

Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News

Is Roman Catholicism Dying?

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The Decline of Romanism in Europe

A recent Associated Press article stated: “Across Europe, the continent that nurtured [Roman Catholicism]... churches, convents and chapels stand empty and increasingly derelict as faith and church attendance shriveled over the past half century.... It is a phenomenon seen over much of Europe’s [Roman Catholic] heartland from Germany to Italy and many nations in between.”¹ This is no exaggeration. Romish church buildings, only a few short years ago packed to capacity with worshippers, stand empty, or are being converted to secular uses, such as cafes, concert stages, clothes shops, night clubs, even climbing walls.

Let us consider just three European countries.

In Germany, the Roman Catholic institution is facing what an article published by a Roman Catholic website called “an unprecedented crisis, with more than half a million baptized [Roman] Catholics leaving the [Roman Catholic] Church in 2022, according to figures released by the German Bishops’ Conference on June 28 [2023].”² This was the highest number of departures *ever recorded* in Germany, double what it was in 2020. To break the figures down: 522,821 Roman Catholics left their “Church”; the total number, including deaths, was over 708,000; while during the same period there were 155,173 Romish “baptisms”, and 1,447 new members added. Clearly, new membership was minuscule compared with departures. Although almost a quarter of Germany’s population was still officially Roman Catholic at the end of 2022, a report in 2021 by Catholic News Agency Deutsch noted that one in three German Papists were considering leaving the “Church” of Rome. No question about it, Roman Catholicism in Germany is in serious decline.

In Belgium, until recently a very Roman Catholic country, a 2018 study by the PEW research group revealed that of the 83% of the population who said they were raised “Christian” (they meant Romanist), only 55% still considered themselves so, and only 10% still attended services regularly. In Flanders, Belgium, an area with monumental cathedrals filled with great works of art, the 300 towns have on average about six Roman Catholic church buildings each – but frequently there are not enough people to fill even one.

The city of Mechelen, Belgium, has some two dozen Roman Catholic church buildings, but the mayor said, “In my city we have a brewery in a church, we have a hotel in a church, we have a cultural centre in a church, we have a library in a church. So we have a lot of new destinations for the churches.” A former Roman Catholic church building was having a café and a concert stage added, and the plan was to convert the building into “a new cultural hot spot in the heart of Mechelen”, close to where the archbishop of Belgium lives. Not far away a former Franciscan church building was converted into a luxury hotel.

What about the Republic of Ireland, which for so much of its history has been staunchly, indeed rabidly, Roman Catholic? In recent years it has made a massive about-turn, with the “Church” of Rome and its priests going from being the dominant force in all aspects of everyday Irish life for

centuries to being rejected *en masse* by vast numbers of Irish people.

As one Irish priest said, “I grew up in a time in the 1970s and 80s when [Roman Catholic] churches were full for Sunday mass. If you didn’t come early, you didn’t get a seat. That has changed now.”³ During those decades masses were sometimes so crowded that people had to sit on the steps outside. But by 2021, a survey by the Association of Catholic Priests found that only about 30% of Irish Roman Catholics attended mass regularly. In 1975 it was 91%. Not only that, but the numbers of men entering the Romish priesthood in Ireland has declined hugely too. This, added to the fact that over a third of Irish priests are now over 60 years of age, is just another sign of the phenomenal decline of Romanism in Ireland.

These three European countries can be taken as broadly representative of most others across Western Europe. What is causing this mass exodus from Roman Catholicism in Europe?

Without doubt, for vast numbers of Europeans the revelations of the priestly sexual abuse of children, and Rome’s shocking handling of this evil, was the final straw. The worldwide scandal, and the Vatican’s deliberate cover-ups, shocked and angered multiplied millions of Roman Catholics. This is almost certainly the single greatest factor contributing to the decline of Roman Catholicism in Europe and in many other parts of the world. As the Irish priest quoted above put it, the priestly sexual abuse of children concentrated minds, and a point was reached when all the pent-up grievances boiled over, and “there was just rage against the [Roman Catholic] Church.”⁴

There was just rage against the Roman Catholic Church. It sounds like France prior to the French Revolution. The French people reached a point of such rage against their priests that they were ripe for revolution and when it came, they exploded in an orgy of violence against Romanism and its priests. This did not occur in Ireland, but the rage was real, especially in the wake of the priestly abuse of children. Irish Roman Catholics were devastated to discover that their cherished priests, whom they regarded as holy men and held in reverence and awe bordering on worship, could commit such sins against their little ones.

