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Public opinion in the Church. A communicative and ecclesiological reflection

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ABSTRACT

The first part of this paper presents the Church before the court of public opinion through a synthesis of the findings of research about media coverage of the Catholic Church in the last 20 years. Public opinion exists *within* the Church, although it is not called this because the Church is not a political or a democratic community. However, since it is a communion, it necessarily requires communication. All communication brings with it debate, which in the case of the Church is a kind of singular ‘public opinion.’ This is manifested in diverse ways depending on the issue concerned. In this study, I have chosen a threefold division of public opinion within the Church for analytical purposes, for in reality the different aspects occur together. First, when the matter is concerned with the *demands of the faith*, ‘public opinion’ is called *sensus fidelium* and behaves – or should behave – as one would expect in regards to dogma or doctrine and its demands for communion in the faith. Second, when it is concerned with questions of the government, which affect the good of the communion, the hierarchical principal rules – or should rule –, that is to say *the demands of communion*. Third, when public opinion is concerned with contingent questions, we are – or we ought to be – in the area of free debate and opinion, in the area of disagreement, which supposes and requires both freedom and plurality. Developing this central idea is the objective of the second and third part of the article, after having presented synthetically the teachings about the subject of the Catholic Church and of the popes from Pius XII to John Paul II, and especially of pope Francis. In the third part, these ideas are applied to the cases of the sex abuse scandal, which are in the course of being resolved since the measures of Benedict XIV. The underlying thesis is that the problem was a practical ecclesiological error, not merely an error in communication. The study concludes with five recommendations for those in charge of ecclesiastical communication.

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Introduction

I will begin this study of public opinion in the Church by remembering an anecdote that is tied to the origins of the Department of Communication of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.¹ One of the developers of the department, who followed its evolution very closely with his prudent advice, a person with broad experience in communication in ecclesiastical institutions, counselled those who made up the initial faculty more or less in these terms: 'You should just teach the profession of public relations, and pass on a love for all the professions of communication, specifically of journalistic communication, but do not become entangled with Church affairs nor specific Church communications issues. The students, who already know what the Church is, and the majority of whom have the theological formation of a priest, will know how to synthesize these two worlds.'

The advice of our colleague was not only cautious; it was also very prudent. It was what had to be done at that time. But his warning involved certain assumptions that time and events have, in some cases, proven and, in others, disproven. It took for granted that our students had or have a deep knowledge of theology – it is not my task to judge this assertion – that they love the Church – I can attest to that – and, last of all, that they would know how to unite the 'the two worlds,' the professional and the ecclesiastical, on their own. This last has proven to be an unfounded assumption.

The events experienced in Rome since the department began, which have seen its teachers and students involved as 'actors' dealing with hundreds of journalists, have required us to descend from our academic Olympus, that is to say, to take action and simultaneously to reflect on communication in the Church. Some of these events have been extraordinary for many reasons: the illness and death of John Paul II, the following election of Cardinal Ratzinger, the crisis over the abuse of minors, the renunciation of Pope Benedict XVI, the following election of Pope Francis,² the beatification of John Paul II, etc. Others have been less extraordinary, such as the World Youth Days and or the World Meeting of Families; not to mention numerous courses, professional consultations and conferences with bishops, priests and ecclesiastical communication officials that we have had to give during these years.

Besides, in spite of the opinion of my colleague, how could a department of communication of the Catholic Church grow academically if it does not concern itself with researching and teaching communication *of* and *in* the Catholic Church?

When I began this stage of my academic life teaching the discipline of Public Opinion, I was not unaware that internal discussions and indoor Church affairs are inexorably linked to the shaping of public opinion regarding the Church. I was aware that it would be difficult to give an adequate explanation of public opinion about the Church unless public opinion in the Church was also known and explained. Naturally I was not able to do it at that time. It would have been rash. I lacked the empirical knowledge of the reality of the ecclesiastical institution and I lacked theological tools. Also, we had very little knowledge of how public opinion behaved with respect to the Church; that is to say, we had few rigorous studies about its functioning, beyond more or less certain impressions or intuitions, some shared common knowledge and well-founded prejudices about the hostility of most mainstream mass media toward

the Catholic Church. Now, we do know something about this. But, before unfolding this acquired knowledge, I bring forward an outline of the whole content of the article.

I will first define the central idea: public opinion within the Church does exist, but it is not called this, which is not strange if one takes into account that the term is a recent one even in political society.³ Public opinion is manifested or expressed in the Church in diverse ways depending on the issue with which it is concerned: when it has to do with doctrine, and therefore with the *demands of the faith*, it behaves – or should behave – as one would expect with regards to dogma; when it concerns questions of government that affect the good of the communion, the hierarchical principal rules – or should rule – that is to say the *demands of the communion*; and, lastly, when it is about contingent questions we are – or should be – in the fields of debate, of free opinion and of dispute, which involve the *requirements of liberty and of plurality*. Developing this central idea will be the object of the second and third parts of my article. This three part division is made for analytical purposes; in reality the three things always go together.

In the first part, I will concern myself with documenting what we know about how the Church is judged by the court of public opinion through a number of studies conducted by the Communication Department of the Holy Cross University.

What we know about public opinion *about* the Catholic Church

Naturally, those in my department are neither the first nor the only ones studying public opinion and the Church (Piquer 1965; Morero 1965; Zizola 1996; Marazziti 1990; Zancchi 2006, 89–107). Supported by the findings of the *spiral of silence* theory (Noelle-Neumann 1993),⁴ it has to be stated that public opinion and published opinion, although both are closely related and mutually influenced, are not one and the same thing, which is also the case with the Catholic Church (González Gaitano 2001; González Gaitano 2010, 9–47).

The following summary responds to the findings of the course of investigation over the news coverage of the Catholic Church, mostly in the international press, conducted with a well-proven qualitative–quantitative method, which has become more refined with successive studies. That is to say, they are results which are born of the analysis of journalistic discourse about the Catholic Church or about ecclesiastical events, either at the international or the local level, in the tradition inaugurated by the linguistics of discourse (van Dijk 1998) and perfected by rhetorical and pragmatic analysis of discourse (Vilarnovo Caamaño 1992, 1994; Tapia Velasco 2014, 151–262). For the sake of brevity, I will refer only to three of the most significant studies in this line of work.

1) *The Church in the international press*

The ground-breaking study of this line of investigation was done by Contreras Luzón (2004) in his exhaustive research into more than 3000 news items, one by one, in 10 newspapers of international distribution.⁵ Contreras' work has paved the way for further work in this vein in other countries. Offering an enjoyable and significant

synthesis of the results of the minute analysis was an enormous task for its author. For my part, I offer here a synthesis of the synthesis:

- a) In secularized societies the subject of religious information, with the honorable exception of Italy, lacks prestige in writing, when it is not simply shamefully avoided. Contreras' research, among other things, demonstrates the inconsistency of this persistent stereotype: 54% of the texts that are published about religion neither appear in the religion section, if there is one; nor in the more neutral section of 'society.' When the study began, the 2001 attacks of 9/11 had not yet occurred. This brutal attack and those that followed have meant, among their collateral effects, the traumatic rediscovery of religion in secularized society. Today, we run the risk that religion may be represented in the media in a simplified and exploitative way; that is to say, the same risk, in a different form but with the same cause, that of ignorance.
- b) The Catholic Church, compared to other religions, is a simple and easy journalistic topic, relatively speaking, of course. In spite of the fact that it represents more than a billion faithful, and is present in very diverse cultures and political contexts, with extremely complex historical traditions, the Catholic Church has unity of doctrine – also unity of morality, at least recognizably – a central authority and institutional organizations that speak in its name and are recognizable before public opinion. This converts it *ipso facto* into the religious subject with the greatest number of mentions in the press. To this, we can add other factors such as the undeniable moral prestige of some of its outstanding faithful – Mother Theresa of Calcutta, to cite someone known to most people in the world – the service that many Catholic institutions provide to the needy – for example the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and its service to the poor; its historical continuity of 2000 years as an institution, not a bad record compared with others that appeared as strong as the Roman Empire or Kodak⁶ – its leaders who, from Pius XI and Pius XII, through John XXIII and John Paul II, to Pope Francis, are figures of unprecedented socially recognized moral authority, regardless of whether or not their theological identity (Vicar of Christ on earth) is accepted; and finally, the notable influence of certain historical or current institutions within the cultural elite, accompanied by the parallel resentment of antagonistic elites, as seen in the famous legend of the 'High Inquisitor' of Dostoyevsky regarding the Jesuits or in The da Vinci Code regarding Opus Dei, notwithstanding the enormous differences between the literary status of Dostoyevsky and Dan Brown. In short, all motives for being a fascinating journalistic subject.

Contreras' work offers the empirical keys to this informative interest. One must add that the work is not free of irony. When Monsignor Foley, president of the now extinct Pontifical Council for Social Communications, accompanied the President of the Bishops of the United States in his first annual visit to the New York Times, the then director of the newspaper openly showed Foley his surprise: 'Why is it that the Vatican has decided to visit us?' Foley, never short of good humor, retorted: 'We ought to maintain fluid relations between infallible institutions.' That an institution should pretend to be unerring in faith and morals is asking too much, and not only

for those who pretend to have it in matters of opinion. Decidedly, the Catholic Church is an inevitable journalistic subject.

