

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

Tuesday, the 2nd of May, 2017

His Eminence Gerhard Ludwig Cardinal Müller, Prefect of the Congregation, hosted our meeting this morning, staying with us for over an hour. He was joined by Monsignor John Kennedy (*Capo Ufficio* of the Discipline Section) and Father Robert Geisinger, SJ, (Promoter of Justice). Shortly after, he and Father Geisinger joined the other dicastery superiors for their *ad limina* meeting with the Bishops of Cuba. Cardinal Müller's presence ensured a singularly rich dialogue touching on a broad spectrum ranging from the need to rediscover the rightful place of justice in the Church, to praise for the canonical expertise shown by colleagues in the United States, and the need for us to assist our colleagues in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

His Eminence addressed delicate moral issues such as what to do with embryos conceived in vitro, to the current state of abortion in our country, to the corruption of morals evidenced in the media. He spoke, for example, of what he heard from the Bishops of Ontario, Canada, during their *ad limina* visit last week, who spoke of the way in which the euthanasia ruling of the Canadian Supreme Court, was in part the fruit of a long, gradual swaying of public opinion to favour terminating the lives of those who concluded their lives were a burden beyond bearing. Although His Eminence did not mention it, one could not help but hearing just how real were the observations made by Malcolm Gladwell in the book he released in 2000, entitled: *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. "How difficult it is," he pondered out loud, "for the Church to have a credible voice when so many dismiss its voice citing problems with the sexual abuse of minors." He was quick to applaud the efforts made – and are still being made – in the United States to address that very issue, holding them forth as a worthy example for the Church.

We had an in-depth conversation about the nature of the Pontifical Secret: "An instrumental value that cannot be used to harm or damage another. It must be used to protect the good name of those involved."

We spoke of what might be done for one who, though manifestly innocent, cannot be assigned due to the odium engendered by negative publicity. And what of the one whose guilt cannot be determined because of a lack of corroborating evidence?

We were told that the Dicastery is quite favorably disposed to granting dispensations from SST / *Normae de gravioribus delictis* regulations requiring a JCD or ordination to assume certain roles in a penal process. It usually is enough for the Bishop or Superior General to offer the academic / professional CV of the qualified person, along with his sound argument for seeking the dispensation. Such dispensations are granted on a case-by-case basis.

We were encouraged to engage in "holy nagging" if it appears as though a case has become stalled: "Write, fax or email us! Ask if there is something you believe you could offer to move it along." Also, "If a matter is urgent, say that on the first page of the petition, or even on the envelope. The Dicastery will do its best to offer it the attention it deserves!"

We were gently reminded that *graviora delicta* cases need not be submitted in triplicate, as is the case for those dealing with marriage: a single well-prepared dossier will suffice.

Shortly after arriving back at our residence, we received the following email from Father Johannes FÜRNKRANZ Fürnkranz:

Subsequent to today's visit of the *CLSA* to the *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith* Msgr. KENNEDY informed me that the indication of materials for *favor fidei* cases which are accessible by internet would be very helpful for your association.

Thus, I wish to inform you of the internet address of our Dicastery: www.doctrinafidei.va. In the section 'Documents: Complete List' (direct link: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/doc_doc_index.htm), not only the Text of the *Norms* of 2001 can be found (direct link: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010430_favor-fidei_en.html), but also the following materials:

- Summary form according to art. 25 § 1 *Normae* (direct link: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010430_summarium-favor-fidei_en.pdf)
- Supplementary page to the Summary (direct link: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010430_summarium-allegato-matrimoni-favor-fidei_en.pdf)
- Promises of the Parties according to art. 5. *Normae* (direct link: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20010430_cautiones-favor-fidei_en.pdf)

Furthermore, as you will appreciate, the *Notes* issued by this Dicastery with regard to some practical aspects of *favor fidei* cases can be found in *Roman Replies and CLSA Advisory Opinions* 20 (2004) 65-69.

If there are any further questions with regard to *favor fidei* procedures, please do not hesitate to contact our Office!

Yours sincerely,

Rev. Johannes FÜRNKRANZ
CDF – Ufficio Matrimoniale

As our meeting drew to a close, Cardinal Müller said three things we would all do well to heed: "Permanent formation is essential for all canonists. Don't forget to find new candidates for the study of canon law – the Church is in great need of canon lawyers. And please, don't forget to help the Church in Latin America, Africa and Asia in their quest to form new canonists, whether that formation be here in Rome, or in other Pontifical universities."



Father Roger Keeler, Father Bruce Miller, Cardinal Gerhard Müller, Msgr. John J. M. Foster, Father Robert Geisinger, SJ