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## Pastor's Column

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### If You Don't Think Francis Is the Cure, You Don't Grasp the Disease

—excerpted from *Crux, Taking the Catholic Pulse*  
John L. Allen, Jr. and Ines San Martin  
June 21, 2017; <http://tinyurl.com/y7x5eknq>

*Although some Catholics, especially the more conservative sort, often find Pope Francis a bit of a shock to the system, the leader of the Church's influential Communion and Liberation movement\* says that if you don't think this pontiff is the cure, then you don't understand the nature of the disease that we're facing in a post-modern, secular world.*

*\*Father Julián Carrón is the leader of the influential Communion and Liberation movement whose natural base is among more conservative Catholics.*

Father Carrón stated: "Sometimes certain gestures of the pope may not be understood because we don't understand the full implications of what he calls an 'epochal change.'

It's like thinking a tumor is a simple case of the flu, so taking chemotherapy would seem too drastic...but once you understand the nature of the disease, you realize you're not going to be able to beat it with aspirin...

The changes we're living through are so radical, so unprecedented, that I get why many people just don't understand what's happening or the gestures of Pope Francis...but if we don't understand these gestures now, we will in time when we see the consequences they're leading to."

Carrón argued that what's happened in modernity is that people have lost sight of what it means to be a human being, so the crisis is much deeper than simply the rejection of this or that ethical precept, and that what's needed now is not so much moral exhortation or theological argument, but the attractive power of a fully Christian life.

Carrón goes on: "I get that many people are upset and puzzled by the pope, as were people in Jesus' time by him—especially, let's remember, the more 'religious' people, for example, the Pharisees, failing to see the full drama of the human situation facing them, wanted a preacher simply to tell people what to do, to put heavy burdens on them.

That wasn't enough to give humanity a new start, and then Jesus arrived and entered the house of Zacchaeus, without calling him a sinning thief, and that could have seemed too weak. Instead no one ever challenged Zacchaeus the way Jesus did.

All those others who condemned his way of life didn't move him an inch from his position. It was that absolutely gratuitous gesture of Jesus that succeeded where others failed..."

Carrón continued: "So many people are looking for meaning in their lives, for a reason to go to work, to raise a family, to face reality, and often they don't find it and try to escape in different ways. The fundamental question is, in a moment in which the basic value for we moderns is liberty, the only possibility of not falling back on force to constrain the freedom of others is to have a space where people can meet each other freely, to share what it is life means to be, what they think it means to live fully. If that doesn't happen, then the vacuum that leaves behind will keep generating conflicts.

People can't live without meaning, and if the vacuum persists, we're going to keep generating people who, sooner or later, will feel the temptation of violence...at home, at work, and in some cases, ending up in terrorism. The problem is how to respond to the vacuum of meaning we find many times today in society. It is possible to overcome it only in a free society, in a free space, in which people can meet and make comparisons among the ways in which people choose to live and how they make choices differently...

I think what's missing sometimes is a deep understanding of the human challenge we're facing. Sometimes [critics] just want [the pope] to repeat certain phrases, certain concepts, but they're empty for most people and have been for a long time. Or, they want a list of rules to follow, as if that's going to heal the human person or lead anyone to 'verify' the faith in their experience. The problem, and we suffer from it too, is that often we're not able to transmit faith in the future to our colleagues at work, to our friends. Only if we're audacious about recognizing the situation, without always feeling the need to defend ourselves, maybe we'll learn something..."

"In Christianity, the truth has been made flesh. You only understand the full dimensions of this truth made flesh by meeting and watching a witness. The whole Christmas liturgy is about the fullness of God becoming visible. If it hadn't become visible, we would never have understood it...that's the great challenge.

It's useless to ask others if they're everything they're supposed to be. The real question is, are we convincing witnesses to the faith? Do we still believe in the disarmed beauty of faith? A person who's in love will know what to do, and you fall in love through meeting someone. That's what made the experience of Jesus a 'Copernican revolution' for humanity."

*F. Mike*