But there are other factors causing the mass exodus as well. A significant one has been the social and moral changes since the 1960s, and the rise of materialism and secularism. For millions of westerners religion is viewed as a superstition, a relic of earlier and unenlightened times, promoting an outmoded morality that stifles sexual “freedom”, i.e. promiscuity.

And another factor, especially in countries such as Ireland, was the overwhelmingly oppressive influence of the Roman Catholic religion in every aspect of peoples’ lives. In this age of anything-goes freedom, this was no longer acceptable, even to Roman Catholics whose own parents and grandparents would have been fanatical blind followers of their priests in everything. As the Irish priest quoted above admitted, “The [Roman Catholic] Church had a tremendous amount of power within Ireland that created huge resentments.... There was definitely an over-reach within Catholicism. We were involved in *everything*. We were involved in all aspects of life. I think we took our eye off [Romish] evangelisation. We kind of catechised the young people in school, and then we said, ‘OK, that’s it for life.’ So we never invested in them after that... with the result that the [Roman Catholic] faith suffered.”⁵

The Growth of Romanism in Africa and Other Parts of the World

Although Roman Catholicism is in trouble in many parts of Europe, this is not the case in Africa and various other parts of the world, where it is very much alive and even growing. In some places, in fact, it is experiencing phenomenal growth. And the Vatican hierarchy is well aware of this, and is preparing for massive changes in the near future.

So Is Roman Catholicism Dying?

No, it is not. It is certainly diminishing, it is shrinking, in much of Europe and the West, shedding members at a phenomenal rate; and if this was to continue it would in time almost cease to exist in

these places. However, the Vatican is taking radical steps to arrest this decline. Although it is declining in some parts of the West, it is not declining in other parts of the world, nor even in all parts of the West; and it may very well revive in some or many of those Western lands where it is at present rapidly diminishing. However, if it does flourish once again in these places, it will do so because, like the chameleon it is, it will have changed its colours. We do not know what the future holds for each and every part of the world. All we know for certain is that the mighty Roman Catholic institution will never cease to exist – not until the Lord Himself destroys it at the end of the world. This is crystal clear from Bible prophecy (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:1-7; Rev. 20:19-21).

Possible Scenarios in the Near Future

One possible (but very unlikely) scenario which may unfold in the future is that Rome will simply cut its losses in Europe, Canada, Australia, etc., and concentrate all its energy on “evangelising” and taking control of large swathes of the Third World, where it is experiencing much growth. But I believe this to be an extremely remote possibility, because the West is not only its historic epicentre but also the source of most of its vast wealth and power. It is far more likely that it will indeed massively increase its “evangelism” and focus on the Third World, while *at the same time* doing all in its power to win back those parts of Europe which it is losing.

A far more realistic scenario is that as time goes by Roman Catholicism may experience a revival in the West. I do not mean a biblical revival, for Rome is not Christian, but in some Western lands a renewed interest in and commitment to Roman Catholicism may occur, so that it again experiences the growth it knew in the past.

There are those who believe this may already have begun in Ireland, for example, where some Romish religious orders and movements are seeing an uptick in interest in their work. The Dominican Order in Ireland, in particular, has in recent years seen an increase in the number of young men joining it to prepare for the priesthood. One priest said, “I think in Ireland, at the moment, there’s a real hunger for people to learn more about their faith. And I think that is something we see a lot coming through in the younger generations.” He said that many people in Ireland “have not really abandoned the faith, they’ve just kind of drifted. And very often the reason they have drifted from the faith is because they never really understood it to begin with. So I think for a lot of younger people now, when they begin to see the richness of our faith and the great tradition that we have – and the great learning and the wisdom and the philosophy and the beauty of our faith – when people connect with that, they really want to be able to communicate that to other people.”⁶