- c) Many conclusions can be drawn from Contreras' work. The most relevant in my opinion, at the risk of sounding simple, is that, in writing about the Catholic Church – as in any other subject – being honest and being a good professional are one and the same thing. This assertion can be demonstrated in three ways: (1) One does not need to have faith in order to inform about the Church well, just as, undoubtedly, one need not be a Muslim in order to write objective news about Islam. (2) There are no conspiracies, except in some obvious cases, other than laziness in documentation, inertia in failing to go beyond the stereotypes of the group and of cultural history, the ease of taking refuge in interpretive frameworks fabricated by others, etc. No wonder, then, that unfair attacks on the Catholic Church for ideological motives are often disguised under the umbrella of presumed 'professional' reasons. (3) At the same time, it should be obvious that faith does not offer shortcuts to the professional in his work, although it may help him orient himself more adequately. At times, people who have faith do a poorer job of informing and even do more damage to the Church than those who do not have it.

2) The Great Jubilee

The analysis of Szcepaniak (2004), about the news coverage of the Jubilee of the year 2000 proves that the spiritual dimensions of the diverse jubilee events had less presence than their political dimensions. Thus, for example, the only canonization of the Jubilee passed unnoticed, that of Sister Faustina Kowalska, the saint of the Divine Mercy (Szcepaniak 2004, 45).

Obviously, the disproportion in news interest depends on cultural factors, on the nationality of the newspapers and also on ideological and political motives. It is not irrelevant that 66% of the volume of attention given by the Washington Post (53% in the case of the New York Times) to the jubilee had to do with the visit of John Paul II to the Holy Land, while the average volume to this event in the rest of the newspapers, significant as well, was 29% (47 and ff.)

World Youth Day had an average of 21% of media attention. For the Washington Post the event that brought together two million young people in Rome, in practice did not exist: it dedicated 50 times less attention to it than to the visit to the Holy Land.

In any case, nothing new about the structural distortion of the media, already well demonstrated in coverage of science (Nelkin 1995), in coverage of social policies (Franklin 1999) and in news about conflicts, whether armed or not (González Gaitano 2004; Wyatt 2012; Gil 2013). This structural distortion is also verified in coverage of religion.

3) The last unexpected catechesis of John Paul II

Television and radio broadcasters, newspapers and news magazines had been preparing for years to tell about the death of the pope who had guided the Church into the

doorstep of the third millennium, the first Polish pope in history, the pope who decisively contributed to the fall of the Berlin Wall, the pope who had travelled more than any other in the 2000-year history of the Church. The second-longest pontificate, in a word, the pope of records, including the velocity of his process of canonization.

His death brought together three million pilgrims to Rome, spontaneously, although certainly alerted by the media. It was surely the most closely followed planetary 'media event' after the September 11 attack on the United States of America. To get an idea of the media coverage raised, the Italian press alone wrote more in the few days of the illness and death of John Paul II than in the entire year of the Great Jubilee of 2000, a record year for religious events and for media coverage about the Church. The phenomenon deserved a serious and rigorous study. Tridente (2009) undertook it based on 1850 news texts from 14 Italian papers. I myself did a first trial of the analysis in the international press (González Gaitano 2007).⁷ To these studies I would like to add my personal experience:

The media story went from the 'health of the Pope of the twentieth century' to 'the meaning of suffering and the death of John Paul II, a man.' They ended up telling the 'gospel of suffering' of Karol Wojtyła; that is, John Paul II, the man. Unwillingly and willingly, they changed the angle or the narrative, what we technically call the *frame*.

To change or to cause the frame with which the media treats a subject to change may seem to be a difficult, almost an impossible task. The change sometimes happens spontaneously, sometimes in a programmed fashion with manipulative ends. In any case, it always requires knowledge of the system of information, of its strong points and weak points.

In the case of the terminal illness and death of John Paul II the frame or narrative changed spontaneously (González Gaitano 2007, 237–259; Tridente 2009, 159–265).

The sequence of events can be summarized this way: the news stories that told about the evolution of the illness, more or less accurately and with a profusion of medical details, illustrated with corresponding computer graphics in the case of print media and with the background of the Gemelli hospital in the case of television; the striking Angelus on Easter Sunday in which the Pope was unable to speak; the images of the ailing pope in his chapel as he followed the Stations of the Cross on television, embracing a crucifix; later the multitude that, 'Silent and moved, identifies with the Stations of the Cross of the Pope, absent for the first time, with prayer and silence' (Le Monde 2005); then the prayer vigil in St. Peter's square, full of testimonials, especially from young people who accompanied the Pope with prayers and songs; after his death, the stupor of the arrival of the pilgrims, a veritable flood of faithful who wanted to give homage to the body of John Paul II, with lines that had an up to 14-hour wait, and which the reporters describe in terms that make one literally see what the readers had surely seen already live on television (International Herald Tribune 2005); and finally the irresistible fascination for the liturgy of the funeral of such a pope in such a place as noted by Fisher.

In short, the informative paradigm about the 'state of health of the pope of the twentieth century' to the frame 'the meaning of the suffering and death of John Paul II, the man.'

How could it happen that the focus should change so quickly and in such a 'painless' and imperceptible way? And, it is not that there was a lack of ideological

resistance to decline to cover the event for ideological reasons.⁸ There are, in my opinion, two answers:

In the current post-modern Western society, where the ‘new poor are the dying and the handicapped elderly, invisible in the public life, the media demonstrated the value of human life until the last moment. The factors that made the natural change of frame possible were the pilgrims and the images of common people united in common prayer. So many small, genuine gestures that flowered into the uncontrollable vertigo of images, direct and persistent; gestures understood by the people – which is not the same as the ‘audience’ – as if transmitted by wireless communication. The same mysterious communication established by John Paul II with his people during his entire pontificate. The event overflowed the boundaries of the system of packaging of the writers and the field reporters told what everyone could see in the images.

In my opinion, this ‘painless’ change of frame, this unexpected narrative of the media in the face of the event is due to three factors⁹: (1) The decision of John Paul II not to hide his illness from the cameras; a decision that no image consultant would have advised, and surely some in the Vatican criticized at the time. (2) The professional work of the preparation of communication in the face of foreseeable events on the part of the Vatican Press Office, and its impeccable execution. (3) The tireless work of those ‘laborers of information’ of the Vatican, of the accredited journalists or special envoys who fairly told what was happening and not what, very often, their editors wanted.

If I had to sum up what the studies cited here, and others that I have not mentioned,¹⁰ have taught us about public opinion and the Church, I would say that public opinion behaves toward the Church in the same way that it does toward any other institution, with the addition of a greater ‘suspense’. A suspense that is not due to the fact that the Church is not a political institution, or that its nature is hierarchical and not democratic. There are many other social institutions, multinational companies or international non-profit agencies that share these characteristics and nevertheless offer less journalistic suspense. Could it be that it is because, in the Church, there is no real public opinion?

Public opinion in the Church

The first pope to use this term was Pope Pius XII:

We would like to add a word about public opinion within the Church itself (naturally, in the subjects left to free discussion). Only those who do not know the Church or who know it badly will find this strange. For the Church, after all, is a living body and would lack something of its life if public opinion were lacking; the fault of which would fall on its pastors and on its faithful (Pius XII, 1950).¹¹

One must not forget that, as Marazziti (1990, 6) points out, ‘Pius XII could be considered the first pontiff of the society of the masses.’ It is true that, up to the pope Pacelli, tangentially, and later Vatican II, in detail, the official teaching of the Catholic Church had not spoken about public opinion in general nor in the Church.¹² Since then, though, it has exhorted its faithful to cultivate a ‘responsible public opinion’ in

the bosom of the Church. Thus, in the document *Ethics in Communications* the principle is expressed that

A two-way flow of information and views between pastors and faithful, freedom of expression sensitive to the well-being of the community and to the role of the Magisterium in fostering it, and responsible public opinion all are important expressions of ‘the fundamental right of dialogue and information within the Church. (n. 26)¹³

Let us see in detail what the Church has said and what theological debate has been like on this subject.

Public opinion in the Magisterium and theology

The ecclesiastical documents that speak, not only tangentially, but with some development of the idea, are *Communio et Progressio* (1971), n. 20 and *Aetatis Novae* (1992), n. 10.

The quoting of these documents, of lower magisterial rank, and their incorporation to a more developed argumentation, can be found at last in the apostolic letter *Rapid Development* of John Paul II (2005), which presupposes the assimilation of these general principals in the Code of Canon Law.¹⁴ John Paul II, after citing these documents and referring as well to number 37 of *Lumen Gentium*, concludes his argumentation in these terms:

‘Communication both within the Church community, and between the Church and the world at large, requires openness and a new approach toward facing questions regarding the world of media. This communication must tend toward a constructive dialogue, so as to promote a correctly informed and discerning public opinion within the Christian community. The Church, like other institutions and groups, has the need and the right to make its activities known. However, when circumstances require, it must be able to guarantee an adequate confidentiality, without thereby prejudicing a timely and sufficient communication about Church events. This is one of the areas in which collaboration between the lay faithful and Pastors is most needed, as the Council appropriately emphasized’ (John Paul II 2005).

The theological debate about public opinion in the Church ends, except for marginal skirmishes (Zanacchi 2006, 99),¹⁵ as a consequence of the moral and disciplinary crisis of faith that followed Vatican II. Today it is a common opinion that there were two councils, “the council of the media” and that which occurred in the council room. This is the opinion shared by historical protagonists such as Joseph Ratzinger (Benedict XVI 2013), Julián Herranz (2007, 53–56) and historical analysts of the part played by the media (La Porte 2011). This duplicity has burdened the correct reception of the teachings of the Council in public opinion and, with it, in a large portion of the Christian people.

In my opinion one cannot do without this historical fact if one is to judge the theological debate – or the absence thereof, depending on how one looks at it – about public opinion in the Church. This has unfolded on two planes, one nominal and the other substantial.

