

The Catholic Church of the
Immaculate Conception

2540 San Diego Avenue, San Diego, CA 92110 619 295-4141 FAX 619 295-4142
e-mail: parish@ic-sandiego.org Website: www.ic-sandiego.org

October 18, 2015

Rev. Richard L. Perozich, Pastor
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Deacon Robert H. Fitzmorris
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Marsha Long, Music
pictures@marshalong.com

Parish Office Hours
Monday: Noon to 4:00 pm
Tuesday-Friday: 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

Mass Schedule

Daily Mass: Monday - Saturday at 8:00 am
First Friday Mass & Devotion: 8:00 am

Sunday Masses

Saturday Vigil: 5:15 P.M.
Sunday: 8:30 AM, 10:00AM, 11:30 AM. 5:15 P.M.

Holy Day Masses: 8 A.M., 7:00 P.M.

Penance: For daily Mass goes 7:30 AM, For Parish on Saturday: 4:30 to 5:00 P.M., and by appointment

Baptisms & RCIA: *By appointment only.* Please email Deacon Fitzmorris at rfitzmor@diocese-sdiego.org.

Weddings: *By appointment only.* Arrangements must be made at least **one year** in advance. Please contact the office

Funerals: *For arrangements, please call the parish office.*



History of Immaculate Conception Parish

It was here in Old Town that Father Junipero Serra celebrated his First Holy Mass in California on July 2, 1769, near the site of the present Immaculate Conception Church, and it was on the hill overlooking Old Town that he planted the cross which marked the site of the Mission and the Presidio.

In 1849, the first parish church was established in Old Town with the name of Immaculate Conception and was dedicated in 1858. It still stands and is known as the Old Adobe Chapel on Conde Street. The cornerstone to the present Immaculate Conception Church was laid in 1868 under the direction of Father Antonio Ubach. With the population swing toward the south, it was not until July 6, 1919, that the church was dedicated by Archbishop John J. Cantwell of Los Angeles.

WE PRAY — Pray the Rosary in October —

MASS INTENTIONS

19	8 AM	<i>Ss. John de Brébeuf & Isaac Jogues and Companions</i> Priest's Intentions	RP
20	8 AM	<i>St. Paul of the Cross</i> †Richard Green	RE
21	8 AM	<i>Weekday</i> Steve Beckholt, SI	RP
22	8 AM	<i>St. John Paul II</i> Chris DiEdoardo, SI	RP
23	8 AM	<i>St. John of Capistrano</i> †Martin Morris	RP
24	8 AM	<i>St. Anthony Mary Claret, BVM</i> †Rosa Isella Duarte	RP
25	5:15PM	†Maria Vitale	RP
	8:30 AM	†Martin Morris	RE
	10:00 AM	†Timothy Harmon	RP
	11:30 AM	†William Kennedy	RP
	5:15 PM	Steve Beckholt, SI	RP

APOSTLESHIP OF PRAYER

October: Intentions of the Holy Father

Universal: That human trafficking, the modern form of slavery, may be eradicated.

Evangelization: That pastors of the Church, with profound love for their flocks, may accompany them and enliven their hope.

PRAY: SEMINARIANS IN THEOLOGY

1st	Manuel Del Rio, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo
4th	David Exner North American College Rome,
4th	Brian Frice Mt. Angel Seminary OR
2nd	Oscar Lopez, St. John's Seminary, Camarillo
3rd	Nathan McWeeney Mt. Angel Seminary OR
1st	Raymond Napuli, Mt. Angel Seminary OR
1st	Michael O'Connor Mt. Angel Seminary OR
2nd	Eric Tamayo North American College Rome
4th	Corey Tufford North American College Rome,
4th	Derek Twilliger Mt. Angel Seminary OR
3rd	Billy Zondler, Mt. Angel Seminary, OR

PRAY FOR OUR PRIESTS


19	Rev. Michael Guinan, OFM
20	Rev. Craig Haider
21	Rev. Msgr. Timothy Harnett
22	Rev. Brian Hayes
23	Rev. William Headley, CSSp
24	Rev. Ronald Hebert
25	Rev. Scott Herrera

