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Pope Francis Ideological Colonizations

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In conjunction with being the Respect Life Apostolate Chaplain for the Archdiocese, I am also the priest spiritual director for Teams of Our Lady (TOOL) Omaha area Sector. In his address to the international Teams of Our Lady 10 September 2015, Pope Francis called TOOL couples to be missionary disciples. To be the image of the family as God designed it (1 man + 1 woman + children). This is especially important as the family is deformed by “ideological colonizations.”

“In the second place, I invite the couples, fortified by the meeting in Teams, to the missionary commitment. This mission, which is entrusted to them, is **all the more important in as much as the image of the family** -- as God wills it, made up of one man and one woman in view of the good of the spouses and also of the generation and education of children -- **is deformed through powerful contrary projects supported by ideological colonizations.** You are certainly already missionaries by the radiation of your family life to your ambits of friendship and relations, and also others. In fact, a happy and balanced family, inhabited by the presence of God, speaks on its own of the love of God for all men. However, I invite you also to commit yourselves, if it is possible, in an ever more concrete way and with ever renewed creativity, in the activities that can be organized to receive, form and support in the faith particularly young couples, before and after their marriage.”

(Pope Francis Address to Équipes Notre Dame, 10 September 2015)

What is Ideological Colonization?

What does the Holy Father mean by “ideological colonization”? He spoke on this to families during his visit to Manila, Philippines:

Let us be on guard against colonization by new ideologies. There are **forms of ideological colonization which are out to destroy the family.** They are not born of dreams, of prayers, of closeness to God or the mission which God gave us; they come from without, and for that reason I am saying that they are forms of colonization. Let’s not lose the freedom of the mission which God has given us, the mission of the family. **Just as our peoples, at a certain moment of their history, were mature enough to say “no” to all forms of political colonization, so too in our families we need to be very wise, very shrewd, very strong, in order to say “no” to all attempts at an ideological colonization of our families.** We need to ask Saint Joseph, the friend of the angel, to send us the inspiration to know when we can say “yes” and when we have to say “no”.

The pressures on family life today are many. Here in the Philippines, countless families are still suffering from the effects of natural disasters. The economic situation has caused families to be separated by migration and the search for employment, and financial problems strain many households. While all too many people live in dire poverty, others are caught up in materialism and lifestyles which are destructive of family life and the most basic demands of Christian morality. These are forms of ideological colonization. **The family is also threatened by growing efforts on the part of some to redefine the very institution of marriage, by relativism, by the culture of the ephemeral, by a lack of openness to life.**

I think of Blessed Paul VI. At a time when the problem of population growth was being raised, he had the courage to defend openness to life in families. He knew the difficulties that are there in every family, and so in his Encyclical he was very merciful towards particular cases, and he asked confessors to be very merciful and understanding in dealing with particular cases. But he also had a broader vision: he looked at the peoples of the earth and he saw this threat of families being destroyed for lack of children. Paul VI was courageous;

he was a good pastor and he warned his flock of the wolves who were coming. From his place in heaven, may he bless this evening!

(Meeting with Families, Address of His Holiness Pope Francis, Mall of Asia Arena, Manila, 16 January 2015)

It is informative to know some of the context of why the Holy Father would bring up ideological colonization while in the Philippines. In late 2013, the Filipino Congress and President Benigno Aquino defied the nation's church leadership in enacting the long-controversial RH (reproductive health) Law, which legalized contraception for the first time in the overwhelmingly Catholic country.