The first, the nominal debate, has continued to use the term ‘public opinion’ and has rapidly died out due to suspicions that the term conveyed (Zanacchi 2006,

89–107)¹⁶ and keeps conveying inasmuch as its historical origin is linked to the democratic system and practical truth, in this case political, that is affirmed and established discursively, in and through debate, and is considered inappropriate for the Church (Vitali 2001). The Church is not a parliament and its truth and identity are not self-founded or self-founding. One of the theologians who took on this question, Baragli, proposed replacing the term for ‘opinion dialogue’ (dialogo opinionale) to avoid confusion. This way of approaching the question, in my view, is greatly loaded by the theological and cultural atmosphere of the immediate post-Conciliar period, marked by the theology of dissent and the dialectical manner in which many read the relation between the authority of the magisterium and the liberty of the faithful. I think that Baragli’s answer is an oblique escape of the problem, besides being based on a limited idea of public opinion, much closer to what I like to call ‘published opinion.’

Without meaning to cut off hastily – and a bit falsely – the debate on this matter, I think that the problem lies in the scanty reflection and practical experience of what debate means in such a singular community as the Church. This reflection would require an idea of public opinion more closely related to the tradition of classical political philosophy, in spite of the fact that it has never used this term.¹⁷ On the other hand, I understand that the adequate documents of the Magisterium for this analysis are not those that deal thematically with communication as it has been done until now, but those that respond to the epistemological and moral challenges that the Enlightenment presented to the Church, such as *Fides et Ratio* and *Veritatis Splendor*, which shed light on the principles that are in the basis of the relation between faith and practical truths, or also other texts such as *Libertatis Conscientiae* and *Christifideles Laici*, that frame the question of liberty and temporal action, political in the highest sense, of Christians.

The second line of reflection about public opinion in the Church, which I consider more substantial, has been produced in the context, undoubtedly richer, of the ecclesiological reflection about the *sensus fidelium* of which the Second Vatican Council speaks in its chapter about the People of God in *Lumen Gentium*, n. 12¹⁸ and in the dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, n. 8.¹⁹

The Document of the International Theological Commission *Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church* (2014) presents a synthesis, already communally accepted in theology (Vitali, 1993; Staglianò, 2004), about the question: its formulation throughout history, from its roots in Scripture, Tradition and medieval and post-Tridentine history until modern times; as well as a development of its nature, tied to the three *munera* of which conciliar ecclesiology and its functions speak. It was surprising for me to discover that the technical theological term *sensus fidelium* is the work of Tridentine theology, which coined the term to respond to the Lutheran challenge of the ‘institutional Church,’ that is to say to argue that the Church, in its living Tradition, is the source of doctrinal authority, rule of the faith, and that Scripture alone is not sufficient. It is the Spanish theologian Melchor Cano who systematically develops this theological doctrine in book IV of his work *De Locis Theologicis*, where he states:

Ecclesiae fides deficere non potest. Ecclesia in credendo errare non potest. Non solum Ecclesia antiqua in fide errare non potuit sed nec Ecclesiam quidem, quae nunc est,

quaeve futura est usque ad consumationem seculi, errare fide non potest aut poterit (Cano; Belda Plans 2000, 722–732).

This doctrine, about the infallibility *in credendo* of the people of God is expressed later through the extraordinary and ordinary Magisterium of the Church. Concretely *Lumen Gentium* takes up the subject, as we have already seen (n. 12).

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of Pope Francis takes up this idea forcefully, although it does not develop it (n. 119). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nn. 91–95) systemizes it in the chapter about Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), explaining how the deposit of the faith has been entrusted to the entire Church.

One must remember, with Vitali and so many others, that this doctrine of *sensus fidelium* has been revived in theology thanks to the impulse of Möhler (1825, 1995), John Henry Newman (1859, 1861) and Yves Congar (1953), and more in general thanks to the renovation of ecclesiology that occurred in the Catholic Church in the second half of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

Sensus fidelium, which does not belong to a part or to a ‘category’ of the Church’s faithful – the laity, for example – as its subject, but to its totality, cannot be separated from what Tradition calls *sensus fidei*. The Church, like any other human community – also the political community although in a different way – is not a depersonalized, unique body, nor is it a formless addition of individuals, nor a numerical sum of them. The person is always in relation to the community: it could be called a ‘subsistent relation of personal relations.’ It is impossible to understand the person outside of his relationship with the community. In the case the Church, which has its origin and foundation in divine action, this ‘communal’ dimension is accentuated. The community does not believe in an amorphous and impersonal way, nor does the individual believe in a way that is isolated from the community, rather the Christian believes in the community of the Church. The Christian, in embracing the faith through a divine gift, is ‘assumed’ and ‘lives’ inserted into union with all the other Christians. As De Salis Amaral (2013) reminds us, the Church is not like any other human community, because the relationality that it enjoys is God-given, it is God who has instituted this form of relation ‘in Christ and by the Spirit,’ and it is because of this, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the soul of the Christian that identifies him with Christ, that *sensus fidei* exists; if not it would be only the human expression of what a Christian thinks or of what they all think together about God and about salvation.

The following is a good definition of *sensus fidei*, without which one cannot speak of *sensus fidelium*: ‘The faithful have an instinct for the truth of the Gospel, which enables them to recognise and endorse authentic Christian doctrine and practice, and to reject what is false. That supernatural instinct, intrinsically linked to the gift of faith received in the communion of the Church, is called the *sensus fidei*, and it enables Christians to fulfil their prophetic calling.’ (International Theological Commission 2014, n. 2). In the same way Vitali (1993, 216) expresses it, although he does not explicitly mention the fact that the faith is received in communion with the Church: ‘The sense of the faith would be that form of knowledge that comes from the faith, and that consists in a capacity for intuitive judgement, *per connaturalitatem*, that refers to all that has to do with the faith.’

It is clear that this faculty of knowledge has been given to each of the baptized with the gift of new life in Christ and is enlivened by the action of the Holy Spirit who works in each Christian to make him like Christ. It is a singular form of Christian knowledge that makes every believer capable of embracing and knowing the Revelation of God (International Theological Commission 2014, nn. 92, 128).

This intelligence of the faith, this supernatural instinct of the faithful, is a kind of sixth sense, regardless of their doctrinal or theological erudition, and is manifested in a spontaneous way even when the faithful do not have words to adequately express that which makes up the core of their faith. All Christians possess it, and it grows in them, as the *Catechism of the Church* (n. 94) reminds us, ‘through the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things (the realities and the words of the heritage of faith) in their hearts (*Dei Verbum*, n. 8) and from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which [believers] experience (*Dei Verbum*, 8).’

Any of us could give examples of people with little or no knowledge of philosophy or theology, who demonstrate a lively and profound comprehension of the faith without having the technical terms to express it. The elderly Portuguese woman who says to Pope Francis ‘God exists, because if he didn’t, the world wouldn’t exist;’ the pedagogical mastery of a mother who teaches her children the catechism; not to mention the popular faith of pilgrims to Marian sanctuaries and those of other saints, are all eloquent examples of this wisdom of the faith so often hidden from the wise and prudent.

A reading of public opinion in the Church. The three planes in which public opinion is manifested in the Church

Now that these doctrinal premises have been established, I will present my personal reading of how we can speak of public opinion in the Church. The term public opinion is not ambiguous, but analogical, and not only in the realm of the Church. I have sustained elsewhere that *public opinion* is not necessarily or automatically identified with *published opinion*. This does not mean that they are unrelated to one another. They mutually influence each other in ways that the theory – the theories – of social communication are making ever clearer. Besides Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, other well-known authors can be summoned here for that purpose, like Sparrow (1999), Monzón (1996), and of course the classic, Walter Lippmann (1922, 1997). This is not the time to explain or develop the relationship between public opinion and published opinion.

The Church is not a political community, but is a community of faith, even more a communion in the life of God and, therefore, of faith. There is no communion without communication, and wherever communication exists there is ‘public opinion’, though not in the strict sense that we give this term attached to its historical origin in Western parliamentary democracies.

Speaking in ecclesiological terms, this means that communion in the Church is born from the auto-communication of God with mankind. Some auto-communication from God has implications on His part, some others are typical of the common life of men, and yet others are partly of God and partly of the creativity of men. Throughout history, the Church has gradually discovered what aspects of its mystery

apply to everyone everywhere, and has deepened its knowledge of them, especially when the nature of one of these elements runs the risk of being mistaken. In the auto-communication of God there is no public opinion – it would be wrong to say so – but it is true that, in the handing of the faith from one generation to another, there is a common atmosphere, common spiritualities, ways of living the virtues, ways of teaching the faith, etc., that build up the ‘public opinion of the Church’ and shape what the people think, live and express. God makes use of these to transmit the faith.²⁰

Public opinion in the Church is expressed in diverse ways, and communication and communion are also realized in different ways according to different fields of action. I distinguish three fields, that of the faith, that of government and that of the contingent.

a) The level of the faith

At the level of faith, at the level of dogma, of the essentials of the faith, public opinion does not have a role of discussion. One is either within or outside of the communion of the faith. Thus, for example, in the case of the resignation of Benedict XVI, notwithstanding all the perplexities his decision may have caused in not a few faithful,²¹ we had to remember that the Creed says nothing about the resignation of the Vicar of Christ. But public opinion is also manifested at this ‘indisputable’ level as *a silence that prays and accepts the decision of the Pope with respect*. One needed only search the internet in order to ‘hear’ this clamor of prayer.