PRAY THE SCRIPTURES

Monday: Rom 5:12-21; Ps 40:7-17; Lk 12:35-38
 Tuesday: Rom 5:12-21; Ps 40:7-17; Lk 12:35-38
 Wednesday: Rom 6:12-18; Ps 124:1-8; Lk 12:39-48
 Thursday: Rom 6:19-23; Ps 1:1-6; Lk 12:49-53
 Friday: Rom 7:18-25; Ps 119:66-94; Lk 12:54-59
 Saturday: Rom 8:1-11; Ps 24:1-6; Lk 13:1-9

PRAY FOR HEALING

Jesus, we ask you to bring your peace and healing touch to those who are ill, afraid or worried. Amen

Esther Fitch, Lydia Castillo Herrera Margaret Kelly, Patricia Kennedy, Dorothy Kleint, Deena Marchiano, Dena Mendoza, Jean Miller, Patricia O'Grady, Mary Jane Tiernan, Marguerite Vorst, Marie Whitman, Martha Zamudio, Carlos Amaya, Fred Levine, Mike Rodriguez, Lisa Becerra, Maguire Fitzpatrick, Tony Jenkins, Peter Nalwalker, Bob Witt, Frank Garay, Frances Garcia,		Socorro Pacheco, Linda Lee, Amparo Valenzuela, Robby Witt, Phyllis Altomare, Alicia Ambrose, Shirley Pearson, Diego Cárdenas. Inez Cerda Bull Rose McBrien Cosmo Busalacchi Maria Casanova, Steve Stone, Laura Castillo, Edna Moore, Maria Esperanza Kramer Joan Busalacchi Georgiana Ottenheimer, Mark Brandon. Jeanne Pontius, Esther Salazar, Joane Anderson Janet Meyers
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PRAY FOR OUR DEPLOYED MILITARY

Jesus, protect all who serve our country.

Sgt. Ahmed John Alexander, Natalie Augustine, Major Jerry Bloomquist, Col. Mike Bodkin, Danny Carpenter, USMC, LTJG Joseph Colangelo, USN, Cpl. Samuel James Comer, Daniel Dinglebeck, USN, PFC, David Eley, USMC, Micah Emery, Sgt. Christopher Escalona, Capt. Pedro Esquivel, 1Lt. Cortez Fabia, Juan Carlos Galazza, SSGT. Vincent Charles Lucario,	Robert Clinton Long, MC2, Sgt. Adriana Matizel, Wendell Miculob, LTJG Joe F. Morales, USN; LCPL Matthew A. Pena, Sgt. Richard Pierce, Sgt. William Paul Powers and Cinco, CPL Wilson Santiago; Alfred Tello, Ricky Thibeault, Tony Tulloss, PFC Travis Vliet; & 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing. SCPO Desiree S. Hayes, USN
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†PRAY FOR OUR DECEASED†

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace Amen.

William Kennedy, Joan Schmittin, Robert McMahan, David Diaz, Margie Gautier, Patrick Piggot, Rodney Serrano, Concepción Garza, Richard Solís Moreno, Laura Marks, Alvin Weaver, William Bethel, Lillian Sinclair, Olga Hritz, Imelda Hoeckelmann, Angelina Olivarez,	Alice Perry, Joseph Moreno, Louie Serrano, Gustavo Sosa, Floyd Watson, Iola Torre, Thomas Briggs, Emilie Graham, Angela Cordova, Ramiro Moreno, Alexander Toczko Jeannette Toczko José Teofilo Solorio Ray & Betty Jackson Denise Cooney Joanne Mangiameli
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A PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

FROM THE PASTOR

On September 28th, 40

Catholic pilgrims from Immaculate Conception and near San Diego flew to Christian Europe on a

pilgrimage of faith in the Most Holy Trinity to experience the many places where heaven touched earth, where Mary appeared to humans to reinforce Jesus' message of conversion, repentance and salvation.

In Barcelona, we visited the church of Maria del Mar, Mary of the Sea, built in the 13th century by faith filled sailors who carried on their backs stones to construct this church. We celebrated Holy Mass here as we did each day in one of the shrines. Our local guide, Jose, taught us also about the cathedral in Barcelona where we visited, and then to the basilica of the Holy Family designed by Gaudi, begun in the 1800's and scheduled to be finished by 2017. It was faith filling to be among so many pilgrims at all of these places feeling their faith to augment our own, and showing them our devotion to God and the Blessed Mother.

