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# FOREWORD

We live in an age of immediate communication and instant responses. One of the corrosive effects of such an “immediate” world is the loss of a sense of history. That sense has nothing to do with the sense of nostalgia for better times in the past—in the Church and across societies. It is the sad outcome of a failure in many education systems around the world to properly value the study of history.

Massimo Faggioli is one significant remedy to that deficiency as far as the Catholic Church is concerned.

## **Catholic History and Law**

A helpful comparison is found by comparing the Church and its evolution to the establishment and growth of the rule of law because a thorough grasp of history is important to understanding good legal practice and the value and the circumstances within which a statute is created by legislatures and courts.

As any lawyer worth talking to will tell you, laws are created to remedy an abuse.

What is the abuse? All offences are against a deeply held value. A crime is an abuse of a value.

Over time, laws lose their relevance as the circumstances that the law addresses change.

The reforms of Vatican II are grounded in a theological response to a new set of ecclesial and social circumstances. They are better suited to handle the change of era we are now in the midst of than is a regressive movement to reinvent a now non-existent past.

But these reforms have not been dropped from the sky like a baby delivered by the stork! They emerged and were embraced after an even deeper reading of Catholic tradition, teaching and practice than was possible in much of the post-Tridentine Church.

The Catholic Church is only just emerging from almost 500 years of the stability that followed the Council of Trent.

To appreciate them, today's Catholic needs a well-informed sense of history and that is where the work of Massimo Faggioli is invaluable. The celebrated *La Croix International* columnist brings his learning to contemporary issues facing the Church and Massimo has an unrivaled place among contemporary commentators precisely because of his profound appreciation of Catholic doctrinal history.

## Franciscan Reform

In this volume, Massimo Faggioli addresses the key emphases of the Franciscan Pontificate, the essential challenges an evangelical and mission focused Church faces in today's world but also the divisions and resistance this Pope's leadership has created by his forthright approach to being a post-Vatican II Bishop of Rome.

Nurturing and protecting the environment that he argues for, the welcome and care of migrants and refugees that he urges and the ways he has intervened to bring peace and accord between hostile and rival nations are emblematic of the Church at the service of the world that Francis proposes.

But he was elected by his brother Cardinals for one main reason: to reform the Vatican. This project has been the constant of his Papacy since 2013. His instruments for doing this are several—the Council of Cardinals who act as a cabinet; his constant and repeated consultation of bishops and others about his proposed changes; but most especially his reinforcement of the participatory form of governance recommended by Vatican II but hardly practiced since in any real way throughout the Church: Synods that can be diocesan, regional and national and global.

The process, conclusions and recommendations of these revived forms of governance are where Pope Francis comes in for resistance he triggers from his critics.

But what is amazing about these criticisms is how historically and theologically uninformed so many of them are. And it is precisely here that Massimo Faggioli provides an indispensable remedy: an historian of theology with the tools of both disciplines at his disposal. He commands a deep grasp of the Church's tradition set in its historical contexts.

We are indebted to Massimo Faggioli not only for his fertile mind and his keen analytical skills. We are especially indebted to him as one who chronicles and explains why our period is, as Pope Francis has said, not simply an era of change but a change of eras.

*Fr. Michael Kelly, SJ*  
Publisher,  
La Croix International/English

# Francis (and Benedict)

*Francis' papacy cannot be fully understood without considering the extraordinary circumstances of his pontificate, especially the cohabitation with Benedict XVI. It is about how the papacy works via social media in today's media-friendly, global Church.*

*The extraordinary transition from Benedict to Francis—which is still ongoing and far from over—is the first transition of papal power to take place in the age of electronic social media. This is the very media that changed the daily habits of many believers precisely during Benedict's pontificate (2005-2013).*

*It is also about the unintended consequences of the coexistence of a pope and a retired predecessor who has chosen to remain at the Vatican. Francis has to deal with the fact that Benedict XVI's decision to resign opened a new page in the theology of the papacy, but with little preparation both at the theological and the juridical level.*

# The language of Pope Francis: More poetry than dogmatic orthodoxy

August, 2015

Francis of Assisi is not only one of the Church's most famous saints and legendary figures. He is also considered a pioneering writer.

