

## The Joy of Love

37.

We have long thought that simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace, we were providing sufficient support to families, strengthening the marriage bond and giving meaning to marital life. We find it difficult to present marriage more as a dynamic path to personal development and fulfilment than as a lifelong burden.

We also find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations.

**We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them.**

308.

At the same time, from our awareness of the weight of mitigating circumstances – psychological, historical and even biological – it follows that “without detracting from the evangelical ideal, there is a need to accompany with mercy and patience the eventual stages of personal growth as these progressively appear”, making room for “the Lord’s mercy, which spurs us on to do our best”.

I understand those who prefer a more rigorous pastoral care which leaves no room for confusion. But I sincerely believe that Jesus wants a Church attentive to the goodness which the Holy Spirit sows in the midst of human weakness, a Mother who, while clearly expressing her objective teaching, “always does what good she can, even if in the process, her shoes get soiled by the mud of the street”.

The Church’s pastors, in proposing to the faithful the full ideal of the Gospel and the Church’s teaching, must also help them to treat the weak with compassion, avoiding aggravation or unduly harsh or hasty judgements. The Gospel itself tells us not to judge or condemn (cf. Mt 7:1; Lk 6:37). Jesus “expects us to stop looking for those personal or communal niches which shelter us from the maelstrom of human misfortune, and instead to enter into the reality of other people’s lives and to know the power of tenderness. Whenever we do so, our lives become wonderfully complicated”.

## Rhetorical style

- Francis wants to reach hearts and souls
- He wants to influence them
- Very much like the Fathers of the Church
- This began at Vatican II
- And Pope Francis is continuing it now
- He is raising up the ideal of Catholic life
- Knowing not everyone is able to live it

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## Pope Francis' language

- Not juridical
- Not canonical
- But the language of interiority
  - The call to holiness
  - His desire to win inner consent
  - A change of heart
  - A firm Christian commitment
- This is what the church is all about

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## Jesus, the Chief Accompanist

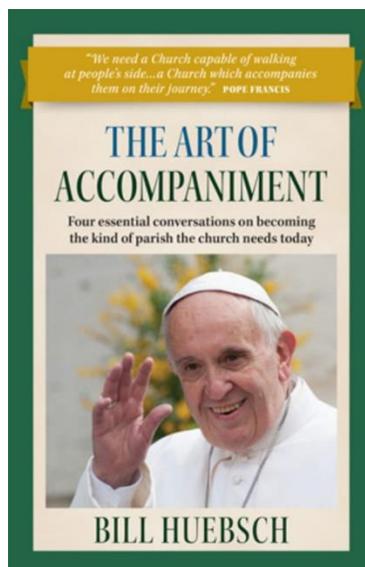
- The woman in adultery (John 8)
  - Jesus could have passed by
  - This story summarized what was most likely a longer relationship between them
  - He stood up for her in the face of a legal solution, which was to stone her
  - He urged her to live a more worthy life
  - "Neither do I condemn you."

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## Jesus, the Chief Accompanist

- He is the good shepherd
  - Shepherds accompany their sheep
  - Pope Francis: "Smell like your sheep."
  - What do shepherds do?
    - They tend their sheep
    - Watchful, listening, posture
    - A fundamental orientation toward their sheep
    - Ready to "go the extra mile"

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For more information and a deeper look into all this, get this short and readable book in the exhibit hall or online at this link:

<https://pastoral.center/the-art-of-accompaniment-booklet-four-essential-conversations-on-becoming-the-kind-of-parish-the-church-needs-today>