We travelled to Zaragoza where tradition says that Mary appeared to the apostle James to urge him on when he was becoming discouraged. She appeared to him on a marble pillar telling the apostle to build a church on this site. With countless other pilgrims, including the late Saint John Paul II, we venerated the pillar in the church of Our Lady of the Pilar. We celebrated Holy Mass in one of the chapels of this magnificent church before continuing our tour of the city of Zaragoza and the old cathedra.

From there we traveled over the Pyrenees to Lourdes, France, set in a valley cradled by tree-covered mountains with the river Gave. It was here that Mary appeared to Bernadette Soubirous in 1858, revealing to this uncatechized girl that the name of this mysterious lady was, "I am the Immaculate Conception", a doctrine just proclaimed ex cathedra by the pope of that time, something that Bernadette could neither know nor understand. Mary asked Bernadette to drink from the spring which the girl found when she dug under the earth at Mary's direction. That spring now yields copious amounts of water so that sick pilgrims can bathe in the special baths where many documented healings have taken place, and can drink the water as well as take it home for their loved ones who cannot make the pilgrimage.

In Lourdes we participated in the nightly procession of the international candlelight rosary, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in the underground church with its capacity for 25,000 pilgrims, celebrated Holy Mass at one of the chapels and at the cave where Mary appeared to Bernadette. Our local guide took us to the home and the mill where the Soubirous family lived in poverty after some misfortunes that befell the family. We pilgrims were able to walk the mountain for the stations of the cross, and visit the upper and lower church and the crypt to venerate St. Bernadette's remains.

After the cool and rain of the Pyrenees, we travelled through San Sebastian, Spain where we concelebrated Mass with a retired bishop from the Bronx, NY in the beautiful cathedral there. After lunch, some of us got our feet wet at the beach of the Bay of Biscay in the waters of the north Atlantic before boarding our Mercedes motor coach once again.

Arriving at Covadonga, Spain where Don Pelayo began the reconquest of Spain from the Moors in the early 700's, we escaped the hustle of travel, the crush of pilgrims, and were cradled by the beautiful mountains all around us in quiet and peace. We visited the cave of our Lady, paid tribute to Don Pelayo, were soothed by the silence of the mountains, the rainbow in the sky, and lulled by the sound of the waterfall next to the cave. The next morning we celebrated Mass in one of the chapels of the rose-colored stone church with its spires reaching up to the sky. It reminded us of Jesus leaving the crowds to go to the mountain to pray. Most of the pilgrims wished we could have stayed there for a while, just as St. Peter wished when he was on the mountain with Jesus, Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration.

Santiago de Compostela in the Spanish province of Galicia was our next stop. We began with a tour of the city which ended with holy Mass at the Cathedral where thousands of pilgrims actually walk a several hundred mile journey from many directions out of devotion to our Lord. At the end of the Mass, we witnessed the special custom of offering incense to God in the botafumeiro, an 8 foot censer guided by 8 men to swing it from side to side, ceiling to ceiling to cleanse the church and the pilgrims of evil and present them and their prayers to God. After some free time, I found a convent, arriving just in time for the rosary, before joining other pilgrims for sung vespers at still another monastery by the Benedictine nuns.

Bom Jesus in Braga, Portugal was the next stop. Some pilgrims took the funicular to the top, while others of us climbed the 600 steps where the different stations of the cross were displayed in small chapels on the way, and rising further the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and statues of figures from the old and new testament leading up to the beautiful church where we celebrated Holy Mass at the main altar. Many of us descended the same steps on foot before boarding the coach to the city of Porto, and finally the shrine of Fatima.

The first evening in Fatima, we took part in the international candlelight procession of rosary and Eucharist around the square, which began at the site where Mary appeared to the 3 shepherd children. The next day we celebrated Holy Mass in one of the newer chapels, and then venerated the tombs of the 3 visionaries, Lucia, Jacinta, and Francisco in the large church. Our guide took us to the homes of the children in the nearby village as well.

The final stop in Lisbon brought us to the Romanesque cathedral with a tour of some of the churches and local monuments. We celebrated Holy Mass in the cathedral in the morning. The surprise for us was our vigil Mass Saturday evening in the Portuguese language at the beautiful church of St. Anthony. After Mass, the Franciscan priest brought out a relic of St. Anthony so that we could venerate it. Then we were able to pass through the sacristy to descend to the lower area to the room where St. Anthony was born. In Portugal he is called St. Anthony of Portugal because he was born there, while most of us call him St. Anthony of Padua where he preached for the conversion of many people.