There are many historical and current examples on how public opinion comes into play at this level of communion of the faith. I will briefly cite some of them. For sure, more development and research to support this idea is needed.

In the procedure of beatification of the saints, documenting the *reputation of holiness* of the servant of God whose heroic virtue must be proven is required, as Gutiérrez (2005, 23) points out: ‘The *fama sanctitatis* should be spontaneous and not artificially produced, coming from honest and serious people, it continues, with a tendency to grow and currently prevailing among the majority of the people. This should be verified above all where the servant of God died and is buried.’ As he states later on, ‘this procedural demand in the causes of beatification is the echo, the historical remnant, of the *vox populi* that in union with the bishops themselves, was enough for memory of a martyr to be venerated’ (78). In my opinion, we may find here the first public opinion survey in the history of public opinion, long before the polls appeared, at the end of the 1930’s. Cardinal Amato (2011), prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, expressly established this connection between public opinion and the processes of canonization. We know that, in the past, canonizations were made by popular outcry. The Church, however, which had recognized for a long time the volatility and possible abuses of public opinion, introduced a regulated process and included, as a requirement, the documented investigation of popular veneration of the candidate to sainthood.

How could one fail to remember that the latest Marian dogmas, those of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary, involved popular approbation, investigated through a formal survey directed, respectively, by popes

Pius IX and Pius XII to all the bishops, Catholic universities, theologians and experts questioned by the Holy See, as well as the ‘interpretation’ of the unanimous consensus of the faithful as it was manifested in the devotion to Virgin Mary in the entire Christian world throughout the ages. And, all this in the absence of unanimity of the Fathers of the Church and of sufficient ground in the Scripture. The theological formula of the *Ineffabilis Deus* decree by Pius IX leaves no room for doubt about this interpretation: *perpetuus Ecclesiae sensus* and *singularis conspiratio Antistitum et fidelium*. What is remarkable is that these two criteria – of ‘popular consensus,’ one could say – are spelled out before the testimony of the Fathers and of Scripture, in this special case. An analogous argumentation is found in the *Munificentissimus Deus* decree of Pius XII with respect to the Assumption. The Pope lists as the first of the testimonies of the truth of the faith the unanimous plebiscite of the Church throughout the centuries, before the arguments of the Magisterium, the Fathers and theology.

We could find other historical examples in which this healthy intervention of *sensus fidelium* can be verified in the history of the Church. Newman (1859, 1986) carried out a fascinating investigation concerning the Arian controversy in the fourth century, when most bishops, for worldly reasons, had strayed from the faith in favor of the ‘official theology,’ more concerned with the unity of the Empire than with the truth of the faith. Newman sustains that this was a very singular historical circumstance that would never repeat in the history of the Church. I have my doubts.

For example, not a few theologians and pastors have attempted to abuse this doctrine of the *sensus fidelium* to force the hand of the Magisterium about a theological or moral position that is difficult to accept and live out because of the mentality of the dominant culture. Particularly significant is the reception of the doctrine of *Humanae Vitae*, later reaffirmed by *Familiaris Consortio* and the whole ordinary magisterium of John Paul II about the theology of the body (Kirk 2010). The ‘forced’ logic goes, in a few words, like this: since the majority of the faithful do not live in accord with the teachings of *Humanae Vitae*; that is to say, since this doctrine has not received the *consensus fidelium*, it cannot be retained as a Catholic doctrine, therefore it must be changed. Such a position, which is also a logical error,²² involves a poor theological vision of the *sensus fidelium*, it reduces it to a numerical problem; it is something like reducing public opinion to survey results. Not even scholars of the public opinion science would dare to make a similar equation. Only bad politicians do so, governing according to polls, as Monzón (1996) remind us.

Besides, here we are confronted with a problem which, in the discipline of public opinion, is called the ‘intensity of the opinion;’ that is to say, in our case a faith that is not very lively or even dead, a faith that is dis-informed by ignorance – its culpability is another problem – and by a life opposed to the faith, cannot be equaled to the *sensus ecclesiae*. As the Note of the International Theological Commission that I cite here reminds us, ‘in the history of the people of God, many times they have not been the majority, but rather a minority that has truly lived and given testament to the faith.’ As had already happened in the history of Israel, that a *remnant* was the testimony and heir to the promises, so also in the new people of God, which is the Church, it has not been unusual in its 2000-year history that a small remnant has saved the faith of the Church from shipwreck by faithfully transmitting it to successive generations.²³

Definitively, in the field of the faith, public opinion in the Church is not manifested in terms of debate. Either one is in communion with the faith or is not. This does not mean that there is no debate within the Church on questions of the faith. It only means that the way to convey it is not through secular mass media, regardless of their being more or less hostile to the Church. Unfortunately, those who use media as instruments to advance within the Church, despite their theological agenda in opposition to dogma, do little service to communion.

Does this mean that at the level of faith, there can be no debate within the Church? To say so would be historically nonsensical, first because debate has in fact occurred, is occurring and will always occur. Heresies, for example, have made debate thrive, and with debate comes the development of dogma. Moreover, this is not only a *de facto* question, but is something that is due – among other factors – to the inevitable insufficiency of languages – any of them – to contain once and for all the truths of the faith, as if the faith could be reduced to formulas or linguistic propositions, although it is certainly contained in them.

Concerning this, one need only remember that the infallibility of the Magisterium means that it is free of error in the interpretation of the content of the faith. This explains why there is progress and development in doctrine and that, in its comprehension and explication, it ought not to be ‘solidified’ in mere formulas. Such formulas would need an explanation of the historical context in which they were formed and established declaratively, without draining them of the content of truth in this task of ‘textualization’ and re-proposition.²⁴ It is surely here where the charisma or function of theology in the Church is rightly placed (International Theological Commission, nn. 81-84).

Definitively, debate in matters of faith does exist; it is only that it has its own sphere, which is theological. That is, on the one hand this debate requires competence – theological formation and erudition – among those who debate, and on the other, it requires some not debatable common ground, which is precisely the faith as the preliminary basis of debate.

In this summary analysis about *sensus fidei* and *sensus fidelium* in relation to public opinion, one cannot do without the consideration of popular piety and the faith. I will do it in the words of Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*:

Underlying popular piety, as a fruit of the enculturated Gospel, is an active evangelizing power which we must not underestimate: to do so would be to fail to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit. Instead, we are called to promote and strengthen it, in order to deepen the never-ending process of enculturation. Expressions of popular piety have much to teach us; for those who are capable of reading them, they are a *locus theologicus* which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization.²⁵

Naturally, the many pilgrimages to Marian shrines and, in general, to holy places are an expression of popular piety, of the *sensus fidelium* and, likewise of a public opinion within the Church that cannot be overlooked by any attentive observer of popular phenomenon (González Gaitano 2000). They are certainly not an expression of a debate-driven public opinion, but they are still public opinion, and very significant public opinion at that.

b) The level of government

At the level of government, things are a little different. At this practical, prudent level, of the communion of life, one must remember that the Church is not a democratic community, but it is a communion (Semeraro 1997, 2013). It is the job of the bishops to govern and these are ‘positions’ that are not democratically chosen. It is true that there are ways, formally established in law, according to local customs, which have varied throughout history, to listen in some way to the governed, especially the clergy, in the naming of bishops.²⁶ There are also ways for the bishop and parish priests to listen to the voice of the lay faithful in the subjects that concern them.²⁷ But, this government of pastors, specifically of the bishops is not, and cannot be, that of a despotic power. The pastor, like the rest of the faithful, in addition to answering to God and to his superiors,²⁸ should also respond in some way before the communion of the faithful. With a term familiar in the language of finance, one can speak of moral accountability,²⁹ of ‘being accountable’ to the faithful of those decisions that affect them directly, that have to do with the ecclesiastical common good.

Incidentally, speaking precisely of finances in the Church, ever more often the problems of the Church in public opinion have to do with the correct administration of ecclesiastical finances. And, it is logical that it should be so. If scandal in this area has always occurred through history, today it is the faithful who finance a good part of pastoral activity with their voluntary contributions, given directly to their pastors or ecclesiastical institutions, or through the assignment to the Church part of those taxes that the State manages. This requires transparency on the part of administrators. The sensibility of the faithful has grown in this area. Not all countries have a juridical, fiscal and moral culture in this respect. Some are more advanced and others, such as the Vatican itself, are beginning to adapt themselves to this culture of transparency (Mendoza 2016).

An example, in my opinion an exceptional one, of an ‘accountable’ doing can be seen in Benedict XVI’s decision to retire from office as Pope. As its Founder had configured the Church, it is up to the Pope himself, as successor of Peter, to take this decision (CCC 332 §2). The Code of Canon Law, logically, does not take into account how such a far-reaching decision has to be communicated or should be communicated. Nevertheless, the way Benedict XVI took his decision and communicated it fitted this ‘accountable mindset’: he first told the College of Cardinals, that is the governing body that had chosen him as a sort of body representing the entire Church, and which assists him in its government. And, afterwards in successive public addresses – in particular his last audience, a master piece of communication (González Gaitano 2016) – he ‘rendered and account’ to all the faithful and public opinion in general.

At the level of government, public opinion places demands on pastors and on the faithful, individually and together. The first are called not to abuse their power, for example, by binding their consciences in questions that do not have to do with faith – naturally they should not do this – or in questions that are not strictly disciplinary. To sum up, pastors should not abuse the authority that God has given them, using it for material affairs or for human motives or for convenience. That is, pastors should be careful not to abusively invade areas that do not correspond to them. The figure of

a meddlesome and bossy priest is a comic one. A sad one, on the other hand, is the figure of the Marquis of Talleyrand, crafty survivor of the French Revolution, who was bishop, representative, minister, politician, ambassador, who managed to fool everyone and who, fortunately, at the end of his life turned to the mercy of God. Relations with politics offer an abundant field of casuistry.