Language experts regard his "Canticle of the Creatures" (*Cantico delle creature*) as one of the first texts in the history of "modern" Italian literature.

And like the saint whose name he took when elected Bishop of Rome in 2013, Pope Francis also has a compelling way of using language.

The Argentine Pope's mother tongue is Spanish, of course, and that adds a charming accent to his perfect command of Italian. He is not as fluent in other languages—like English, French and German—as were Benedict XVI and John Paul II.

However, there is a more substantial linguistic difference that marks him out from most recent two predecessors. Francis' language is much richer in metaphors, proverbs, and idioms. He tends to create new verbs and nouns (like for example *misericordiare*, "mercying," and *rapidacion*, "rapidization"). The 78-year-old Pope's language is much more figurative and expressive than communicative. It is non-academic because it is existential and derived from many years of pastoral experience as a priest, teacher, and bishop.

Francis is a "language pope" much in the same way that Jesuit historian John O'Malley says the Second Vatican Council was a "language event."

Language is not just a tool, but a distinct form for theology; it gives

form and shape to theology. The new style of discourse at Vatican II was the medium that conveyed a new message. To a particular kind of language corresponds a kind of theology.

The difference between Benedict XVI and Francis is more linguistic than doctrinal. But it is a very meaningful difference that significantly changes the way doctrine is thought out, taught and received.

In contrast to his predecessors, Francis had a teaching curriculum that focused more on literature than philosophy. His biographers recount how he organized a lecture by the famous Argentine author, Jorge Luis Borges, back in August 1965 for his students in Santa Fe.

From 1964-1965 the future pope taught Cervantes, gaucho literature (very popular in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay between 1870 and 1920) and the epic poem *Martin Fierro* by José Hernández. He underlined the importance of this experience of teaching literature in the interview he gave two summers ago to Antonio Spadaro SJ, editor of the Italian Jesuit journal, *La Civiltà Cattolica* (translated and simultaneously printed in numerous other Jesuit periodicals).

Many who closely follow and observe Pope Francis see a parallel in his manner of using words and images. It is the late Italian writer and filmmaker, Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975).

Pasolini was a public intellectual and communist at odds with the party line of the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Ostracized for being gay by the ultra-conformist social orthodoxy of post-war Italy, he was a “believing atheist” in search of Jesus. He dedicated a poem and his most famous movie, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964, arguably one of the best movies on Jesus) to John XXIII, a pope whose spiritual diary (*Journal of a Soul*) Pasolini read and analyzed (in a way not too dissimilar to Hannah Arendt, who called Roncalli “a Christian pope on the throne of Peter”).

Like Pope Francis, Pasolini was inspired by the saint of Assisi, where in 1942 he read the Gospel of Matthew for the very first time. He had a mystical soul that was not in contradiction with his passion for social justice and for education as a mean of liberation. His language



was deeply existential and he masterfully discovered and conveyed the experience of the people through their dialects and popular expressions, which he saw as pure and free from systematizing.

Pasolini found in the peripheries of urbanization a humanity that was lost in the transition from a peasant culture to the industrial society of the 20th century. His passion for the poor and disenfranchised was a passion for a reality that could wound us but also open up our soul.

His attack against the hypocrisy of moralistic Christianity brought a formidable challenge to the petty bourgeois version of Italian Catholicism between World War II and 1975, when he was murdered in one of the many unsolved political-criminal cases of contemporary Italy.

The quest for Jesus was for Pasolini rooted in his critique of modernity as dehumanizing—something strikingly similar to what Pope Francis calls “the technocratic paradigm” in the encyclical *Laudato Si’*.