On Sunday morning we boarded our plane to return to San Diego, and like Mary did with Jesus, we continue to treasure and ponder the memories of this holy pilgrimage in our hearts, allowing Jesus to unfold in us all the graces we received in our worship and devotion as pilgrims on the journey toward eternal life.

AROUND THE PARISH

ALL SOULS DAY

Immaculate Conception will once again set up a remembrance table for deceased loved ones. If you wish to include a photo (framed, if possible) in the display, please drop it off in the Parish Office between now and Oct. 23.

We will also participate in Old Town's Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) festivities and keep the church open until 9 p.m. on October 31 and November 1. We need volunteers from 4 p.m. to closing to greet our visitors and to help maintain a prayerful atmosphere in the church proper. Please contact Elena Orozco or the parish office if you can volunteer.

Traditional Latin Mass in the evening with procession to the cemetery. Hour to be determined.

NIGHT FEVER: LET'S EVANGELIZE!

On Nov. 01, our parish will be wide open until 9 p.m., we will be inviting passers-by to come see, sit in contemplation, listen to music, and pray. Help is needed. Please call Michael Camacho at 619-565-8301.

Need help in praying the rosary?

Visit:
www.theholyroary.org
www.comepraytherosary.com

The **Prayer Chain Ministry** has been established in our parish. Our intention is to mobilize our parish community to pray for someone who has suddenly become ill, is going in for surgery, has a personal emergency or special needs they would like kept in prayer. Please contact Ruthe Jenkins if you are in need of prayers or if you are interested in being part of this powerful ministry on either the contact team or as part of the prayer chain. Email: rutheis@cox.net or phone 619-981-1424.

FAMILY CATECHESIS

Parents and children as well as all interested adults are welcome to attend Family Catechesis in the bride's room of the parish hall every other week. The program continues on Sunday, October 18, at 9:45, right after the 8:30 AM Mass. All children must be accompanied by their parents at each session.

Rite of Christian Initiation

Each year on Holy Saturday during the Easter Vigil, thousands of people are baptized into the Catholic Church in the United States. Parishes welcome these new Catholics through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA).

If you are interested in becoming a baptized member of the Church, consider participating in the RCIA process.

For information, please contact Fr. Richard at
 619-295-4141, ext. 11, or
email.pastor@ic-sandiego.org.



2015 Baptism Schedule

November 9 Class
November 15 Baptisms

(See ic-sandiego.org
 for more dates.)

St. Joseph Academy High School ...

...cordially invites you to attend an **OPEN HOUSE** on **Saturday, October 24, 2015**, from 10am to 1pm. St. Joseph Academy High School offers a challenging college-prep curriculum, vibrant Catholic environment, CIF sports and dedicated faculty. SJA forms Catholic leaders championing the light of Christ in today's society while maintaining the most affordable private high school tuition in San Diego. Families and students of all ages are encouraged to visit our beautiful 4-acre campus nestled in the hills of San Marcos.

Visit us at www.SaintJosephAcademy.org.

Quarters and Cans Sunday **October 25, 2015**

During our second collection next Sunday, all money collected will be used here at Immaculate Conception to assist our brothers and sisters who come to us in need. Your generous donations will continue to be used to help feed, and in some cases assist those who are in need of our help with rent and utilities. The parish also provides gas and grocery cards. Resource information is also available so people can access public and private agencies that can help with their needs.

Food items collected will be taken by our volunteers to the Catholic Charities Food Resource Center. Please make sure these items are in non-breakable containers, unopened, and the dates have not expired. There is always a need for the following items:

- ◆ Canned goods including vegetables, fruit, chili, tuna fish, spam, chicken, beef, beans, soups, and spaghetti sauce;
- ◆ Peanut butter, jelly, and honey;
- ◆ Cereals, pasta, rice, and beans;
- ◆ Any paper goods such as toilet paper, paper towels, paper plates, cups, napkins, Kleenex tissues, baby wipes;
- ◆ Hygiene items such as shampoo, soaps, toothpaste, tooth brushes, dental floss, mouthwash, disposable razors, shaving cream, lotions and feminine products;
- ◆ Plastic, paper or reusable grocery bags for carrying the above.

