

**ANALYSIS**

# Fiducia supplicans latest piece of Francis' new paradigm

**ECCLESIA**

29\_12\_2023



**Stefano  
Fontana**



The 'ecclesial civil war' provoked by the declaration *Fiducia supplicans* can be understood in its internal dynamics by going back to the concept of the 'new paradigm' applied to Francis' pontificate. Countless articles and books use the expression. From

the very first steps of the pontificate, it was evident it was a new paradigm. Already in the additions to the unfinished text of *Lumen Fidei* or in the interview with *La Civiltà Cattolica*, everyone noticed a new paradigm in embryo, which then unfolded extensively in this decade and now, with the *Fiducia supplicans*, has definitively shown its revolutionary face, dividing the Church. One must avoid attributing the disastrous effect to Cardinal Fernández's latest statement alone. It has been a decade in the making and is directly linked to chapter 8 of *Amoris laetitia*, but not only. This is why the notion of a 'new paradigm' is worth examining once again.

**This expression comes from the philosophy of science and in particular from the Popperian school.** Thomas Kuhn interpreted the development of science as a succession of revolutions on the basis of new paradigms to be understood as research programmes. The new paradigm had to be able to explain both what the previous one explained and what it failed to explain. The issue took an interesting turn when Imre Lakatos argued that a new paradigm does not come into being after an anomalous fact is discovered that falsifies the previous one, but first the new paradigm is elaborated and then the anomalous facts with respect to the previous one can be seen and explained, which would otherwise remain in the dark or be forcibly adapted within the old scheme. The new fact can therefore only be seen as new if the new way of seeing things has already come into being first, and not afterwards. First we move on to the new criteria and only then do we deal with the new facts, now made visible by the light of the new paradigm. A fact is not new because it is new, but because the way of seeing it is new.

**This can help us understand the new situation in the field of theology and pastoral care,** so that we do not get trapped in this logic. According to the doctrine of the succession of paradigms, the blessing of heterosexual and homosexual de facto couples is a new fact that 'indietrists' cannot understand because they have remained within the previous paradigm, but is fully clear and sharable by those who have acquired the new. The novelty does not lie in homosexual couples, but in the unprecedented glimpse that the new paradigm now casts on them. The blessing of the latter is a creation of the new paradigm, which has posed the new question after having created the new way of dealing with it. One poses the problem because one already has in mind the way to solve it.

**This explains two other aspects of the new current ecclesial situation.** The new paradigm explains new things, but it also intends to confirm the explanations provided by the previous paradigm, otherwise there is no step forward. In fact, Fernández says

that the previous doctrine last expounded in the Responsum of 2021 is not denied but expanded by a new paradigm. The new assertions are thus indisputable: they cannot be criticised in the light of the new paradigm, because it was precisely it that produced them, nor can they be criticised in the light of the old, because it was inadequate and was in fact replaced by the new, which, however, does not cease to explain what the old explained. In this way, the model of the new paradigm claims to guarantee the continuity of tradition.

**This view is indebted to the non-realistic but idealistic approach of modern thought,** which starts from the subject and not the object. Thus our entire worldview is a 'grand paradigm' from which we construct reality. This just exposed, however, is invention; reality is different. The scheme now seen has a first huge flaw: it understands tradition only as a "previous paradigm", which Francis refers to when he speaks of "repetition of patterns that generate immobility", or as a succession of paradigms. Tradition is thus called 'alive', but in reality it is dead because a paradigm is not knowledge of reality, since it posits it. At most it is interpretive, which is too little and distorts the Church's definition of tradition. Furthermore, it is not true that the new paradigm allows what the previous one explained to be explained in its own light. This is because positing new realities after inventing a new paradigm casts backwards a different light even on previous truths that are linked to an outdated interpretation. This is the delicate point where deceptive stratagems are inserted: in reality, *Fiducia supplicans* abolishes *Responsum* because the new supposed pastoral motives are not only pastoral but fully theological. Indeed, it belongs to the new paradigm to claim that pastoral is not applicative but creative of doctrine.

**In today's Church there are two visions of faith and two irreducible codes of thought.** The Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith carries forward the vision of the succession of paradigms, while the cardinals, bishops and laity who oppose it adhere to tradition, which is not a paradigm destined to be superseded by another.