem is, he has not appointed successors; and the appointment is of a piece as well, because this is a problem in the United States. There are so many positions to be filled, there are three or four metropolitan spots that he has not filled; and people are wondering why. There might not be a whole lot of good candidates out there; that is one of the reasons. The pool is very shallow folks! So, we have with the sex abuse, we have the McCarrick case, which again, we just thought in this country we were getting over the hump of this whole thing, now this comes out. The pope moved swiftly on that. McCarrick has been defrocked, as it were. He is no longer a priest. There are still investigations that have to go on. Then, we have the instance of West Virginia, Bishop Bransfield. We have a number of other bishops, one native of this archdiocese, Archbishop John Nienstedt; still, that is an unresolved case. What did the pope do?

Then, we have Vigano letter that comes out in August 2018, as the pope's coming back from Ireland on a plane. The letter accusing the pope of all kinds of things, a cabal, dishonesty etc., covering up for pedophiles, appointing active homosexuals, all this. The pope gets this on the plane. Before the pope even sees this, the bishop in Tyler, Texas, Bishop Strickland, has already sent a letter to all his parishes vouching for the credibility of the nuncio, and saying that they must read this at all their Masses. What's going on here? Where is the cabal?

Then, we have the abuse summit this past February. And out of the abuse summit, in Rome, which had never happened before, we now have at least, it is on the radar that again the pope is beginning processes. He's come late to this game folks—don't kid yourself—he's a Latin American bishop. They have not been good on this. He has finally understood, I think, that this is a global problem. Brought all the presidents of all the conferences around the world to the Vatican; and now they are mandated to set up protocols, set up commissions, set up structures, to monitor and to face this problem; because, even if it's not a problem right now, at least publicly, we know, we know, we know it's happening everywhere.

And finally, because of this one of the results of this summit, was the publication in May of the *Vos Estis Lux Mundi*, You Are the Light of the World; and that is a protocol for judging bishops or trying bishops, investigating bishops who have been negligent in their duties. We have a case in Buffalo, New York; and we will be watching in the next couple of days if Tim Dolan begins, because the metropolitan archbishop is the one that begins the investigation. There have been more and more things that have come out in the press about Bishop Malone in Buffalo that seem to warrant such an investigation; and if Dolan doesn't instigate it, it is likely that the Holy Sea will ask him to do so. So, things are moving. In the last two years things have been moving very fast on some levels, and on other levels they seem to be still at this glacier speed. The Reform of the Curia.

But I believe unfortunately, I will end on a prediction that might not be the most hopeful; but, remember: things are in God's hands. Pope Francis has never returned to Argentina. He's never gone back. He's been bishop of Rome for 6 1/2 years. He's never gone home; and people are wondering why. Now, he is saying that maybe he will go back in 2020. I believe that when he goes back to Argentina, he is going to stay in Argentina; but he is not going to do that until he knows that he has done all that he can do. He has to do the reform of the Roman Curia; that has to be done! He has to issue, and maybe they are already written up, but they are not being talked about.

He has to issue a reform, or an update, of the procedures of the election of the Roman Pontiff. Part of that will be protocols for the resignation of a Roman Pontiff; because the way this has been done up to now—we didn't even talk about that Elephant in the room, the one who used to wear the red shoes—that has been a big problem: the existence of a retired pope, who continues to draw people and post things; they post things on Instagram and Twitter, pictures with the former pope. Or now, when you have the now deposed, thank God, Interior Minister of the Italian government wearing a shirt saying, “Benedict is my pope,” the Steve Bannon crowd, that crowd. This is a problem; and so there needs to be very clear protocols about the resignation of the Roman Pontiff. What he shall be called? Where he shall live? How he shall be dressed? How he shall address the public? Because, right now, what we are seeing is, the people who are close to Benedict, who don't like Francis are using the former pope to sow division.

So, he's got to get the Curia reformed. He's got to get the election reformed. What to do with the retired pope. And perhaps, he will raise the number of electors, and maybe we will see that. Maybe, before he decides to retire, he will say, “I want to raise the number,” I say, “153, because in the Gospel, when they throw their net, they don't catch anything. Jesus says, ‘Throw your net on the other side,’ and they bring in 153 big fish.” And the cardinals are the big fish in the Church, right? (laughter) So, he could do that; and then, he'll staff the college; and then, he retires. But, I really believe, when you hear that, “He is going to Argentina,” start praying; because, I believe, in my heart of my hearts, that he will not come back. Okay, I am going to stop there. (applause)

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