It is true that in a land like Ireland, where Romanism has dominated for so many centuries and has entered into the very warp and woof of all aspects of society, it is difficult for the people to cast it off completely. And it may very well be that if the Irish priesthood could in time shake off the disgrace and shame caused by the priestly sex scandals of recent decades, it is just possible that Ireland may see a revival of interest in and the growth of Romanism once again. Rome has been in trouble before in its long and chequered history, and has recovered, bounced back, and carried on. As this priest went on to say: “When you look at the history of the Dominican Order [which arrived in Ireland in 1224], as you look to the history of the [Roman Catholic] Church in Ireland, there’s a lot of ups and downs over the centuries and persecutions. And we’ve experienced good times and bad times, but we’re still here, 800 years later.”

He has a point. In the same way as younger generations often fall for the lies they are told about Communism, instead of learning the *real* history of what it has done to ruin one country after another, and they become convinced that it is the greatest force for good in the world, so too younger generations may once again fall for Rome’s lies and cover-ups of its history, and may come to believe that things did not happen the way their parents said they happened. This occurred in France after the French Revolution to a large extent, where Romanism made a comeback even though at the time of the revolution it was overthrown. Time will tell if it will happen again in Ireland or in other European countries.

In fact, given the direction the Francis pontificate and the Jesuit Order are deliberately taking the Roman Catholic institution, Rome is already re-inventing itself, as it has done so often in the past, this time by converting itself into a liberal, Socialist/Communist, Woke institution. This is the solution being promoted by the Jesuits and other leftists within the hierarchy, and by Francis himself. The Jesuits are forcing the Roman Papacy to turn its back on traditionalist Roman Catholics in the West, and to deliberately and provocatively align itself with a liberal, Socialist/Communist agenda. This has already conquered most of the West – and Rome always backs the winning side.

The president of the German Bishops' Conference, Georg Bätzing, said that the alarming decline underscored the need for continued “cultural change”, and for the implementation of the German Synodal Way.⁷ The German Synodal Way taking place within the Romish hierarchy is aimed at shifting the Roman Catholic institution far to the left. German bishops and priests are pushing a pro-abortion, pro-feminist, pro-LGBT agenda, all once anathema to Rome. They are “blessing” sodomite unions, calling for priests to be allowed to marry and for women to be ordained as priests, playing down all kinds of sins and in general taking the attitude that in order to survive and remain relevant in the now left-leaning world, Rome has to change its teachings, drop its centuries-old opposition to various sins and abominations, embrace them all, and then it will see people flocking back into the “Church”.

Officially, at this moment in time the Vatican holds itself aloof from these radical German changes; but behind the scenes it is allowing the German hierarchy to push the boundaries, so as to test the waters worldwide. If this kind of radicalised, leftist, Woke Roman Catholicism achieves the goal of keeping Roman Catholics in the “Church” and inspiring many of those who have left to return, then the German Synodal Way will be rolled out worldwide. Francis himself supports these changes. Throughout his pontificate we have seen numerous examples of his serpent-like subtlety in softening up the faithful to accept the radical changes he and his Jesuits have planned for the worldwide “Church” of Rome. He is being very careful in expressing his support, of course, but every so often he lets slip some utterance which reveals where his heart lies. And later this year these matters are going to be debated by Romish ecclesiastical leaders from the wider Roman Catholic world.

It is very obvious that the Jesuits – who control the Vatican and hold it in a steel vice grip – and many others within the Romish hierarchy have come to the conclusion that this is the only way forward: in order to win back lost ground, Rome must move with the times and embrace and preach a radical message, even though this means massive changes to Romish doctrine and practice.

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ENDNOTES:

1. *AP News*, June 22, 2023. “In Europe’s empty churches, prayer and confessions make way for drinking and dancing.” apnews.com
2. *Catholic News Agency*, June 28, 2023. “German exodus: Half a million Catholics abandon Church in historic departure.” www.catholicnewsagency.com.
3. *The Southern Cross*, July 2023. “There are signs of hope and renewal amid the dramatic decline of the Catholic Church in Ireland.” webmaster@scross.co.za.
4. *The Southern Cross*, July 2023.
5. *The Southern Cross*, July 2023.
6. *The Southern Cross*, July 2023.
7. *Catholic News Agency*, June 28, 2023.