Pier Paolo Pasolini and Francis, despite many differences, have a very similar approach to language as a way to liberate the Gospel from the many ideological layers built on it by the overlap between Christianity and Western civilization. The analogy between Pasolini and Francis may be one of the hidden reasons why certain Italian Catholics find the present Pope so appealing, and why the economic and political establishment does not.

The official Vatican and Catholic Italian media have recently “rediscovered” Pasolini and this is an indication of a profound convergence between Francis and Italy’s last prophetic, popular intellectual.

This issue of language is central if we want to understand Francis.

It is not just an issue for those who have to translate Francis’ words in other languages. It is also a theological issue because Francis’ language requires poetic and linguistic analysis, not just good translation.

A book recently published on theology and poetry (*Esodi del divino*, 2014) by Marcello Neri, an Italian theologian teaching in Germany, casts a light on the use of poetic language for theology. In the “toolbox” of Christian (and especially Catholic) theology there is, still today, much more philosophy than poetry. But the Christian concept of *logos* is also poetic no less than philosophical. And one finds much more poetry than philosophy in the Bible.

Theology needs more poetry, especially today. That’s because the Christian idea of *logos* has suffered from the same crisis that has afflicted the rationalist notion of *logos* in the Western world. Catholic magisterium tried to address the crisis in the relationship between faith and reason (especially between John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio* of 1998 and Benedict XVI’s speech in Regensburg, September 2006) but it did so using the same language of philosophy and therefore falling victim of the same weaknesses of Western *logos*. The Catholic magisterium’s language about “reason” has tried to demonstrate the modern-day rationality of the *logos* of faith, but this is not the issue around with the future of faith is being played out.

Poetic language is not about the certainty of dogmatic orthodoxy. Such certainty does not bring one salvation.

“The aseptic beauty of institutional religion does not transmit beauty anymore—and that is why the Church as such is no longer able to be a patron of the arts,” writes Neri.

In the Western world, Catholic theology has accepted the partition of the rationalist *logos* from the *logos* of the faith. The rationalistic turn of the Christianity and the subsequent crisis of western rationalism have obscured the poetic *logos* of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Francis has shown himself to be a truly global pope and a key reason is because his language is not constrained by the classic western discourse on *logos* and its consequences on Catholic theology. The globalization of Catholicism is being hastened as the Pope and the rest of Church find new linguistic expressions for a faith ever ancient, ever new.

# The political heterodoxy of Pope Francis

November, 2015

The present moment in the life of the Catholic Church is in some sense similar to the immediate post-Vatican II. Bernard Häring said of the day when Vatican II ended (December 8, 1965), “the council begins today.” A big moment in the life of the Church has just developed under our eyes—the Bishops’ Synods of 2014-2015. Now it is about the beginning of the Church of synodality. It is uncharted territory: we have an idea of what synodality is, what it requires, and how Pope Francis sees it, for he described it in the speech of October 17, 2015 to the Synod. But we do not know if and how it will work in a Church that is not used to it (for these last ten centuries, more or less).

There are though many differences between the first few days of the post-Vatican II period and this post-synodal period. Not only because a council is not a synod, but because Francis has to deal with a Church where many basic distinctions about and within Catholicism seem to be lost, especially among those who have a voice as “orthodox Catholics” in the public square. But it is not only their problem, if we just look at the difficulty of the Synod debates to articulate properly the relationship between doctrine and theology—symptom of a widespread difficulty to have a healthy relationship between the doctrine and theology in the Catholic Church of today.

There is one more reason that makes the Church debates of today different from the theological debates of fifty years ago, and it is about the politicization and ideologization of the different positions in the Church. The polemics of the representatives of traditionalist Catholic orthodoxy against the changes Francis is accused to introduce are moved also (and sometimes mostly) by political motives, that is, by issues related to a political interpretation of Vatican II and especially of the post-Vatican II period. For these ideologues, the changes in

culture starting in the 1970s (changes mostly about sexual morality) were caused by Vatican II. In this sense, for them Vatican II is the moment zero in the history of the moral decay of Western civilization.