After this visit, Pope Francis was asked to explain this term further, during an in-flight press conference. Here is his answer:

“**Ideological colonization**. I'll give just one example that I saw myself. Twenty years ago, in 1995, a minister of education asked for a large loan to build schools for the poor. They gave it to her on the condition that in the schools there would be a book for the children of a certain grade level. It was a school book, a well-thought-out book, didactically speaking, in which gender theory was taught. This woman needed the money but that was the condition. Clever woman, she said yes and made another book as well and gave both of them. And that's how it happened. This is ideological colonization. **They introduce an idea to the people that has nothing to do with the people. With groups of people yes, but not with the people. And they colonize the people with an idea which changes, or means to change, a mentality or a structure.** During the Synod, the African bishops complained about this. It was the same story, certain loans in exchange for certain conditions — I only speak of this case that I have seen. Why do I say “ideological colonization”? Because they take, they actually take the need of a people to seize an opportunity to enter and grow strong — **through the children**. But this is nothing new. The same was done by the dictatorships of the last century. They entered with their own doctrine. Think of the Balilla, [The Fascist Youth under Mussolini] think of the Hitler Youth.... They colonized the people, they wanted to do it. So much suffering — peoples must not lose their freedom. Each people has its own culture, its own history. Every people has its own culture. But when conditions are imposed by colonizing empires, they **seek to make these peoples lose their own identity and create uniformity**. This is spherical globalization — all points are equidistant from the centre. And true globalization — I like to say this — is not a sphere. It is important to globalize, but not like the sphere but rather, like the polyhedron. Namely that each people, every part, preserves its identity without being ideologically colonized. This is ‘ideological colonization’. There is a book — excuse me I'm advertising — there is a book, perhaps the style is a bit heavy at the beginning, because it was written in 1907 in London.... At that time, the writer had seen this drama of ideological colonization and described it in that book. It is called Lord of the World. The author is Benson, written in 1907. I suggest you read it. Reading it, you'll understand well what I mean by ideological colonization.” This is the first question.

The second: What did I want to say about Paul VI? Openness to life is the condition of the Sacrament of Matrimony. A man cannot give the sacrament to the woman, and the woman give it to him, if they are not in agreement on this point, to be open to life. To the point that it can be proven that this man or this woman did not get married with the intention of being open to life, the matrimony is null. It's a cause of matrimonial nullity. Openness to life. Paul VI studied this with commission, how to help the many cases, many problems, important problems, that are even about love in the family. Everyday problems so many of them.... But there was something more. Paul VI's rejection was not only with regard to personal problems, for which he then told confessors to be merciful and understand the situation and forgive, to be understanding and merciful. He was watching the universal Neo-Malthusianism that was in progress. And, how does one recognize this Neo-Malthusianism? It is by the less-than-one percent birth rate in Italy, and the same in Spain: that Neo-Malthusianism which seeks to control humanity by [controlling] its powers. This doesn't mean that a Christian should have a succession of children. I met a woman some months ago in a parish who was pregnant with her eighth child, after having seven caesarean births. Do you want to leave seven orphans? This

tempting God. We speak about responsible parenthood. This is the way, responsible parenthood. But, what I wanted to say was that Paul VI did not have an antiquated, closed minded. No, he was a prophet who, with this, told us to beware of Neo-Malthusianism, which is coming. This is what I wanted to say. Thanks.

(In-flight Press Conference of His Holiness Pope Francis from the Philippines to Rome, 19 January 2015)

The “ideological colonization” that families must counter means certain groups attempt to “colonize the people with an idea which changes, or means to change, a mentality or a structure”. The first example that he cites is trying to colonize people with the ideas of gender theory. Then he mentions the African Bishops bringing this up at the III Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 5-19, 2014). For example Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama, president of the Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria, said in an interview that at the Synod he would voice the concerns of the African Bishops:

“Our African values are God-given, and, where they do not contradict the Gospel values, we uphold them – that is the essence of inculturation.”

“We are going to uphold those things that are dear to us. For instance that life is sacred. Nobody should take life, whether in the womb or out of the womb.

“And that marriage is between a man and a woman. Even outside of scriptural support, our culture tells us that, nature tells us that. Then, the Bible says clearly that man and woman should marry, and by the grace of God bear children, bring them up, educate them in the fear of the Lord and in the service of society.

“These are our cultures, and we're not going to compromise over them. ... We are going to humbly and respectfully share how we feel about life, ...about children, ...about marriage, and about family.”

