

## **Background Information on the Pastoral Appeal for Priests and Other Interested Parties**

**What we ask of priests:** Please consider signing the Appeal and sending a copy to your bishop (see [www.curapastoralis.org](http://www.curapastoralis.org)). By its nature as an act of pastoral care and priestly witness to Christ and his Gospel, the Appeal calls for personal commitment rather than anonymity. Moreover, we cannot rightly remain anonymous while asking the bishops to accept the challenges of acting publicly.

The priests who sign are engaged in a pastoral effort, not a political initiative. They act in their own names, not as members of a group or movement within the Church. We ask that in discussing the Appeal, they make clear that they are speaking for themselves, not for the others who have signed.

We recognize that there may be priests who agree with the basic concerns and the affirmations of the Gospel expressed in the Appeal, but who for legitimate prudential reasons choose not to sign. We ask for your prayers.

**Rationale:** The Appeal is based on two observed facts and a resulting pastoral judgment. The facts are these: 1) the serious pastoral problem and damage caused by the resurgence of a harmful and long-rejected approach to the Christian moral life and 2) the inadequacy of past and current ecclesial efforts to bring an end to this false approach. The pastoral judgment is this: given that history, we are now in need of a formal correction of these errors and reaffirmation of the Gospel expressed with the full authority of the apostolic office; otherwise an already detrimental situation will worsen significantly.

It is essential to note that this harmful approach is not new and that its principles have been repeatedly and precisely corrected by the Church. Hence, the pastoral assistance we request in the Appeal would not require any speculation on the part of a bishop, but simply that he would use his full apostolic authority to reaffirm Christ's teachings and the Church's correction of these errors. This form of apostolic witness to Christ and his Gospel has a unique efficacy for overcoming the damage caused by error because it is a divinely established and mandated means for bringing his grace and truth to the human race and for gathering them into the faith and life of the Church (see Lk 10:16; Mt 28:18-20; Acts 2:42; I Thes 2:13).

**Goals:** As priests responding to the harm done by this approach, we desire: 1) to witness publicly to Christ and his teachings, thereby providing counsel for those who are in doubt or misled, solidarity for those remaining faithful to the Gospel in difficult circumstances, and encouragement to our brother priests to minister with compassion, perseverance, and the authentic Gospel rather than to give way to impatience, passivity, or deliberate ambiguity; 2) to draw attention to the Church's decades-long pastoral efforts to heal the damage by correcting those errors; 3) to request, in light of the inadequacy of those past efforts, that each bishop consider using his full apostolic authority in order to reaffirm the Gospel and to refute the errors; and 4) to present our pastoral concerns and appeal in a fraternal and filial manner.

**Style and scope:** The language is pastoral and religious, while minimizing the use of specialized terminology from theology and canon law. This best reflects the heart of our concern which, although touching matters of doctrine, is focused above all on providing timely and effective assistance for those wounded by this harmful approach to the Christian life. We believe the style also suits the fraternal and filial nature of the Appeal.

The ten affirmations of the Gospel presented in the Appeal are positive expressions of the Catholic faith meant to address some of the fundamental issues raised by the mistaken approach, not to provide a comprehensive analysis or refutation of those errors.

**Text and Translations:** The official text in English and authorized translations can be found at [www.curapastoralis.org](http://www.curapastoralis.org).