The faithful, in their turn, cannot break the communion by publicly dissenting on disciplinary decisions. The life of many saints is full of exemplary silences before disputable, if not mistaken, governmental decisions. The example of Saint Catherine of Siena is proverbial in this respect. Recently, Mother Angelica died. In her life, we also find abundant examples of this equilibrium to avoid breaking communion, without subjecting herself to the abusive judgement of some pastors.

These words of St. Josemaría Escrivá with which he responded to the question³⁰ of ecclesiologist Pedro Rodríguez on how authority and obedience have to be balanced with respect for 'public opinion in the Church' in October of 1967, tense moments in the immediate post-council era, offer permanent criteria for judgement and action, beyond the temporal circumstances to which they refer:

I do not think there can be such a thing as truly Christian obedience unless that obedience is voluntary and responsible. The children of God are not made of stone. Nor are they corpses. They are intelligent and free beings. And they all have been raised to the same supernatural order as those who hold authority (...) The problem of 'necessary public opinion in the Church' is fundamentally the same as the problem of the doctrinal training of the faithful. Certainly the Holy Spirit distributes his abundant gifts among the members of the People of God, all of whom are responsible for the mission of the Church.³¹

Escrivá, the Founder of Opus Dei, who promoted numerous initiatives in the area of what he called the *apostolate of public opinion*, as well as a spirit that stirs up this conscience in all its members, speaks out his mind, without fear of going into too many details:

Regarding the forms of expression of this public opinion, I don't think it is a question of organs and institutions. A diocesan pastoral council, the columns of a newspaper, even though it isn't officially Catholic, or even a personal letter from one of the faithful to his bishop, can all be equally effective. There are many legitimate ways in which the faithful can express their opinion. They neither can nor should be strait-jacketed by creating a new body or institution. And much less if it meant having an institution which ran the risk of being monopolized or made use of, as could so easily happen, by a group or clique of official Catholics, regardless of their tendencies or orientation. That would endanger the prestige of the hierarchy itself and it would seem a mockery to the other members of the People of God.

The relation between government and public opinion, and vice versa, within the Church has not been yet carefully examined. Surely all the reflection that is being developed in the Church about synodality, goes partly along these lines. Synodality is being strongly promoted by Pope Francis.³² Of course, one must place the dispositions and recommendations of the Code of Canon Law mentioned above in this context as well. It can also be affirmed that the warning of Pope Francis to pastors and laypeople not to give in to the many forms of clericalism go along these lines.³³

c) *The level of the contingent*

This is surely the easiest level to explain from the point of view of how public opinion works, and sometimes even the funniest. It has to do with the usual sense of the term public opinion, that is, to say with everything dealing with debate, with rational debate, although sometimes it is not so rational. Nonetheless, one need not think too solemnly of rationality, as if only rationality had the title of legitimacy in the formation of public opinion, as some stern thinkers pretend. At this level, feelings, attitudes, humors, prejudices, stereotypes, tastes, etc., have their unavoidable role. Naturally, it is at this level where we usually find more colorful stories, gossipy and sensational. I will give this less attention, precisely because of its contingent character.

To follow the example that I have used to illustrate the distinction between the three levels, I return once again to the retirement of Benedict XVI. No doubt we could discuss whether the Pope Emeritus could or should stay in the Vatican praying in a monastery, serving the poor, shutting himself into a local monastery in his country, dedicating himself to study, etc. In any case, and after many speculations that could fill pages and pages in newspapers, those who love the Pope will respect his decision and be sure and content that he decided what is best for him and what gives him rest.

The level to which I am referring here is the level of liberty and pluralism par excellence, and also of criticism, because, by its nature, the affairs of 'ecclesiastical politics' are also exposed to criticism. As long as it is respectful, as it should be in any case.

Cardinal Newman, who endured the criticism, irony and calumny of many of his contemporaries for converting to Catholicism in a society that laughed at Catholics, nonetheless zealously defended the liberty of criticism: 'In a free country such as ours, I cannot condemn the fact that individuals are ridiculed, whoever they may be. It would be a sad day in which ridiculing were prohibited. From the Lord Chancellor or the prime minister to the lowest charlatan or swindler who astounds the entire world with his absurd stupidity, we must foretell that they can all be mocked by anyone who decides to jeer at them. It is the only way to free oneself easily and politely from so much absurdity, nonsense, annoyance and madness; it is the healthiest expression of public opinion.' (Newman 1851, 203) Newman himself makes good use of derision to dialectically defeat the anti-Catholic prejudices of his time. Moreover, while admitting that there is a dividing line, though subtle and difficult to draw, between what is acceptable and what is not in ridiculing religion, he exempts himself from finding it and concludes: 'I have no intention, if I may permit myself, to protect Churchmen with the sacred mantle of religion.' Here, we see in action a very healthy criterion for correcting the abuses, so frequent throughout history, derived from the instrumentalization of religion for other ends.

To conclude, this reflection about the three levels of public opinion and the life of the Church, one must say that in reality the three levels occur together. It is the analysis that distinguishes them. Reality is greater than ideas, although ideas help one orient oneself in reality. To demonstrate this, I will present a well-known, but very painful, case for the Catholic Church: the case of abuses of minors on the part of some priests. I will analyze it from the perspective of communication with the key points I have discussed.

The abuse of minors, an ecclesiological error, and therefore an error of communication

The crisis over the sexual abuse of minors on the part of some Catholic priests and religious is doubtless, the greatest crisis of communication that the Catholic Church has experienced in recent times, undoubtedly the longest lasting (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2010) and it continues to have devastating effects in the consciences of many, besides drying up the contributions to not a few dioceses and religious institutions.

The following table provides verified data on the subject. The study was carried out by the *Pew Research Center* in 2010 with 40 newspapers selected among the most reputable newspapers published in English in many countries around the world. The data correspond to the period 2002–2010; that is, from the date that the problem exploded in the press of the United States, after two years of intensive coverage by the *Boston Globe*. Once *The New York Times* decided to include it in its agenda (2002), the issue got the attention of the international media and reached another climax during the year 2009, when the *NYT* and the European media blamed Ratzinger for covering up in a case of abuse in the diocese of Munich while he was bishop there. The case against Ratzinger (Benedict XVI at the time of the accusations) proved to be a bluff. *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life Study* extends up to 2010.

Coverage of the sexual abuse of minors in English-language newspapers throughout the world (n° articles)

Region/Date	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 ^a
Total newspapers	4019	1515	1124	1087	749	592	763	1023	1559
United States	2284	864	668	555	383	284	228	224	252
Europe	607	249	148	221	144	98	165	538	765
Other countries	1128	402	308	311	222	210	370	261	542

^aIncludes only the period from January to April 2010. In April of this year, there was an intense media coverage blaming Ratzinger of having covered up a case when he was archbishop of Munich.

Source: self-made based on the data of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. *The Pope Meets the Press: Media Coverage of the Clergy Abuse Scandal*. www.pewforum.org/2010/06/11/the-pope-meets-the-press-media-coverage-of-the-clergy-abuse-scandal.

Any line of argumentation in defense of the Church that attempts to mitigate the perception of the damage with comparative appeals to other religious denominations, civil educational institutions, even sports organizations which have children in their charge is detrimental, besides being a poor argument. Likewise, it is harmful pointing the finger at the family, the place where the majority of abuses occur, often without any public attention. The words of Jesus in the Gospel do not make room for any hypocrisy: ‘who shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea’ (Mt, 18,6). If the Church is the ‘sacrament of universal salvation’ (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 48) and its witness before the nations, it cannot be an accomplice to such an evangelical anti-testimony, it would be a betrayal of its own identity. There can be no gradualness

between good and evil, between error and truth. It is true that mercy reaches all people, even those who commit the sin and crime of pederasty, or any other sin, but this does not change the judgement of their actions.

How is it possible that such a crystal clear truth – today it seems crystal clear – did not illuminate the judgement and the action of so many pastors and so many faithful – not a few of them members of the police or the judiciary – for decades in countries with broad Christian presence? (Lawler 2008)

It is not my task to make a cultural diagnosis about the possible causes that can explain how such an evil can be so far-reaching. Surely, the sexual revolution and its effects have to do with it, although quite a few among those who point the accusing finger in the cases of abuse make the link. It is easy today to be scandalized, or even to stigmatize in films and novels the passive complicity of those who should have remedied the problem and did not do so. It was not so only 10 years ago. The change of opinion has occurred, thanks to God, very quickly and for the good, in spite of the excesses and hasty processes, perhaps unfair ones in a few singular cases.

I am interested, instead, in pointing out a factor that has to do with public opinion in the Church. The pastors who permitted – by their action or omission – the cover-up of these grave sins, regardless of their lack of criminal consideration in the law, and protected in practice the sinners – delinquents, often multiple offenders – did so often in the name of the good of the Church, to prevent the faithful from being scandalized. They did it with good intentions. No doubt, there were cases of malice, as when the pastors were authors or accomplices themselves in these crimes. The majority, though, acted in good faith avoiding immoral publicity to the Christian community and to society. ‘The dirty laundry,’ according to the saying, was the justification with which these well-intentioned concealing behaviors were absolved. This is not the first time in history, not even in our ‘enlightened’ twentieth century, that a glaring moral error has clouded the judgement of an entire society. One may add that, in the case of pastors from countries governed by communist parties, this was one of the common accusations used by the Party to do away with troublesome priests, so that the bishops were accustomed to ignore them.