(<https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/nigerian-archbishop-will-tell-synod-take-away-family-and-society-will-colla>)

These concerns made it into the final document of the Extraordinary Synod, *Relatio Synodi*:

“Exerting pressure in this regard on the Pastors of the Church is totally unacceptable: it is equally unacceptable for international organizations to link their financial assistance to poorer countries with the introduction of laws that establish ‘marriage’ between persons of the same sex.”

(The Synod of Bishops, The Pastoral Challenges of the Family in the Context of Evangelization, *Relatio Synodi* 56, 2014.)

Ideological Colonization: Population Control

During the time of Pope Paul VI, Pope Francis says, the ideological colonization was Neo-Malthusianism, the controlling of population growth and changing a culture’s views on openness to life and children. In fact, we find this issue referenced in the Teams of Our Lady Charter:

“We live in an age of contrasts. On the one hand, divorces, adultery, free love and ‘neo-malthusianism’ are widespread; on the other hand, a growing number of couples aspire to a thoroughly Christian life. Some of these have founded the Teams of Our Lady.”

This Neo-Malthusianism continues to be an ideological colonization. For example several times Pope Francis has addressed the imposition of this ideology on the poor:

“Healthy families are essential to the life of society. It gives consolation and hope to see so many large families that welcome children as a gift from God. They know that every child is a blessing. I have heard it said by some that families with many children and the birth of many children are among the causes of poverty. That opinion seems simplistic to me. I can say, we can all say, that the main cause of poverty is an economic system that excludes, always excludes: excludes children, the elderly, young people, the

unemployed ... and that creates the throw-away culture we live in. We are accustomed to seeing people discarded. This is the main cause of poverty, not large families.”

(Pope Francis, General Audience, 21 January 2015)

“Instead of resolving the problems of the poor ... some can only propose a reduction in the birth rate. ... To blame population growth instead of extreme and selective consumerism on the part of some, is one way of refusing to face the issues.”

“Eliminating children because they are not what their parents wanted” results from a “use and throw away” logic,” “the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary.”

(Pope Francis, Encyclical *Laudato Si'* On Care for Our Common Home, 50, 123, 24 May 2015)

Ideological Colonization: Gender Theory

But we need to add to the list of issues the ideological colonization of gender theory. Pope Francis has given this as an example a number of times.

“The crisis of the family is a societal fact. There are also ideological colonializations of the family, different paths and proposals in Europe and also coming from overseas. Then, there is the mistake of the human mind — gender theory — creating so much confusion. So, the family really is under attack. What can we do in this active secularization? What can we do with ideological colonialization? How can we go on in a culture that doesn't care about the family, where marriage is not preferred?”

(Pastoral Visit to Pompeii and Naples, Meeting with Young People on the Caracciolo Seafront, Address of the Holy Father, 21 March 2015)

The pope speaks of modern-day “Herods” that “destroy, that plot designs of death, that disfigure the face of man and woman, destroying creation.” Giving examples of these, he says:

“Let's think of the nuclear arms, of the possibility to annihilate in a few instants a very high number of human beings. Let's think also of genetic manipulation, of the manipulation of life, or of the gender theory, that does not recognize the order of creation.”

“With this attitude, man commits a new sin, that against God the Creator. ... God has placed man and woman and the summit of creation and has entrusted them with the earth. ... The design of the Creator is written in nature.”

(From an October 2014 Interview published in *Papa Francesco questa economia uccide* [Pope Francis: this economy kills] di Andrea Tornielli, Giacomo Galeazzi, as cited by <https://www.lifesitenews.com/news/pope-francis-condemns-gender-theory-a-third-time-the-family-is-under-attack>)

Pope Francis discussed gender theory in a General Audience:

Experience teaches us: in order to know oneself well and develop harmoniously, a human being needs the reciprocity of man and woman. When that is lacking, one can see the consequences. We are made to listen to one another and help one another. We can say that without the mutual enrichment of this relationship — in thought and in action, in affection and in work, as well as in faith — the two cannot even understand the depth of what it means to be man and woman.