This is a very questionable (to say the least) view of the last fifty years of global history and of the relations between Catholic theology and culture in the Western world. Nevertheless it is a very powerful narrative that is challenged by what Francis says and does (which does not mean that Francis does not see disturbing symptoms of decline in the western world). Since the very beginning of the pontificate of Francis, traditionalist quarters of Catholicism (in the United States of America especially) have crafted a narrative about Pope Francis' "heterodoxy." If we just look at the articles published by conservative and traditionalist Catholic magazine and journals (to say nothing of the Catholic blogosphere) in these last two and a half years (especially after the publication of the interview with the Jesuit-run magazine *La Civiltà Cattolica* of September 19, 2013) we have different versions of "warnings" against the possibility that the conclave of March 2013 elected as bishop of Rome somebody whose theology is not fully Catholic. This is interesting because all this started *before* the beginning of the debate about divorce and remarriage (with the lecture of Cardinal Kasper to the consistory of February 2014), which is the issue that now the most prominent of these "anti-heretics" have picked to fuel their battle against Francis.

Why has Pope Francis been subject from the very beginning to this kind of extremist criticism coming from the most pious, devout, and tradition-minded but also ideologized quarters of American Catholicism? The narrative about Catholicism coming from these quarters is politically shaped by the trauma of the culture wars, and presents an ambiguous relationship between a social-political doctrine and the sense of the role of Catholic doctrine a relationship where Catholic doctrine is exploited in order to defend a social-political paradigm more than to permeate the pastoral ministry of the Church.

It has become clear by now that Pope Francis has violated the social-political agreement that flourished within Catholic conservativisms during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI. Pope Francis

broke the taboo thanks to the two key words of his pontificate: the poor and mercy. Being poor has become (also for some Catholics in the Western hemisphere, I would say) not a social-economic condition, but a heresy proving false the universal promise of wealth: talking about the poor therefore challenges not only assumptions about the use of tax money or allocation of resources, but challenges also a political-religious identity. Much of the change going on with Francis is that a “social Catholic” like him re-proposes the essence of a theology that is indigestible to the neo-liberal economic culture, to an individualistic mentality that finds it hard to accept the ethical demands of Catholic morality as an integral part of the idea of the “common good,” and to a gentrified Catholicism that would like to make Jesus Christ a self-righteous moralist.

The emphasis on mercy, on the other hand, violates the “law and order” mentality of the self-appointed guardians of Catholic orthodoxy. For them Catholicism is unchangeable doctrine that cannot be contaminated by theological developments and by the idea of the pastorality of doctrine. Francis responded to this kind of criticism with one of his most impressive speeches, the one of October 24, 2015 at the end of the Synod. The Synod, said Francis, “was about bearing witness to everyone that, for the Church, the Gospel continues to be a vital source of eternal newness, against all those who would ‘indoctrinate’ it in dead stones to be hurled at others. It was also about laying closed hearts, which bare the closed hearts which frequently hide even behind the Church’s teachings or good intentions, in order to sit in the chair of Moses and judge, sometimes with superiority and superficiality, difficult cases and wounded families.”

The heterodoxy that some see in Francis is not theological, but political. This is why the attacks coming from conservative bloggers and pundits are not really about Francis’ theology, but about the social and political consequences of Francis pontificate for an ideological interpretation of Catholicism. To paraphrase Carl von Clausewitz, the theological “civil war” declared by some is a continuation of politics by other means. Luckily, this is happening only in a very limited space in the northern Atlantic, and it is a minor sideshow in what is now global Catholicism.

# Populism vs. elitism in the Church

February, 2016

Pope Francis is for sure an anti-elitist: his biography, his language, and his message are firmly rooted in a “theology of the people.” But is this enough to label him as a populist? The question is important for two reasons. The first one has to do with understanding Francis and the opposition to him; the second reason is that we live in an age of populism and it is necessary to comprehend how much the Catholic Church is part of this phenomenon.