This misjudgment, an ecclesiological error too, consisted in confusing the good of a part – that of the institution and its official representatives – with the good of the entire community. Those who had a mission of service to the community unintentionally behaved as a caste that was defending its status. They forgot the fact that the Church is a communion; that is, a community of life in Christ. An error that had a clerical character attached to it (Shaw 2008).³⁴ It is not coincidence that the countries where the most damage was done have – or had – a clerical tradition.³⁵

These pastors, short of both theoretical and practical ecclesiology, were lacking in *sentire cum Ecclesia*. They did not understand the fact that, besides answering to their consciences and to God, they had to answer to the community whose spiritual well-being God had placed them, not as administrators but as servants. They had certainly not been democratically chosen, and did not have to answer to an electorate, but they were responsible for the good of the communion. And their behavior destroyed, though invisibly, unity and communion. The omissions in government are wrong government and, when they are grave, produce grave consequences. It is like a

shepherd dog that does not bark in the presence of a wolf. They should have protected the sheep, the community and they did not do so.

In 2008–2009, I had the good fortune to be able to investigate in the University of Chicago the change in public opinion of the Catholic Church in the United States as a result of the visit of Benedict XVI precisely in relation to this subject. The Pope had been invited by the United Nations for the 60th anniversary of its foundation. The visit included a tribute to the victims of the terrorist attack of 11 September 2001 at ‘Ground Zero,’ as well as other religious events.

The common opinion shared by reporters was that the visit of Benedict XVI of April 2008 had changed the media perception and that of public opinion about the will of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to resolve the problem. The fact that Pope Benedict XVI confronted the question directly, in a way that neither the bishops nor the media expected made it clear.³⁶ Ever since the press conference on the plane, responding to one of the reporters’ questions, he showed what turned out to be an entire government program in this thorny issue. To everyone’s surprise, the German Pope spoke openly, forcefully and repeatedly about the crisis. He apologized for the abuses, almost as if he took the blame personally. He received in private a group of victims of abuse in the Nunciature of the Holy See in Washington, an event that was referred to by the Vatican spokesman and by the moving declarations of one of the victims. This was the first in a series of gestures that were to come and in whose wake Pope Francis has continued.³⁷

The trip of Benedict XVI received more attention from the media and public opinion than any other religious event until the visit of Pope Francis to the U.S. in September 2015: 84% of Americans ‘saw, read or heard something about the visit of the Pope in 2008’ and 61% of those interviewed thought that the trip ‘had met or exceeded expectations.’³⁸

Also, this trip, as demonstrated by the study to which I refer, changed the perception of the public opinion about the normal life of the Catholic Church in the United States in the following months. I spare here the methodological details of the investigation (González Gaitano, 73–78 and 90–94) and, instead, I select the principal conclusion of this data:

Before the visit of Benedict XVI, the frame ‘sexual abuse of minors’ ranked second, behind ‘social life of the rich,’ among the most frequent story frames related to the normal life of the Church, that is other stories not regarding the sex abuse scandal.³⁹ After the visit of the Pope, it fell to number 9. Not only this, the almost neutral image that the Church had in the news (+0.02 on a scale of –1 to +1) began to be clearly positive (+0.36).

Of course the Church is interested in the transformation of consciences. And, although it is difficult to evaluate the image of an institution with only statistical methods, one must not dismiss the effect in the reputation or the public image of the Church as an institution. Now, speaking in terms of ‘reputation,’ the courage, humility and sincerity of Benedict XVI did more for the reputation of the Church in the United States than all its communication resources, which are not a few. Naturally, other studies are needed in distinct periods to prove the affirmation over time.

Conclusions

1. Pastors may change views; some theologians even more so

'I am not a river that can't change its course,' Saint Josemaría Escrivá used to say to his collaborators. Such an affirmation is taken for granted for anyone, but sometimes may be an injection of common sense to faithful who feel a kind of reverential fear for ecclesiastical authority or sanctity, even more when it is attached to questions of doctrine or faithfulness to the origins of any particular spirituality. This reverential fear can block their interior liberty and their capacity for judgement and decision-making, even turning them into useless collaborators, or bad ones, by keeping them from speaking clearly and expressing themselves frankly, something that is not at odds with respect for authority.⁴⁰

It is well-known that Cardinal Ratzinger, renowned theologian, has changed his opinion about the possibility to give communion in some specific cases of people who are divorced and remarried in civil marriages. The case in question dealt with the supposed invalidity of the sacrament for those who had married without theological faith (Ratzinger 1998). The doctrine being established in *Familiaris Consortio*, he had no difficulty in aligning himself willingly with the opposite view, which contradicted the one he had maintained until then. It is less well-known that Ratzinger demonstrated an uneasiness regarding some forms of Marian devotion that he held to be excessively 'Latin.' Personally, I consider that he changed his view about some expressions of popular Marian piety, quite typical of an erudite theologian, after witnessing it in John Paul II so well blended with a profound theological knowledge.⁴¹ The concluding chapter of his encyclical *Spe Salvi*, dedicated to Mary in the Church and in the life of the Christian is, in my humble opinion, one of the most beautiful texts in Marian literature and they speak of a lively and profound love of Mary that is difficult to match. As a philosopher friend of mine said, 'scandalized' by the processions of Seville when he saw them for the first and last time, 'The Church endures everything: from Holy Week in Seville to the intimist spirituality of an Englishman.'

It is not well-known, on the other hand, that Jorge Bergoglio, as bishop, did not participate in any of the World Youth Days or the World Meetings of Families (de la Cierva, Black, and O'Reilly 2016). This certainly did not prevent him from participating with undoubtable personal enthusiasm, as pope, in the World Youth Days in Rio de Janeiro and in Krakow, nor in the World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia.

No one should be surprised that people change their opinions. Only in a relativistic culture, which gives no value to truth, can one idolize opinion, that ends up becoming dogma in practice and, therefore, anyone who changes his opinion comes to be judged with suspicion. When the highest, or even the exclusive value of a society is authenticity, changing opinion becomes at least suspicious. Excluding truth and trying to hold together authenticity and real life can be a difficult paradox, for authenticity may become mere consistency.

Perhaps, these considerations may seem obvious. Nonetheless, they show, in my opinion, although they do not prove it, the fact that who governs the Church is not just those who visibly do so or appear to do so.

2. In necessary things, unity; in disputable things, diversity; in all things, charity

This maxim, rephrased in my own words, holds ancient wisdom. It is adapted from Saint Paul,⁴² who had to deal with many difficult battles of public opinion in the early Church. Later, theology would echo him in the celebrated formulation for disputes of faith and teaching: *in necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas, in omnibus caritas*.⁴³

The problem of the maxim is learning to determine, concretely, what is necessary, what is opportune, and what is contingent. That John Paul II should see in private the controversial but beautiful film *The Passion* by Mel Gibson when he was promoting it is a contingent question, the same as it is that Pope Francis received Angelina Jolie. One should not make the cinematographic tastes of the popes a question of faith, it goes against logic; it is ridiculous to make it a question of government, it is against common sense; showing agreement or disagreement, always with respect, is more than legitimate; to attribute intentions that are not manifest to these decisions is unfair.

Things are not always so distinct and clear. Moreover, normally the level of doctrine, of government and of the contingent are inexorably mixed, as we know well.

3. Who know where they stand (John Henry Newman)

Cardinal John Henry Newman asked for 'Laity who know where they stand' in his famous conferences in the Oratory of Birmingham (Newman, 1851). Newman felt that, to change the hostile public opinion of his time in respect to the Catholic Church in Great Britain, it was necessary for the laity to have a good grasp of theology and of the history of the Church. Newman was speaking of common lay people, not those laypeople who had a special professional responsibility as communicators. Christian communicators who are ignorant of their faith and of their own history will not only be unable to help build a well-informed public opinion, in particular about the Church, but will be dragged along by the dominant stereotypes of the culture in which they live.

Certainly, this judgement applies not only to the laity but also to pastors. And, if it is true that theology distinguishes between material and formal heresy – that is, between involuntary and voluntary – in terms of its moral responsibility, public opinion does not make these distinctions. And, the confusions and problems that are generated, in good faith, are not a few.

Solid formation helps to avoid problems of communication of substance and not only of language. Sometimes, even among well-intentioned pastoralists, language is spoken of too much. Adapting language to the public, instead of speaking in ecclesiastical jargon, is no doubt much needed. But, the problem is not only of language but of the comprehension of the substance of things. It is evident that the truth cannot be reduced to formulas. However, if one does not personally possess the truth that these formulas contain and to which they point, whoever is the layperson or pastor, communicator or less so, he will not be able to express it in his own words. Words mean things, they are not arbitrary malleable material. Eugenio D'Ors said that clarity is the courtesy of intelligence. And, one must add that words are the clothing of thought. Only who really knows is capable of discerning the straw from the grain, in the

ongoing flow of words that the media and the prosumers give out to the poor public opinion. And, if this is true for doctrine, what so we say for the information when the voices, the sources, the 'inputs' multiply and professional filters decrease? Definitely, both formation and information are required. Overload of information, especially when it has not quality, causes mental indigestion; formation without good information makes us useless. As Escrivá (1968) puts it, 'the problem of "necessary public opinion in the Church" is fundamentally the same as the problem of the doctrinal training of the faithful.' One must add, without being able to develop it here, that deeds – and with them, the signs that make them visible – often count much more than words for the formation of public opinion about the Church. The comprehension of the substance of the Gospel is essentially linked to the works that manifest the words and fill them with meaning. Thus the Gospel itself says that Jesus 'began to do and to teach' (Acts, 1,1).⁴⁴ Therefore the 'unity of life,' that is the testimony of evangelical example, in particular that of the saints – officially recognized or not – should be the most important factor of the configuration of a positive public opinion about the Church. And, on the contrary, the bad example of Christians also contributes to shape a negative public opinion.