Modern contemporary culture has opened new spaces, new forms of freedom and new depths in order to enrich the understanding of this difference. But it has also introduced many doubts and much skepticism. For example, I ask myself, if the so-called gender theory is not, at the same time, an expression of frustration and resignation, which seeks to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it. Yes, we risk taking a step backwards. The removal of difference in fact creates a problem, not a solution. In order to resolve the problems in their relationships, men and women need to speak to one another more, listen to each other more, get to know one another better, love one another more. They must treat each other with

respect and cooperate in friendship. On this human basis, sustained by the grace of God, it is possible to plan a lifelong marital and familial union. The marital and familial bond is a serious matter, and it is so for everyone not just for believers. I would urge intellectuals not to leave this theme aside, as if it had to become secondary in order to foster a more free and just society.

(Pope Francis, General Audience, 15 April 2015.)

This problem of the manipulation of sexuality or the denial of the sexual difference also comes up in his Encyclical on the Care for our Common Home:

“Human ecology also implies another profound reality: the relationship between human life and the moral law, which is inscribed in our nature and is necessary for the creation of a more dignified environment. Pope Benedict XVI spoke of an ‘ecology of man’, based on the fact that ‘man too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will’. It is enough to recognize that our body itself establishes us in a direct relationship with the environment and with other living beings. The acceptance of our bodies as God’s gift is vital for welcoming and accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father and our common home, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation. Learning to accept our body, to care for it and to respect its fullest meaning, is an essential element of any genuine human ecology. Also, valuing one’s own body in its femininity or masculinity is necessary if I am going to be able to recognize myself in an encounter with someone who is different. In this way we can joyfully accept the specific gifts of another man or woman, the work of God the Creator, and find mutual enrichment. It is not a healthy attitude which would seek ‘to cancel out sexual difference because it no longer knows how to confront it’.”

(Pope Francis, Encyclical *Laudato Si’* On Care for Our Common Home, 155, 24 May 2015)

It was the ideological colonization by proponents of gender theory that was Pope Francis’ concern in that often cited press conference, “Who am I to judge?”:

Then, you spoke about the gay lobby. So much is written about the gay lobby. I still haven’t found anyone with an identity card in the Vatican with “gay” on it. They say there are some there. I believe that when you are dealing with such a person, you must distinguish between the fact of a person being gay and the fact of someone forming a lobby, because not all lobbies are good. This one is not good. If someone is gay and is searching for the Lord and has good will, then who am I to judge him? The Catechism of the Catholic Church explains this in a beautiful way, saying ... wait a moment, how does it say it ... it says: “no one should marginalize these people for this, they must be integrated into society”. The problem is not having this tendency, no, we must be brothers and sisters to one another, and there is this one and there is that one. The problem is in making a lobby of this tendency: a lobby of misers, a lobby of politicians, a lobby of masons, so many lobbies. For me, this is the greater problem. Thank you so much for asking this question. Many thanks.

(Press Conference of Pope Francis, During the Return Flight, Apostolic Journey to Rio De Janerio on the Occasion of the XXVIII World Youth Day, 28 July 2013.)

The problem is not that people struggle with same-sex attraction. There are many distortions of our human nature that each of us struggle with throughout our lifetime. But the effects of original sin cannot remove the fact that we have been created in God’s image and likeness, as his beloved sons and daughters. Whatever temptation are our own, we can experience healing and the work of God’s grace, especially through the sacrament of reconciliation. The problem is when someone lobbies for this ideology to be colonized within the culture as a whole.

The African Example

This is exactly what is on the hearts of the African bishops at the synod. For example the United States has made clear it will not help Nigeria fight the Boko Haram terror group unless the country modify its laws regarding homosexuality, family planning and birth-control. Hear these powerful words of Bishop Emmanuel Badojo of Oyo, Nigeria:

“Is it true that there is nobody in the West who can at least help to block the funding of Boko Haram? Is it true that there is really nothing that Europe and America can do about it? ...

“I take it all back to the agenda of population control. That’s my theory. Anything that can reduce the population. There has been an inordinate alarm about the exploding populations in Africa. And anything that can be done to decrease or limit the growth of the population in Africa is quite welcome.

