

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

April 24, 2016

Amoris Laetitia

by Frank Himmel

Pope Francis recently released a document on family relations called *Amoris Laetitia*, Latin for "The Joy of Love." This document does not change the official Catholic Church position on issues of divorce and remarriage, homosexual marriage, cohabitation, and similar situations.



It does, however, call for far less stringent application of that position. Biblical teaching is termed an "ideal," and those who do not live up to that ideal are still to be included in churches, at the discretion of local priests, so they may receive "pastoral care."

Paragraph 296 concludes:

Consequently, there is a need "to avoid judgements which do not take into account the complexity of various situations" and "to be attentive, by necessity, to how people experience distress because of their condition."

An example of such complexities and distress is given in paragraph 298.

The divorced who have entered a new union, for example, can find themselves in a variety of situations, which should not be pigeonholed or fit into overly rigid classifications leaving no room for a suitable personal and pastoral discernment. One thing is a second union consolidated over time, with new children, proven fidelity, generous self giving, Christian commitment, a consciousness of its irregularity and of the great difficulty of going back without feeling in conscience that one would fall into new sins.

Jesus said, "Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9). Catholic officials say that if you divorce and remarry but live in the new relationship a long time, are faithful in that relationship, have children, etc., and would be stressed about ending that second relationship, while it is not ideal, it is acceptable. *Amoris Laetitia* applies similar reasoning to some cohabitation relationships.

Where did people get the notion that God's commands are just some ideal? That time turns wrong relationships into right ones? That difficulties in doing what the Lord says justify disobedience? Jesus noted in this divorce/remarriage context that some make themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

The bottom line is, while the Catholic Church is not yet changing its official position on this area of conduct, it is ready to ignore violations of it. That puts Catholicism in line with numerous Protestant groups – and many who call themselves churches of Christ. ■

Boycotts

by Frank Himmel

A retired English Army officer was once made land agent for the estate of an Irish absentee owner. Despite the fact that crop scarcity made the natives quite poor, the hard-nosed agent refused to reduce rents and attempted to evict any tenants who could not pay in full. As a result, he was ostracized to the point that his own servants left him. Attempts were even made to cut off his food supply. Public opinion inflamed against him so much that he had to import British soldiers for protection. In time, the populace made life so intolerable for the agent that he fled back to England. His name? Captain Charles Cunningham Boycott. Thus began the *boycott*, the practice of cooperatively refusing to do business with someone in order to force him to change his position.

Boycotts have become increasingly popular. Numerous groups, both liberal and conservative, trumpet their refusal to do business with certain people or companies or jurisdictions due to moral or political stances. Such action can be quite persuasive. Lost dollars effectively communicate to some who are otherwise not disposed to listen.

Should Christians refuse to do business with companies that in one way or another promote wrong? That is

our prerogative. It may be effective in upholding right. Are we morally obligated to take such action? That is another question. Consider a New Testament example.

1 Corinthians 10 mentions the meat market or shambles (KJV). Often these butcher shops purchased the meat they sold from idolatrous priests, who received it as sacrifices to heathen gods. In some cases these markets actually adjoined the idol's temple. Clearly, they were to an extent supporting idol worship. Perhaps for that reason, some Christians chose to avoid them (Romans 14:2, 14).



Was such avoidance mandatory? No. Paul advised, “Eat anything that is sold in the meat market, without asking questions for conscience’ sake” (1 Corinthians 10:25). The meat market owner’s support of idolatry did not make it sinful to buy or eat his product.

Besides, then as now, it is a practical impossibility to trace all connections to wrong activity.

Who we will or will not do business with is an individual choice. In this context, Paul urges Christians to use mature judgment, not to think merely in terms of right and wrong. He says we need to consider factors like our influence (“if someone sees you . . . dining in the idol’s temple” [8:10]), the effect that being in an ungodly environment might have on us, where this might lead, how closely associated with wrong this makes us, etc. He concludes, “Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense . . .” (10:31b-32).

Service Leaders for the Week

	Sunday Morning	Sunday Evening	Wednesday Evening
GREETER	Greg Winget	Chris Brooks	David Gray
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Paul Richmond	Albert Lee Harrison
OPENING PRAYER	Howard Moore	TBD	
LORD’S SUPPER			
BREAD	Jason Chandler	Jason Chandler	
CUP	Brian Wilson	Brian Wilson	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	Carlos Garcia		
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Singing	Steven Turner
CLOSING PRAYER	Chris Brooks	TBD	Kerry Gray