4. Serious study of communication in the Church

The theological or ecclesiastical reflections about communication to which I referred before are still mostly unknown by pastors or theologians. For whenever they speak about communication, they reveal, in general, a lack of incorporation of the theological principles of Vatican II. It is as if all this doctrine – in particular the content of *Gaudium et spes*, *Lumen Gentium*, *Presbiterorum Ordinis* – had not been received in the area of communication.

I have stated elsewhere that 'truly professional Christians are much needed, that is men who share with their colleagues the authentic professional values, to begin with a sincere love of the profession and the expertise and competence that comes out from that love, and one which that is a direct expression of confidence in creation and in human beings that underlies the Christian view of the world, a world that was born good in the hands of God, and has only been disfigured by sin and that awaits the collaboration of the members of Christ to restore it to the Father.' In summary, this is the thesis that La Porte (2012) sustains in his study about the understanding of Saint Josemaría about the role of Christians in public opinion.

In the words of Lluís Clavell: 'It is necessary to educate everyone – priests, laypeople and religious – in a correct comprehension of the media culture, avoiding instigating in them, on the one hand, attitudes of mistrust or excessive criticism, or, at the other extreme, ingenuous or simple attitudes (...). In the case of priests and religious, it is the responsibility of the pastors or superiors to choose the candidates well. Universities or Catholic centers of higher education in communication should favor a deeper thinking and investigation, that does not look only or mainly at technical skills or the mere neutral description of the rules and conventions of the media. This requires professors with a solid humanistic and religious formation, and with experience in the media.'⁴⁵

5. *Learning with good humor*

I will close with a recommendation that Professor Alfonso Nieto (Nieto Tamargo 2008), used to repeat. Learn to cultivate the virtue of good humor. In this profession, and even more when it has to do with communication of the Church or about the Church, trying to imitate the ‘good humor’ of Divine Providence is helping. And that means taking things with ‘levity’ and not taking ourselves too seriously, being aware that a good result may only depend a little on us. When the history of the Church is read this way, one sees that it is full of ironies and paradoxes. To mention a few recent examples, who among Vatican experts would have thought, seriously and beforehand, that the cardinals would have chosen Ratzinger as pope, or in the following conclave, Bergoglio? And, who would have imagined that Benedict XVI would retire, throwing into confusion, undoubtedly unintentionally, all predictions and calculations – imaginable or imagined – of the best strategists among the makers of public or publicized opinion within and outside of the Church, or better said inside and outside of the Vatican walls? Definitively, Providence plays by its own rules. In this vein, it seems logical to me that Pope Francis should love to recite the prayer of Saint Thomas More in which the English saint and martyr asks for good humor:

Grant me, O Lord, good digestion,

and also something to digest.

Grant me a healthy body,

and the necessary good humor to maintain it.

Grant me a simple soul that knows to treasure all that is good

and that doesn't frighten easily at the sight of evil,

but rather finds the means to put things back in their place.

Give me a soul that knows not boredom, grumblings, sighs and laments,

nor excess of stress, because of that obstructing thing call “I”.

Grant me, O Lord, a sense of good humor.

Allow me the grace to be able to take a joke to discover in life a bit of joy,

and to be able to share it with others.

Amen

Notes

1. The Congregation for Catholic Education of the Holy See, following the petition of Bishop Javier Echevarría Grand Chancellor of the University, approved it with Decree Prot. N. 1436/95 26 February 1996. The promoters of the initiative were Juan Manuel Mora and Alfonso Nieto, supported by the then rector Mons. Lluís Clavell.
2. P. Federico Lombardi, former director of the Vatican Press Office, publicly thanked the professors and students of the School of Communication of Holy Cross for their work in his conference ‘The Vatican Press Office’: http://conferenciaepiscopal.es/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/ruedasdeprensa_2014_Lombardi.mp3.

3. It is well-known that it was Necker, the French finance minister in the decade 1780–1790, who was the first to use it before the Assembly in the middle of the prelude to the French Revolution (Price, 1992, 26).
4. This theory ranks today among the most researched and empirically proven theories in all the cultural contexts of the young discipline of public opinion and it has been so far validated also in the Internet realm (Stoycheff 2016).
5. *ABC* and *El País* (Spain); *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* (France), *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica* (Italy), *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* (United States), *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian* (Great Britain).
6. On 17 January 2012, the Kodak filed for bankruptcy. Contrary to popular belief, the Company continues to function and is going through a process of restructuring and renovation. On 12 March 2014, the Board of Directors chose executive Jeff Clarke as CEO to direct this process.
7. The newspapers examined in my case were: *The International Herald Tribune*, *Le Monde*, *El País* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*.
8. ‘Faithful to the vocation of a martyr, inherited by the culture of the Polish Church, Karol Wojtyła has allowed for his personal Calvary to be exhibited shamelessly and mercilessly before the cameras of the entire world,’ Arias wrote (Arias, J. 2005. ‘El calvario del Papa mudo,’ *El País*, April 2). The responsibility for such a ruthless decision is attributed to –what else? – the Vatican. In other cases, such as in the service of one who was a correspondent of the same paper, Lola Golán, the death was instrumentalized for the media by the Vatican, as fitting for the ‘great communicator definitively immobile’ (Galán, L. 2005. ‘Media presence until death. The Vatican authorizes television to enter into the intimacy of mourning,’ *El País*, April 5). The subtle implication of the subtitle provides its own commentary.
9. The judgement, in addition to the analysis about the news coverage already mentioned, is also based on the testimony of Joaquín Navarro-Valls, recorded in his conference in a professional seminar of the department of communication and later on published in 2007 (Mora, Contreras, and Carroggio 2007).
10. Refer the works by (Shaw 1999; Carroggio and La Porte 2002; Mundadan 2002.; Gronowski 2003; Arasa 2008; Arasa and Milán 2010; Mora 2011; La Porte 2012; La Porte and Mastroianni 2012; Bailly-Baillière and Milán 2014; de la Cierva 2014; Tridente 2014).
11. The speech could not be pronounced personally by the Pope due to and illness, but the original text in French was published in *L’Osservatore Romano* and in Latin. In those days the Pope still spoke in the majestic plural (We).
12. An exhaustive overview about the Magisterium of the Church concerning communication can be found in. For a historical contextualization of each document, see (Pujol Soler 2014).
13. This principle of transparency does not respond to a demand of democratic society, but more radically to the character of the Church as *communio* (*Lumen Gentium*, 18). On the other hand, if the Church does not apply to itself these moral criteria, it could not be able to morally demand that the political society should guarantee the right to information, specifically ‘access to the sources and channels of information and the right of free expression’ as guarantees for the correct formation of public opinion, as *Communio et Progresso* sustains (n. 45) citing the Magisterium of John XXIII, Paul VI and the decree *Inter Mirifica* of Vatican II.
14. Can. 212, § 3: ‘They have the right, even sometimes the duty, for the sake of their own knowledge competence, and prestige, to manifest to the holy pastors their opinion about that which pertains to the good of the Church and to manifest it to the rest of the faithful, always keeping in mind integrity in faith and customs, reverence toward the pastors taking into account the common good and the dignity of persons.’
15. The other two works already cited (Morero 1965 and Piquer 1965), both written right after the conclusion of Vatican Council II, show the climate and the expectations of these

- years in some ecclesiastical environments and the lack of theological tools for confronting the problem.
16. In my opinion, the most recent considerations of Sciortino (2016, 825–842), referring to the cultural-religious situation in Italy from the Council until the present, fall into this category too.
 17. Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann, in recuperating the psycho-social dimension of public opinion, and with strictly empirical tools – modern surveys – has opened the way for connecting it to practical reason and not only to discursive reason. One cannot think that public opinion is a phenomenon that appears almost *ex nihilo* with the press in modern times. There is no public community, or even human community, without the consensus of the people, and that consensus is always expressed in some way. The political philosophy of Hannah Arendt (1958), among other authors, offers a good source for the comprehension of public opinion in this direction. For her, *power*, unlike *force*, rests in *consensus*, in the will of the governed. Certainly one cannot identify where consensus is if there is not a way of expressing it, and, therefore, public opinion, which is one of the ways it is manifested, is a real power.
 18. ‘The entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One (cf. *1 Ts* 2, 13) cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole peoples’ supernatural discernment in matters of faith when ‘from the Bishops down to the last of the lay faithful’ (S. Agustín, *De Praed. Sanct.* 14, 27) they show universal agreement in matters of faith and morals. That discernment in matters of faith is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth. It is exercised under the guidance of the sacred teaching authority, in faithful and respectful obedience to which the people of God accepts that which is not just the word of men but truly the word of God (cf. *1 Ts* 2,13). Through it, the people of God adhere unwaveringly to the faith given once and for all to the saints (*Jude* 3).’
 19. ‘This tradition, which comes from the Apostles, develop in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (see Luke, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her.’
 20. I owe these ideas to Miguel de Salis Amaral. Conversation with the author 2016, April 17.
 21. This open letter to Pope Benedict XVI a few days after his resignation admirably expresses the perplexities of many of the faithful <https://costanzamiriano.com/2013/03/19/lettera-aperta-a-benedetto-xvi/>.
 22. According to this way of thinking, our ancestors would have lived, without knowing it, in a theoretical-moral error, analogous to how the same ancestors lived in the error – in this case only theoretical – of believing that the earth was the center of the universe. A technical discovery, the telescope, shook not only the foundations of this common perception, but all of science and philosophy, with effects that continue today. In the order of practical knowledge, moral theology included, the pill would have had analogous consequences. In this line of reasoning, knowledge *tout court* is not only reduced to experimental knowledge, but the practical dimension of the truth (certainty) is confused with the semantic dimension of the truth (adaptation between judgement and reality).
 23. International Theological Commission, n. 118. The Note even offers historical examples that are quite eloquent: ‘In the history of the Church, evangelical movements such as the Franciscans and Dominicans, or later the Jesuits, started as small groups treated with suspicion by various bishops and theologians. In many countries today, Christians are under strong pressure from other religions or secular ideologies to neglect the truth of

faith and weaken the boundaries of ecclesial community.’ In my opinion, one can say the same about the situation lived in the Catholic Church after Vatican Council II and the role of some creative minorities, fruit of the presence of new charisms inspired by the Holy Spirit currently to the gestation and development of the Council and the correct application of the council.

