

The Pastoral Theology of Pope Francis

Bishop Robert W. McElroy

National Federation of Priests' Councils

April 27, 2017

A. Pastoral theology as distinct from yet linked to dogmatic theology, moral theology and spiritual theology.

B. Foundational Principles:

The Joy of the Gospel: the order of nature and the order of grace

Our radical dependence upon God

The limitless nature of God's mercy

The call to sacrifice and the Cross

The rejection of judgmentalism

The Embrace of the Sacramental life of the Church

C. Pastoral Care rooted in the Gospel finds its central focus in the merciful love of God rather than in judging human failure.

1. Christ embraces, heals and then exhorts

2. The Church as a Field Hospital

D. Virtue, The Moral Law and Conscience

1. The virtuous life as the imitation of Christ
2. Virtues versus values
3. Supererogation
4. The teachings of the Church reflect moral law
5. The hierarchy of truths
6. Conscience as a call to responsibility, not a get out of jail free card
7. The Allure of Rationalization

E. God does not ask perfection of us; all God asks is that we do the best we can in the sometimes overwhelming circumstances of our daily life

F. Pastoral care rooted in the Gospel reflects accompaniment

"The church will have to initiate everyone — priests, religious and laity — into this art of accompaniment which teaches us to remove our sandals before the sacred ground of the other." Joy #/69

G. Pastoral action demands a spirit of inclusion

"The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak....Frequently we act as arbiters of grace rather than its facilitators. But the Church is not a tollhouse." Joy #47

The pastoral logic of integration

H. An application of pastoral theology to specific controverted issues:

- a. The Beauty of Marriage as a Graced Yet Realistic Commitment in the World
- b. The Moral Dignity of Gay Men and Women.
- c. Transgender Issues