The first point: populism and the reactions against Francis’ Catholicism. One of the typical ways to dismiss Pope Francis’ call for a more just social and economic system is to label him as a populist. For Francis’ opponents, it was not enough the historic words of a pope about the populist candidate for the presidency of the USA, Donald Trump: “A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian. This is not in the Gospel. As far as what you said about whether I would advise to vote or not to vote, I am not going to get involved in that. I say only that this man is not Christian if he has said things like that. We must see if he said things in that way and in this I give the benefit of the doubt.” For the most visible of the anti-Francis Catholic pundits the solution was easy, that is, to call both Trump and Francis populists, as we could see from the latest column by the conservative Catholic columnist of the *New York Times*.

Between the pope from Argentina and the billionaire running for president of the United States of America there are many more differences than similarities. But the accusation of populism against Francis is revelatory of moral and intellectual landscape of the Western world the Church lives in. First of all there is the issue of who gets to accuse the pope of populism. It is interesting to see that those

Catholics that are ideologically the polar opposite of Pope Francis are the expression of a Catholic populism that is typical of the elites. The above-mentioned columnist of the *New York Times* (an alumnus of Harvard University, one of the symbols of American elitism) a few months ago played with the typically populist idea that professional theologians do not have a voice that has to be respected (at least) in the public arena, when “civil war in the Church” is at stake. The late Justice Antonin Scalia of the US Supreme Court (another Harvard University alumnus) embodied a Catholicism that reveled in the scorn of so-called sophisticates educated by the secular academic elite and informed by mainstream media.

Second, the idea of populism is very complex in the Church and it relates to the nostalgia for a Church where it was clear who was in charge and the others who were the audience. For example, it is clear the elitist nature of the accusation of populism against the liturgical reform and the turn to the vernacular languages. Sophisticated intellectuals like Agatha Christie, Cristina Campo and more recently German author Martin Mosebach are not exactly making a popular case advocating for the return of the Latin in the Mass. But their appeal is for a return to a liturgy that was popular in the sense that the people practiced it even if the people did not understand it. Now very few Catholics can understand Latin and this call for a return to the Latin mass is made in defense of a supposedly popular, pre-Vatican II Catholicism, but it is inherently elitist.

Every discourse on theological populism needs to relate to an idea of “the people.” The fact is that it has become difficult to identify “the people” in the Church as well as in our political discourse. The 20th century was the age of the mobilization of the masses in the nation state as well as in the Church. That age has been replaced by a much more fragmented social and ecclesial body. It used to be easy to identify the Catholic elite with the clergy, Catholic intellectuals, and Catholic political leaders. Now the leadership role of the clergy is in deep trouble, and there are Catholic lay leaders whose voice matter more than many bishops and cardinals together. On the other hand, “the people” for the Church is still important but much more as a theological idea (the people of God) than as a homogeneous, socially

tangible reality. Divided ideologically, socially, and ethnically, the globalization of Catholicism has to deal with the need to redefine who its people are. Those who accuse Francis of populism use a purely political understanding of populism and the theological implications of the issue of what “people” means for the Church of today are very distant from their worries.

But is there an issue with populism in the Catholic Church of today? There is, but it is different from the shallow analogies between Francis and Donald Trump. One of the unexpected consequences of Vatican II was the beginning of a very profound change of elites in contemporary Catholicism. Understanding the consequences of this is a huge task that runs below the surface of Francis’ pontificate. The pope is aware of the change in the elites of the Catholic Church that took place in the last fifty years more or less. It is interesting to look at the way he addresses two key players in the arena where the battle for Church leadership takes place: the bishops and the new ecclesial movements. Francis addresses bishops in a way that reveals the pope’s take on the shortcomings of the “episcopal” ecclesiology of Vatican II. But the bishops are not the only ones being told about the illusions of their eternal leadership in the Church: Francis’ addresses to the Catholic movements (Communion and Liberation, Neocatechumenal Way, etc.) always contain the idea that the Church does not need elites that are isolated from the rest of the ecclesial community.