“In fact, recently I was alarmed when I heard Hillary Clinton, as Secretary of State, say that the United States government was committed to anything that would push the population control agenda. The United States actually said it would help Nigeria with Boko Haram only if we modify our laws concerning homosexuality, family planning, and birth control. It’s very clear that a cultural imperialism exists. In fact, I think that Africa is suffering greatly from a cultural imperialism that threatens to erode our cultural values.

“And I think, to say the least, it is criminal. Because if the West boasts of being committed to human freedom, mean it. If there are values that the West cherishes, they must not impose those values on Africa. It is part of human freedom. And at least Africa can stand up and say: “These are the values we cherish and these are the values we want to keep.” If the West cherishes freedom for gays and homosexual unions and abortion and contraception, suppose Africans are not wired that way. For the African, life is sacred. And that the world can watch hundreds of people dying in Nigeria every day and look away: it shows that even what we call Western civilization today is sick. ...

“I would like to say, for example, that the African set of values seem to be different from the modern Western world hierarchy of values. The African talks about the *sanctity of life*. In the West, there is too much insistence on the *quality of life*. That’s why for the African a child is a treasure, even if that child is going to have to go through some difficulty in growing up. In the West, if a child cannot have the best of life, then it should not live. That’s not the African world view.

“The African world view is that every life is sacred and useful and a treasure. Because the African looks at today as inferior to tomorrow. You never know what’s going to happen tomorrow, but there’s always hope. And based on that, the whole movement that in the name of family planning is pushing for what the Pope has called the “culture of death”, i.e. contraception, abortion and all such things that limits the existence of people, is abhorrent to the African, and the average African on the streets resists that.

“... And I think that all the effort to make Africans accept what is not acceptable to them is immoral, and should not be allowed to continue for any reason at all.

“You do know about Uganda, in which the government had put in place legislation against, for example, homosexuality, because it wasn’t part of the culture. And Uganda was eventually forced to change that legislation if it was going to have the benefit of a grant from the United States.

“Now, let me put it this way. The Western world claims that every kind of right is a human right, and that every behavior must have the status of a human right. We say no. Not every human behavior has the status of a human right. There are human rights, and there are human behaviors. But not every human behavior has that status. The African believes this because he always starts from the higher being. God is always there and has a place in the life of an African.

“In the West, on the other hand, for whatever reason, there is no need for that kind of God anymore. Everything is okay: a good life, and you can explain everything. The African refuses to be able to explain everything.

“I think there has been an exaggerated sense of human freedom in the West. Freedom that has no limits, that an individual is totally free. But total freedom becomes license. And the African doesn’t see the world like that. The African believes that his life is a gift, and it has worked well for Africa. That is why we still have a

keen sense of family. That is why we have a keen sense of humanity. Your family does not stop with your father's children or your mother's children, but extends to other people who have any kind of kinship with you. And it has worked well for Africa. So there is an exaggerated sense of freedom without responsibility, which probably came from the whole bill of rights of the United Nations. Now there is a whole bill of rights for children, but I'm not seeing a bill of responsibilities. So it's a totally different worldview, and I think it has provoked individualism, relativism, materialism, consumerism in the West, which is quite limited in Africa.

"I think that if people who subscribe to different lobbies in the world today want to claim that every kind of behavior must be given the status of a human right, it should be remembered that if I don't believe that, I also have a right to express myself. Why would anybody impose that other worldview on me. I think it's immoral. ...

"We think that Africa has the capacity to remind the world of the very essential things: of our humanity, the sacredness of human life, and about the beauty of the family, the beauty of accepting children from God as a gift, rather than as a burden. For many in the West, children have become a burden.

"Africa rejects an individualistic, selfish culture that thinks only about the quality of life rather than the sanctity of life. And Africa rejects the kind of culture that speaks only about freedom and no responsibility. We reject that kind of Western-style sexual education that is prevalent now, that attacks children, that seeks to "free" them and give them "choices" in their own sexual behaviors."