24. One must not forget that language is always the ‘carrier’ of a communication, and it happens always *in actu*, meaning it is always a *communicative act*, for it is situated in a precise context that is added up to the sum of the terms and helps to configure the sense of the expression. That is, the meaning is not merely the sum of the meanings of each term (*locutionary act*) nor even the *illocutionary acts*, but the total meaning. This is the thesis of Austin (1989). Applying these linguistic and gnoseological presuppositions to the declarations of the Magisterium of the Church, it can be said that, to know what was said in the moment one spoke, on saying a word – a declarative word in this case – interpretation is always required. This interpretation, if it seeks to be fair, cannot be an arbitrary modelation of the meaning but a recognition of *that which one intended to say and actually said*, always within the limits of human language, which because it is situated in time always presents itself as an act of speech in a specific language, therefore changing. On this subject, the distinction of Eugenio Coseriu (1997) between language as human ability, language as a linguistic tradition, and speech is very useful. Newman, thanks to the strength of his gnoseological presuppositions, was able to anticipate and apply the consequences of these ideas of the ‘development’ of Christian doctrine, rising above the perplexities that the prevailing rationalism presented to a timeless truth, such as is the truth of the faith, and the manifest evidence of its progressive evolution. And, he did it without falling into relativism as it is clearly manifested in his *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, written in 1845, before his conversion and revised version of 1875, without changing the substance of his thesis. Newman’s explanation has been credited later on in current Catholic theology.
25. In the same sense, one may see the now celebrated *Theological Commentary on the Message of Fatima* by Joseph Ratzinger, as Prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_it.html. In similar terms Pasquale (2004, 227–250) expresses himself, for whom popular devotion is a *monstratio* and *de-monstratio fidei* and, with it, an exercise of the prophetic office of the People of God.
26. It is the Supreme Pontiff who ‘freely appoints bishops, or confirms those legitimately chosen’ in accordance with the criteria established in the *Code of Canon Law*, canon 377. This does not change the fact that there is a ‘certain selective public opinion’ as Hillary Odenore (2013) calls it, in the examining of the candidates, as seen in sections §2, §3, §4 of the same canon.
27. In the case of the bishops, it is perceptive that they listen to the *Presbyteral Council* in matters of great importance, although its vote is only advisory (CCC, 500, § 2). There also exists, where pastoral circumstances permit, the Pastoral Council, made up of ‘faithful who are in full communion with the Catholic Church, clergy and members of the institutions of consecrated life as well as, above all, laypeople,’ a Council that has the task, under the authority of the bishop, to ‘investigate, consider, and propose practical conclusions about those things which pertain to pastoral works in the diocese.’ (CCC, 511). Analogously, parish priests, when there is a parish council.
28. ‘For they keep watch over your souls, as they must to give account’ (Heb 13,17).
29. Those who deal with the subject in Canon Law (Miñambres, 2012) speak also of *stewardship*, an English term best defined as ‘power as service’ that distinguishes pastors.
30. The complete question was phrased in this way: ‘The Second Vatican Council has often used the expression “People of God” to designate the Church. It has thus shown clearly the common responsibility of all Christians in the single mission of this People of God. What, in your opinion, should be the characteristics of the ‘necessary public opinion in the Church,’ of which Pius XII already spoke, in order to reflect effectively this common

responsibility? How is the phenomenon of 'public opinion in the Church' affected by the particular relationships of authority and obedience which exist in the heart of the Christian community?,' in Illanes (2012).

31. See (Illanes 2012,154).
32. Although it does not refer to synodality in the technical sense, it does to the spirit of it when Pope Francis (2013) sees in this spirit of communion – encouraged by an open disposition of the bishop to listen – a necessary condition for the missionary renovation of the Church: 'In his mission of fostering a dynamic, open and missionary communion, he will have to encourage and develop the means of participation proposed in the Code of Canon Law (referring to canons cc. 460–468; 492–502; 511–514; 536) and other forms of pastoral dialogue, out of a desire to listen to everyone and not simply to those who would tell him what he would like to hear. Yet the principal aim of these participatory processes should not be ecclesiastical organization but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone.'
33. *Evangelii Gaudium* in n. 102 identifies overcoming clericalism as one of the ecclesiastical challenges of the new evangelization. The Pope understands clericalism as a lack of participation of the laity in the mission of the Church and also the reduction of this participation to mere intra-ecclesiastical tasks. In the same sense, Shaw (2002).
34. This author's statement the thesis of his book: 'Clericalism is the clergy's way of surrendering to two temptations that threaten to corrupt every profession and trade. These are the tendency to distort and pervert the solidarity and mutual loyalty that rightly bond its members (doctor covering for incompetent colleagues, honest lawyers closing their eyes to the ethical failings of dishonest ones); and the tendency to hold low expectations and tolerate a lack of accountability in regard to professional responsibility. Secrecy lends support to both' (p. 18).
35. The words of Bishop Joseph Duffer, one of the Irish prelates convened by Benedict XVI in the Vatican to resolve the problem of the omissions and cover-ups in Ireland, are eloquent: 'We come from a culture of secrets. Now we must learn to share not only unity, but truth and humility'.
36. One must bear in mind that the American Bishops, convened in Dallas in June of 2002, had approved a series of measures (*Dallas Charter*) to eradicate the problem, measures that have proven effective in the following years.
37. Concerning the role of Benedict XVI in confronting and beginning to resolve this problem in the Church (Erlandson and Bunson 2010).
38. The survey was done by MIPO, Marist Poll Institute for Public Opinion, and its results can be seen in: 'The Papal Visit: American Reflect' in <http://www.kofc.org>. A sample of 1013 people older than 18 representative of the total population between April 22 and 24, 2008. Similar results are found in the poll conducted by the Pew Research Center and published in May 6: 84% had paid 'much attention' (29%) or 'a little attention' (55%) to the visit, and, in general, the opinion was favorable toward Benedict XVI ('very or quite') compared to a mere 17% 'unfavorable' (April 23–30, 2008 *N* = 1000). See: <http://people-press.org/report/416/>.
39. One must say that the first in the list of the *frames* ('social life of the wealthy,' in which are included news of socially prominent Catholics who are married in a Catholic Church, for example) is neutral, those following the 'sex abuse scandal' (obviously negative) are positive: 'outstanding lives,' 'religious events,' 'religious rituals,' etc.
40. Incidentally, this is the underlying reason why Saint Catherine of Siena is patroness of a department that must train collaborators of the ecclesiastical authority in the communicative dimension of their task of government in the Church, the School of Church Communication.
41. I interpret these words of his inspiring homily in the funeral of John Paul II as a veiled allusion to this interior change: 'The love of Christ was the dominant force in the life of our beloved Holy Father. Anyone who ever so him pray, who ever heard him preach, knows that (...). The Holy Father found the purest reflection of God's mercy in the

Mother of God. He, who at an early age had lost his own mother, loved his divine mother all the more. He heard the words of the crucified Lord as addressed personally to him: “Behold your Mother.” And so he did as the beloved disciple did: he took her into his own home (eis ta idia: Jn 19:27) – *Totus tuus*. And from the mother he learned to conform himself to Christ.’ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger. Homily at the funeral of the Roman Pontiff John Paul II. http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-card-ratzinger_20050408_en.html.

42. It is eloquent, in this respect, the celebrated hymn of charity (1 Cor. 13), as a basic principle; the reverse about women covering their heads in Church, when, after a lively pep-talk in its favor and as one who feels the weakness of his argument, Paul concludes, ‘in any case, if anyone wants to dispute it, it is not our custom nor that of the Churches of God’ (1 Cor. 16); and on the other hand his firmness in recriminating Peter for his momentary indulgence with the Hebrews in the famous incident of Antioch: Gal. 2, 11–16.
43. The maxim has been erroneously attributed to Saint Augustine. It appears to be by Marco Antonio de Dominis in his *De republica ecclesiastica*. John XXIII uses it for the first time in the encyclical *Ad Petri Cathedram*, III, § 8.
44. This famous beginning to the Acts of the Apostles has been generally commented on in Christian preaching in the direction that I indicated in the text. For example, Escrivá (1974) says in continuity with the reading of the Catholic Church: ‘God has not just said that he loves us. He has proved it with facts. (...) He came to teach us, but he taught us by doing things. In teaching us, he was the model, being our teacher and setting us an example with his conduct.’
45. Meeting with professors of the Faculty of Communication. 2011. Casalmentano, September 19.

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