Thank You

On behalf of the entire Quarter and Cans Committee and Father Richard we thank you for your continued support of these important programs as we try to follow Our Lord's command and put the Holy Gospel into action.

AROUND THE PARISH

Gifts of Treasure

With gratitude for the gifts we have received, parishioners and visitors made a joyful return to the Lord.

October 11, 2015

Total Collection: \$5370.70
Envelopes: 3457.12 Plate: \$1,913.58
Total contributing households: 81

5:15 Sat	\$ 684.00
8:30 Sun	\$1494.55
10:00 Sun	\$1139.44
11:30 Sun	\$ 912.00
5:15 Sun	\$ 435.71
Mailed	\$ 705.00

EXPENSES
 October 5-9, 2015

Maintenance Supplies	\$48.51
Music	\$700.00
Office Supplies	\$62.05
Organ Maintenance	\$270.00
Pest Control	\$100.00
Telephone	\$255.67
Waste Disposal	\$332.23

Total: \$1,768.46

MISSION SUNDAY - OCTOBER 18

Today is World Mission Sunday! In Scripture, we read that St. Paul asked the Gentile Churches to take up a collection to support the Church in Jerusalem. Now we are asked to reach out and support the young churches throughout our world. Your prayers and generous gifts will help missionaries offer the poor of these areas practical help as they share the mercy of God. Go

WELCOME TO IMMACULATE CONCEPTION!

To register at the parish, please fill out the form below, and drop it in the basket or call the office at 295-4141.

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY/ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

Serra Gifts...

**Street Level of
 Fr. Serra Hall
 619-297-3426**



Open 7 days a week
 Monday - Friday 9:30 -4:00
 Saturday 10:00 to 4:00
 Sunday 9:30 to 3:00

Serra Gifts offers a beautiful assortment of religious items for your home, for your family and friends.

Missalettes

As previously announced, beginning in Advent this November, the missalettes will no longer be in the pews because their cost is too high for our small parish.

By end of October, Serra Gifts will offer the **Living With Christ** Missalette for \$8.99 each. Youth missalettes will also available for \$16.99 each.

See our online catalog at:
<http://www.ic-sandiego.org/gift-shop>

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL: LUMEN GENTIUM

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

28. Christ, whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, has through His apostles, made their successors, the bishops, partakers of His consecration and His mission. They have legitimately handed on to different individuals in the Church various degrees of participation in this ministry. Thus the divinely established ecclesiastical ministry is exercised on different levels by those who from antiquity have been called bishops, priests and deacons. (Priests, although they do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood, and although they are dependent on the bishops in the exercise of their power, nevertheless they are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity. By the power of the sacrament of Orders, in the image of Christ the eternal high Priest, they are consecrated to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful and to celebrate divine worship, so that they are true priests of the New Testament. Partakers of the function of Christ the sole Mediator, on their level of ministry, they announce the divine word to all. They exercise their sacred function especially in the Eucharistic worship or the celebration of the Mass by which acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming His Mystery they unite the prayers of the faithful with the sacrifice of their Head and renew and apply in the sacrifice of the Mass until the coming of the Lord the only sacrifice of the New Testament namely that of Christ offering Himself once for all a spotless Victim to the Father.

PARISH & COMMUNITY

Parish Calendar

October

- 18 Mission Sunday-Propagation of the Faith
Special Collection
- 21 Choir Practice 5:30 p.m.
- 24 Quilters (Awesome Fabric Arts) 9:30 a.m.
- 25 Quarters and Cans Sunday
- 28 Choir Practice 5:30 p.m.
- 31-Nov. 1 Knights of Columbus Tootsie Roll Drive
- 31 Quilters - Cancelled for today

November

- 1 All Saints Day (Regular Saturday/Sunday Schedule)
Night Fever 7:00 p.m.
Old Town Day of the Dead Festivities
- 2 All Souls Day (8 a.m. Mass only)
I.C. Seniors Luncheon 11:00 a.m.
Harp Meditation 2:00 p.m.
- 4 Choir Practice 5:30 p.m.
- 7 Quilters (Awesome Fabric Arts) 9:30 a.m.
- 8 Parish Breakfast 9:30 a.m.
- 11 Choir Practice 5:30 p.m.
- 14 Quilters (Awesome Fabric Arts) 9:30 a.m.