(<http://aleteia.org/2015/02/17/us-wont-help-fight-boko-haram-until-nigeria-accepts-homosexuality-birth-control-bishop-says/>)

In fact the Bishops of Africa together issued a declaration in June 2015, exposing this colonization as a new kind of slavery:

"... end the filthy campaigns that promote a civilization of death on our continent. This has to do with a terrifying resurgence of a colonialist spirit under the guise of the appealing names of liberty, equality, rights, autonomy, democratization and development. Condoms, contraceptives, sex education programs fabricated elsewhere, purely technical and deprived of moral content, so-called 'safe abortions,' have become commodities that are more accessible to Africans than the way of delivering integral development, of which we have such a vital need. It can no longer be denied that under the euphemism of 'sexual and reproductive health and rights,' such programs are plainly imposed as a condition for development assistance. Such is also the case of the so-called 'gender perspective,' ..."

"Africans are becoming aware of the ongoing manipulation. ... The agents of the civilization of death ... are coopting a great many partnerships of which they are, in reality, the masters. They take advantage of poverty, weakness and ignorance in order to subject peoples and governments to their blackmail.

"We, African Pastors, do not want Africans to be reduced to 'servile partners.' This is a new type of slavery! We want the dignity of our people to be respected."

"The billions of dollars allotted to the production and distribution of condoms and contraceptives and to the establishment of sex-education programs that do not respect universal moral norms are a scandal that cries to heaven for vengeance, a new slavery at the service of the idol 'money.' The objective that is clearly being pursued is, inter alia, the efficient control of demographic growth in Africa, according to the western 'model,' which has become a zero growth model in Europe today."

(Common Declaration of the Bishops of Africa and Madagascar, Written June 2015)

While in the United States, Pope Francis warned the UN against a rejection of ethics which can turn the promotion of progress into ideological colonization upon countries like those in Africa:

"Without the recognition of certain incontestable natural ethical limits and without the immediate implementation of those pillars of integral human development, the ideal of 'saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war' (Charter of the United Nations, Preamble), and 'promoting social progress and

better standards of life in larger freedom' (ibid.), risks becoming an unattainable illusion, or, even worse, idle chatter which serves as a cover for all kinds of abuse and corruption, or for carrying out an ideological colonization by the imposition of anomalous models and lifestyles which are alien to people's identity and, in the end, irresponsible."

(Pope Francis, Address to the United Nations General Assembly, 25 September 2015)

Solution: The Family

In his final general audience prior to the world meeting of families, Pope Francis again referenced these kind of colonizations, giving the family as the basis of the defense and solution.

In this covenant, the familial-conjugal union of man and woman is the generative grammar, the "golden knot", we might say. The faith draws it from the wisdom of the creation of God, who has entrusted to the family, not the care of intimacy as an end in itself, but rather the exciting project of making the world "domestic". At the beginning there was the family, at the root of this world culture that saves us... saves us from many, many attacks, from so much destruction, from so many "colonizations", like that of money or of the ideologies that threaten so much of the world. The family is the basis of our defense!

(Pope Francis, General Audience, 16 September 2015)

Finally, reflecting upon his trip the US and the World Meeting of Families, it is the hope of the Holy Father that the family, "namely the fruitful bond between man and woman," will be "the answer to the great challenge of our world."

The climax of the trip was the Meeting with Families at Philadelphia, where the horizon extended to the whole world through the "prism", so to speak, of the family. The family, namely the fruitful bond between man and woman, is the answer to the great challenge of our world, which is a double challenge: fragmentation and massification, two extremes that coexist and sustain one another, and together they sustain the consumerist economic model. The family is the answer because it is the cell of a society that balances the personal and the communal dimension, and which at the same time can be the model of a sustainable management of the goods and resources of Creation. The family is the leading subject of an integral ecology, because it is the primary social subject, which contains within itself the two basic principles of human civilization on earth: the principle of communion and the principle of fecundity. Biblical humanism presents this icon to us: the human couple, united and fecund, placed by God in the garden of the world, to cultivate and protect it.

(Pope Francis, General Audience, 30 September 2015)