Does this mean that Francis is a populist? Yes, but only if your perspective is based on political considerations—as it happens to be the case for most of the opponents of Francis. The accusation of populism against Francis not only avoids completely the fact that a Church as a people of God leader is constitutionally a populist. It also reveals that for most political and religious commentators in mainstream media today the spectrum of the acceptable political cultures is the narrow space between traditionalism and conservatism on the right and moderate-reformist on the left. In our age radicalism has become the ultimate heresy, both in the Catholic Church and in the world dominated by the technocratic paradigm. The call for social and economic justice is easily reduced to populism (which for some is a variation of Communism) in a world where politics is



in retreat, authoritarianism is on the rise, and the Catholic Church is one of the last global institutions with the courage, the *gravitas*, and the resources to speak truth to power. In this the paradox is that the Catholic Church, a system that is afraid of introducing democratic ways of governing itself, is in today's world one of the firmest believers in democracy that is not just procedural, but social in nature, that is, at the service of the whole people. This is what the accusers of Francis of populism do not like in this pope.

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# Francis, the refugee crisis, and the ideological conversions to Catholicism

April, 2016

For a pope often accused of populism, Francis proves very successful in building relations between the Rome and the other capitals of Christian geopolitics: Constantinople (“the second Rome” of Byzantine Christianity), Moscow (“the third Rome” of Russian Orthodoxy), and New York (the cultural capital of the USA, the most militant Christian country in the world). This ability of Francis to connect has been part of the pontificate from the beginning, but lately things accelerated. In just eight days between April 8 and April 16, 2015 the pope published the critically important post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, handled diplomatically the presence in the Vatican of a candidate to the presidency of the USA, and traveled to Greece together with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew and Hieronimus II, Archbishop of Athens and all Greece to meet with the refugees being held on the island of Lesbos.

What is interesting about Pope Francis’ travels under is not just the geography of where he travels. There is also another geography of this pontificate: the map drawn by the travels of those who go to him and with him, the map of those figures Francis manages to attract and involve with him and his initiatives. During the last two months Francis has “attracted” to him not only the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew (a real partner in dialogue for Francis), but unexpectedly also the Patriarch of Moscow (for the historic meeting in communist-ruled Cuba—one of the ironies of Church history) and in Lesbos also the leader of the Orthodox Church of Greece, one of most reluctant to dialogue with Roman Catholicism. This has ecumenical consequences for Catholicism as well as for Orthodoxy: Francis is attracting the hierarchs of Eastern Orthodoxy and helping them deal

with the intransigent and anti-ecumenical fringes—which is especially important now, at the eve of the historic Panorthodox Synod that will take place in Crete next June.

But Francis has also attracted—in a way that was non-ritual for the Vatican, the oldest diplomacy of the Western world—the Jewish socialist candidate for the US presidency, Bernie Sanders. This is not only the indication of new and surprising political alignments between the Vatican of Francis and world politicians. It also says something about the resilience of the Vatican and of papal Rome on the world scene. Politically speaking, the Vatican is a relic of the past that owes more to the political history of Europe than to the martyrdom of Paul and Peter. But there is a resilience of that place, its symbolism, and its ability to recognize and interpret world events, that is the fruit of the Church's ability to adapt to changed conditions. In 1870 the papacy lost Rome and temporal power and the popes between Pius IX and Pius XI grieved about that loss; but after Vatican II Paul VI called the loss of temporal power providential. With John Paul II and Benedict XVI the Vatican became the center of Church politics in the sense of centralization in Rome of everything in the global Catholic Church; under Francis, Rome is the springboard for a synodal and collegial Church and for a Church that is not wedded to Europe or to a particular culture.