NEW HYMNAL

So far parishioners have dedicated 125 of the 200 hymnals for loved ones, living and deceased. Donations for dedication are \$20/hymnal. Your name may be printed as donor (or it can be left blank) and you may have the name of a person living, or add a † if deceased. Submit name and donation to rectory or put into collection basket.

“My first and most essential point is not to ask the question of whether the Church is merciful to the divorced, but whether the divorced were merciful to their children. ... If you ask mercy of the Church, I must ask you the question: did you put the burden of your conflict on the shoulders of your children? This is deeply unmerciful.” Cardinal Schoenborn

FROM MISERICORDIAE VULTUS - Pope Francis

BULL OF INDICATION OF THE EXTRAORDINARY JUBILEE OF MERCY

*FRANCIS
BISHOP OF ROME SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF
GOD TO ALL WHO READ THIS LETTER GRACE,
MERCY, AND PEACE*

... 6. Here are some other expressions of the Psalmist: “He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds ... The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps 147:30,. In short, the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality through which he reveals his love as that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that this is a “visceral” love. It gushes forth from the depths naturally, full of tenderness and compassion, indulgence and mercy. 7. “For his mercy endures forever.” This is the refrain repeated after each verse in Psalm 136 as it narrates the history of God’s revelation. By virtue of mercy, all the events of the Old Testament are replete with profound salvific import. Mercy renders God’s history with Israel a history of salvation.

Mercy Pilgrimage

Poland-Prague-Vienna-Warsaw-Czestochowa-Krakow



- Buffet Breakfast Daily, 7 Dinners
- Sightseeing and Entrance Fees per Itinerary
- Private Deluxe Motor Coach
- Professional Tour Escort / Licensed Guides
- Czestochowa - Shrine of the Black Madonna
- Divine Mercy Feast Day Mass with His Eminence, Cardinal Dzwisz
- Visit the - Infant Jesus of Prague
- Mass Daily

Fr. Luke Jaurequi, Spiritual Director
Dates: - March 29th to April 8th, 2016
Cost: \$3159.00 Land & Air from San Diego
(per person/ double occupancy)

Call Saint Rose of Lima or stop by the office for the itinerary (619) 427-0230.

To book the trip contact, or for more information:
Best Catholic Pilgrimages 800-908-BEST (2378),
info@religious-travel.com.

CRISIS FOR POPE FRANCIS

as top-level cardinals tell him: your synod could lead to the collapse of the church.

—Damian Thompson

Update, 3:20pm Monday: **As I write this, various cardinals have said they didn't sign the letter, some of them waiting several hours before distancing themselves from it. Now Erdő says he didn't sign it. It's extremely hard to get at the truth. 'Not signing' can mean a number of things, ranging from an outright false claim that a cardinal supported the letter to panicky backtracking by cardinals who did assent to it but are grasping at the technicality that they didn't personally append their signature. But the damage to the synod is done.**

A group of cardinals – including some of the most powerful figures in the Catholic Church – have written to Pope Francis telling him that his Synod on the Family, now meeting in Rome, has gone badly off the rails and could cause the church to collapse.

Their leaked letter, written as the synod started, presumably explains why a few days ago the Pope suddenly warned against 'conspiracy' and reminded the cardinals that he, and only he, will decide the outcome of the synod.

This is the gravest crisis he has faced, worse than anything that happened to Benedict XVI, and he knows it. And, talking of the Pope Emeritus, I suspect that, had he been free to sign the letter, he would have done so.

The cardinals warn the Pope, in diplomatic language, that (a) the synod is being hijacked by liberals obsessed with the narrow issue of giving Communion to divorced and remarried people; (b) going down the route of 'pastoral flexibility' could lead to the Catholic Church falling apart in the same way as liberal Protestant denominations; and (c) the synod working papers prepared by the Pope's allies Cardinal Lorenzo Baldisseri and Archbishop Bruno Forte are a mess and going down badly with the Synod Fathers.

The seniority of the signatories shows how close the church is to civil war. Cardinal Gerhard Müller, Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith – the Church's doctrinal watchdog – is on the list. So is Cardinal George Pell, head of the Vatican's finances, and Cardinal Robert Sarah, in charge of the Church's worship.

Sarah is the most prominent African cardinal in the church, along with Cardinal Wilfrid Napier of Durban, who has also signed. Add to that the name of Cardinal Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York, and it becomes clear that the loss of confidence in Pope Francis extends far beyond the Vatican.