It is not clear where Francis' effort will lead. But it is clear that Francis' view of Rome and the Vatican (which is not entirely flawless—as bishop of Rome he should use more often the Basilica of St. John in Lateran) is a response not just to his ecclesiology, but also to his reading of the signs of our time. The trip to the Greek island of Lesbos was an ecumenical pilgrimage and a tribute on the shores of that immense inter-religious cemetery that the Mediterranean has become because of the waves of refugees trying to escape the war. One of the signs of the time is the illusion of European politicians to get rid of the multi-religious and multi-cultural DNA of Europe and the Mediterranean. The emphasis of Francis on the fact that this is “the most serious humanitarian crisis since World War II” is another reminder that today it takes a pope from Argentina to remind Europe what Europe should be.

The attractiveness of Pope Francis for Sanders and the Orthodox Churches is matched by the hostility of the European political establishment against the social message of this pope. The words of the pope, Bartholomew, and Hieronimus in Lesbos were a very clear message to the policies of the European Union and Turkey about the refugees, but also the signal that there are parallels between the post-World War II period and this moment. The period immediately after 1945 was the beginning of a Christian ecumenism involving (slowly, cautiously) also the Roman Catholic Church. Something similar is happening with the humanitarian crisis: this could be the birth of a new ecumenical internationalism trying to help in some way the victims of the explosion of the Arab world.

This is not a complex geopolitical architecture, but one of the profound intuitions of Pope Francis. The refugees do not know theology, but they know what the Church is. This is the pastorality of doctrine that Francis has in mind and the response to those who complain about the lack of clarity in Francis' teaching and demean pastorality as mere ecclesiastical niceness. But evidently the pastoral emphasis of Francis is something bigger, when the pope takes with him on the papal flight to Rome twelve Muslim refugees. The symbolical act of liberating refugees from the camps where they are detained is also an act of Church reform. The irony is that this disruptive political act of Francis was made possible thanks also to the extraordinary role of Vatican State, to its extraterritoriality, and to the legacy of ancient temporal power of the pope.

These last couple of weeks is another of those moments when Francis put this pontificate deeply at odds with a century of ideological conversions to Catholicism of conservatives and reactionaries, from Carl Schmitt in Nazi Germany to Richard John Neuhaus in the USA of the post-Reagan "culture wars." It is not an accident that the political conversions to Catholicism were coming from nationalists who were looking for an ideological refuge from cosmopolitan modernity. It is not an accident that the response to them is about the global and ecumenical spirit of Catholicism.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



**Dr. Massimo Faggioli**, a married lay Roman Catholic, is professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University, Philadelphia. He lives in Philadelphia with his wife and their two children.

Massimo worked in the John XXIII Foundation for Religious Studies in Bologna between 1996 and 2008 and received his Ph.D. from the University of Turin in 2002. His doctoral dissertation discussed the history of the appointment of bishops after the Council of Trent. He has studied theology at the Karl-Eberhards-Universität Tübingen and worked as a post-doctoral researcher in the Faculté de Théologie et Sciences Religieuses at the Université Laval, Québec.

Moving to the US in 2008, Massimo was a visiting fellow at the Jesuit Institute at Boston College, and taught at the University of St. Thomas (Minnesota) from 2009 to 2016, where he was the founding director of the Institute for Catholicism and Citizenship.

Massimo writes regularly on the Church, religion and politics for Italian and English-speaking newspapers and journals. He has been a columnist for *La Croix International* since 2014. He is also a contributing writer for *Commonweal* and for the Italian magazine *Il Regno*. He served as co-chair of the study group Vatican II Studies for the American Academy of Religion between 2012 and 2017.

His books and articles have been published in more than ten languages. His scholarly essays focus on Vatican II, on Church history in Italy, on the application of the council of Trent, on the diplomacy of the Vatican, and on the new Catholic movements. His most recent publications include *The Rising Laity. Ecclesial Movements since Vatican II* (Paulist, 2016).