He is, however, passionately supported by liberal cardinals in Europe and Latin America, among them Cardinal Reinhard Marx, head of the German bishops. He can also count of the unquestioning loyalty of Cardinal Vincent Nichols, Archbishop of Westminster.

As the Catholic Herald reported this morning:

Two of the cardinals who signed the letter, published in full by [Vatican commentator] Sandro Magister, have prominent roles in the synod. Cardinal Péter Erdő is its relator general, and Cardinal Wilfrid Napier is a president delegate. [NB: On Monday afternoon, several hours after it appeared Cardinal Erdő denied signing the letter.]

Other signatories included Vatican officials Cardinal Gerhard Müller and Cardinal George Pell.

In the letter, the cardinals expressed concern that 'a synod designed to address a vital pastoral matter – reinforcing the dignity of marriage and family – may become dominated by the theological/doctrinal issue of Communion for the divorced and civilly remarried'.

The letter continued: 'The collapse of liberal Protestant churches in the modern era, accelerated by their abandonment of key elements of Christian belief and practice in the name of

pastoral adaptation, warrants great caution in our own synodal discussions.'

The cardinals also asked the Pope to 'consider a number of concerns we have heard from other synod fathers, and which we share' and criticised the synod's Instrumentum Laboris, or working document.

'While the synod's preparatory document, the Instrumentum Laboris, has admirable elements, it also has sections that would benefit from substantial reflection and reworking,' the letter said.

'The new procedures guiding the synod seem to guarantee it excessive influence on the synod's deliberations and on the final synodal document. As it stands, and given the concerns we have already heard from many of the fathers about its various problematic sections, the Instrumentum cannot adequately serve as a guiding text or the foundation of a final document.'

Here is the list as originally reported by Magister:

- Carlo Caffarra, archbishop of Bologna, Italy, theologian, formerly the first president of the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family;
- Thomas C. Collins, archbishop of Toronto, Canada;
- Timothy M. Dolan, archbishop of New York, United States;
- Willem J. Eijk, archbishop of Utrecht, Holland;
- Péter Erdő, archbishop of Esztergom-Budapest, Hungary, president of the Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe and relator general of the synod underway, as also at the previous session of October 2014 [He has now denied signing the letter, though there was a noticeable delay before he did so];
- Gerhard L. Müller, former bishop of Regensburg, Germany, since 2012 prefect of the congregation for the doctrine of the faith;
- Wilfrid Fox Napier, archbishop of Durban, South Africa, president delegate of the synod underway as also at the previous session of the synod of October 2014;
- George Pell, archbishop emeritus of Sydney, Australia, since 2014 prefect in the Vatican of the secretariat for the economy;
- Mauro Piacenza, Genoa, Italy, former prefect of the congregation for the clergy, since 2013 penitentiary major. [He now denies signing the letter];
- Robert Sarah, former archbishop of Conakry, Guinea, since 2014 prefect of the congregation for divine worship and the discipline;
- Angelo Scola, archbishop of Milan, Italy. [He now denies signing the letter];
- Jorge L. Urosa Savino, archbishop of Caracas, Venezuela;
- André Vingt-Trois, archbishop of Paris, France, president delegate of the synod underway as also at the previous session of the synod of October 2014. [He now denies signing the letter.]

Note that not all these cardinals are regarded as outright conservatives: Cardinal Dolan, for example, is gently orthodox, an amiable figure far removed from the thundering traditionalist Cardinal Raymond Burke, who has been excluded from the synod.

Moreover – and this is very dangerous for Francis – the main point of contention is not the question of whether the church should give communion to divorced people in second marriages, or whether gay unions should be given some degree of recognition.

This is an argument about the wisdom of calling the synod in the first place, and expresses the suspicion of over 100 Synod Fathers that the organizers are manipulating proceedings by confronting them with working papers and procedures designed to push them in a liberal direction. Others are simply fed up with the amateurish nature of the proceedings and wonder why, after last year's chaotic preparatory synod, the Pope left the same people in charge. To quote the Australian Archbishop Mark Coleridge, 'At times our work has seemed more muddled than methodical'.

I'm one of countless commentators who has warned that holding this synod could split the church. Now it's happening, much faster than any of us anticipated.

N.B. This article is commentary and the astute observations of the author.